



JOWŠAQĀN I. THE DISTRICT

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Jowšaqān (جوشقان) is located at 65 miles northwest of Isfahan, where the western foothills of the Karkas Mountain range break down into plain. It lies on the local road that branches off the Isfahan-Tehran highway at Meyma and traverses the Qohrud Mountains to reach Kashan via Qamšar. The district and its administrative center, standing 1,410 miles above sea level at 63 miles southwest of Kashan (q.v.), are formally known as Jowšaqān-e Qāli, (“Ġāli” in Kalāntar Žarrābi) “the Carpet Jowšaqān,” to avoid confusion with Jowšaqān-e Estark, a village in the Niāsar rural district (*dehestān*) of Kashan, as well as with other villages with similar names near Sāva and Bojnurd. The local names are attested as Gušgun, Gašgun, and Kuškun (Lambton, 1938, p. 69; Zargari, pp. 13, 202). A native poet, Mirzā Adib Šaybāni, cites it as “Kušiān,” along with its hamlets Kāmu and Čowkān and the nearby Qohrud and Qamšar (quoted by Narāqi, 1966, p. 254, n. 1) as the localities destroyed by the 1844 earthquake (Kalāntar Žarrābi, p. 208; Ambraseys and Melville, p. 61).

History. For most of its history the district has been associated with Kashan. However, the toponyms Jowšaqān and Jawsaqān listed among the villages of Kashan in the 10th-century *Tāriḳ-e Qom* (Ḥasan b. Moḥammad Qomi, pp. 117, 138) seem to correspond to the Jowšaqān in Estark rather than Jowšaqān-e Qāli. According to a local tradition, there was a mass migration from Sabzevār to Jowšaqān during the Mongol invasion of Khorasan in the 13th century



(Zargari, p. 177; cf. the mention of Nišāpur in a native tale documented in Lambton, 1938, p. 53). In contrast to the town of Kashan, which was a Shi'ite stronghold no later than the Saljuq period, its eighteen villages (Jowšaqān included, although not mentioned by name) continued to adhere to Sunnism (Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi, p. 68, tr., p. 72), apparently until the advent of the Safavids, when the bulk of the nation began to be forcefully converted to Shi'ism.

It was under the Safavids that Jowšaqān established its reputation as a center of carpet weaving. Royal factories were established there, and master weavers were attracted to the town from distant places. The cool, healthy air made Jowšaqān a favorite summer residence for the wealthy of the capital during the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (r. 1587-1629, q.v.), and traces of the summer mansions then built can still be detected. The passage to Isfahan was straight and easy to travel and could readily be crossed by a fast courier in a single day (Pope, pp. 2386-87). The Jowšaqāni merchants grew so affluent that they could afford a caravansary of their own in the capital city of Isfahan (Blake, pp. 118-19).

The district was granted by the Safavid king, Solṭān-Moḥammad Ḳodābanda (r. 1578-87), to Šāhroḳ Khan, the keeper of the royal seal (*mohrdār*; Eskandar Beg, I, p. 227, tr., I, p. 339; Lambton, 1952, tr., p. 230). Under Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751-79), Jowšaqān was ruled, together with Kashan, Naṭanz, and Qom, by Mirzā Mo'ezz-al-Din Moḥammad Ġaffāri (Kalāntar Žarrābi, pp. 316-17; Ġaffāri, p. 78). A Qajar fief holder was Bahrām Mirzā, a son of 'Abbās Mirzā (q.v.; E'temād-al-Salṭana, 1989, IV, p. 2289). In those days Jowšaqān was the administrative center (*qaṣaba*) of the neighboring five villages (Meyma, Ziādābād, Azun/Azān, Vazvān, and Van) and Naṭanz (Ka-lāntar Žarrābi, pp. 35, 40) and exerted some influence in the national economy. It was one of the 38 taxpaying districts in the fiscal year 1888-89, contributing 76,000 *qerāns* to the 54-million-*qerān* national budget (Zargari, p. 253; Curzon, II, pp. 480-83; E'temād-al-Salṭana, I, p. 329).

The surviving towers of a once fortified citadel imply the vulnerability of Jowšaqān to occasional raids (Zargari, p. 186; Narāqi, 1966, p. 313). Jowšaqān was plundered by the Baḳtiāri tribesmen en route to aid the Constitutionalists in Tehran (cf. Zargari, p. 203). Lasting security was achieved only after the establishment of the administration under Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-41), though Jowšaqān never gained its former status. In the course of the 20th century, there was a steady economic shift from Jowšaqān and the adjoining



districts around the Karkas Mountain range to the urban conglomerate around Isfahan and its immediate environs along the Zāyandarud valley. Contributing to the seclusion of Jowšaqān was its location ten miles off the new Isfahan-Tehran highway, and the decline of its carpet industry (see below), as well as the land reforms of the 1960s, which further exacerbated the depopulation of the district. The region was well-explored by Ann Lambton during her stay there in 1936-37; the collected socio-economic data was used in her study *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, with several citations of Jowšaqān. The district's major shrine is the tomb of Ṭāher and Maṣṣūr, the sons of Imam Musā al-Kāẓem, also known as Emāmzādagān (Kalāntar Żarrābi, p. 435), whose original structure (depicted in Edwards, tr., p. 350) was replaced in the 1960s; only its finely carved wooden sarcophagus, dated 730/1330, survives to this date (Zargari, p. 185).

Geography and economy. Due to its location on the border of the Kashan and Isfahan domains (Moḥammad-Mehdi, p. 336), the administrative status of Jowšaqān has faced several changes in the past century. It was often alternatively grouped with Meyma (q.v.), shifting back and forth as a part of the sub-provincial units (*šahrestān*) of Kashan or Isfahan. The local inclination has been strongly towards Kashan, to which Jowšaqān now belongs (Zargari, p. 204). The district's major settlements are Kāmu, Koluk, Varkān, Pendās, Tajara, Ārenjan, Āzarān (Razmārā, pp. 8-9, 10, 66, 72, 225, 241, 317), Čowkān, and Alezg. According to the 1996 census, the population of the district and its center were 6,473 and 3,776, respectively (Sāzmān-e barnāma, p. 2). Jowšaqān has several quarries, especially marble, the exploitation of which has been the major industrial activity in the district in modern times (Nekuzāda, pp. 139-45).

The district is primarily agricultural, with traditionally a peasant-type (*korda mālek*) of land proprietorship. The water is supplied by local springs, the seasonal Kan River, and seven subterranean channels (*qanāt*). The major agricultural products are cereals, beans, potato, grapes, and other fruits specific to the cool (*sardsir*) climate, and dried fruits are exported. As in the nearby Qamšar, the farmers cultivate rose for extraction of rosewater, which is now a growing business in the region. There are also vast grasslands in Rāvanj, attracting shepherders from adjoining districts. The drought of 1948 forced shepherders from as far away as Nā'in to travel in search of pasture to an area near Jowšaqān (Lambton, 1938, pp. 2-5; idem, 1952, p. 354, tr., p. 615; Zargari, pp. 17, 21, 25). In the second month of the autumn, the festival of *quč o*



pājen (the ram and he-goat) is held while impregnation of the ewes and she-goats is underway. Another remarkable festivity, common in Kashan province, is *Esfandi* (or *Esbandi*), held on the night before the beginning of the last month of the Jalāli solar calendar, that is, thirty-five days before the spring equinox (Zargari, pp. 27, 169; Enjavi, pp. 141-63). The rites practiced in *Esfandi*, such as offering gifts to women and keeping noxious creatures away, are similar to those that Abu Rayḥān Biruni mentions in reference to the festival of *Spandārmad*, which then was held in central Persia on the fifth day of the month bearing the same name (Biruni, ed. *Aḏkā'i*, pp. 284-85, tr., p. 355; see also [Kashan vi. ESBANDI FESTIVAL](#)).

Carpets. Jowšaqān produced the bulk of the carpets made for the court of Shah 'Abbās I, and was one of four towns mentioned as sending carpets to the court of the Mughal emperor, Jalāl-al-Din Moḥammad Akbar (r. 1542-1605), in India (Abu'l-Faḏl 'Allāmi, p. 55; Pope, p. 2387). What made this relatively remote district a carpet-weaving center was the existence of upland pastures and excellent water, which provided the fine wool and dye necessary for making quality carpets. Under the Safavids, Jowšaqān developed its own style of carpet weaving, some specimens of which are kept in museums in the West (Edward, tr., 349; dozens of pieces are illustrated in Pope and Ackerman, XI, pp. 1218-61). A master weaver was Ne'mat-Allāh Jowšaqāni Qālibāf, whose fourteen pieces of silk rugs, dated 1671, originally carpeted the mausoleum of Shah 'Abbās II; they were relocated to Iran Bāstān Museum and the Āstāna museum in Qom (Narāqi, 1969, p. 372; E'temādzāda, pp. 37-38; Rafi'i). At the height of carpet production each village of Jowšaqān had its individual marks of color or technique, which made it possible to divide the class into various sub-groups. These sophisticated styles, especially the one known as the "vase," were widely emulated in Persia and beyond (Pope, pp. 2393, 2449-53). A period of decline in the carpet industry followed the Afghan invasion, though Jowšaqān's prestige lived on for at least another century, for in the early 19th century William Ouseley (q.v.) refers to Jowšaqān as a "town celebrated for its carpets" (Ouseley, III, p. 79; Pope, p. 2387).

As the Persian carpet industry was revitalized in the late 19th century due to the expanding markets in the West (see [CARPETS](#)), Jowšaqān's production picked up again, but with entirely new designs and techniques. The predominant design is geometric, sometimes without a medallion, and generally conservative (Yasāvoli, p. 236). Jowšaqān exported up to 600 fine carpets annually to Europe before World War II, but afterwards the quality



began to drop. In 1949, there were 200 looms weaving some 50,000 square feet of carpet annually in Jowšaqān and its hamlets (Edwards, tr., pp. 349-51; cf. E'temād-zāda, p. 138, who provides comparable figures).

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