



KALĀRESTĀQ I. THE DISTRICT AND SUB-DISTRICT

KALĀRESTĀQ (or Kalār-rostāq), and Kalārdašt, historical district in western Māzandarān.

i. THE DISTRICT AND SUB-DISTRICT

Kalārestāq district. This predominantly mountainous district extends along the Caspian coast from the Namakābrud (Namakāvarud) river on the west to the Čālus river on the east, separating it from the districts of Tonekābon and Kojur (qq.v.), respectively. On the south Kalārestāq is isolated from Tāleqān by Taḳt-e Solaymān and the Kandavān (q.v.) heights in the central Alborz mountains.

Kalārestāq consists of four sub-districts (formerly *boluks*; now *dehestāns*): Kuhestān in the south, Kalārdašt in the center, Birun-bašm along the Čālus valley in the east, and Dašt or Qešlāq along the coastline, altogether embracing some 120 settlements (listed in Rabino, 1928, pp. 107-8). Of these sub-districts the central one is Kalārdašt, distinguished by its sound, cool climate (*yeylāq* or *sardsir*), which used to attract the bulk of Qešlāq's population in summer (Noel, pp. 412-13; Bazin and Bromberger, p. 13). The chief river of the district is Sardāb(a)rud, which rises from Hazārčāl (or Ḥešārčāl) and flows northeasterly to irrigate the Kalārdašt basin and then the paddy fields on the plains of Qešlāq, before reaching the Caspian at Sardābrudsar village. Further west flows the Espirud and its tributary, the Palangāvvrud. The district's



administrative center was the coastal village of ‘Aliābād, and those of Kalārdašt and Birun-bašm were Ḥasankeyf and Marzānābād, respectively (Sheil; Rabino, 1928, p. 108).

As a modern administrative division, the term Kalārestāq is poorly defined. Most specifically, it is added to the name of the aforementioned Qešlāq sub-district to form Qešlāq-e Kalārestāq. The toponym is sometimes used interchangeably with Čālus or Kalārdašt, as the name of the entire district (*baḵš*) within the Nowšahr *šahrestān* (cf. Razmārā, pp. 213, 237; Moṣāḥab, p. 2239). The only notable urban center in the district is its modern administrative center Čālus, the eastern half of which belonged historically to the district of Kojur on the east bank of the Čālus river.

The toponym Kalārestāq consists of Kalār (not to be mistaken with *kalā*, a prevalent Caspian place-name suffix) and *rāstāq* (cf. Pth. *rwdyst’g*, MPers. *rōstāg* “river-bed; district, province”; MacKenzie, p. 72). The old town of Kalār, mentioned by the earlier geographers, is an obscure locality (cf. Le Strange, pp. 373 f.). According to Yāqut (IV, p. 296), Kalār was at three days’ distance from Āmol and two days from Rey on the border of the country of the unbelievers, that is, Deylam (Rabino, 1928, p. 154). Ebn Esfandiār (p. 78) mentions the village of Delam near Kalār and adds that no one born there survives his twentieth year. Already in 780/1378 the castle of Kalār was in ruins (Zāhir-al-Din, p. 210). Based on the historical evidence and archeological remains, Freya Madeline Stark locates Kalār to be just to the east of the Bašm col, which separates Birun-bašm from Kalārdašt. Another significant town of the region was Sa’idābād, founded by the Arab governor Sa’id b. Da’laj (ca. 125-28/775-78), the inhabitants of which made a vow with the ‘Alid ruler Ḥasan b. Zayd in 251/865. The historical evidence suggests that Sa’idābād was in the present Birun-bašm (Sotuda, p. 143, n. 3; cf. Rabino, 1928, p. 155, n. 44) or “probably lay low down in the malarial river valley” east of the Čālus (Stark, 1934a, p. 214).

An important fact about Kalārestāq’s historical geography is its position midway between Māzandarān and Gilān. Together with the neighboring Tonekābon and Kojur, Kalārestāq often fell within a larger district that was called Rōdān/Ruyān and then, roughly from the Mongol period, Rostamdār (and, more lately, Maḥāl-e ṭalāt; see below), under the petty rulers who carried the title of Ostandār and were independent from both Caspian provinces (cf. *Ḥodud al-‘ālam*, tr., pp. 135-36). Kalārestāq is only given a passing mention by the early Muslim geographers and the historians of the Caspian provinces (see



indexes in Ebn Esfandiār; Ṣāhir-al-Din; Gilāni), who report hardly any major historical event therein. According to the 15th-century historian Ṣāhir-al-Din Marʿāši, Kalārestāq reached the zenith of its prosperity under the Bāduspānid Ostandār Naṣir-al-Dawla Šāhriār b. Keykosrow (717/1317–725/1325), who built a palace, a town, and a market at Gorgu/Korku, which was also the residence of Malek Oways b. Kayumarṭ in 850/1446 (Ṣāhir-al-Din, p. 299; Rabino, 1928, pp. 154-55).

After a period of decline, Kalārestāq recovered under the Safavids. The coastal route built under Shah Abbas I was made to detour through Kalārdašt. At the end of the 18th century, Kalārestāq and Kojur were entrusted to Mehdi Khan Ḳalʿatbari, the chieftain of the neighboring Tonekābon, and thus these three districts became known as Maḥāl-e ṭalāt, independent of both Gilān and Māzandarān (Demorgny, p. 73). According to H. L. Rabino (1913, p. 445), the inhabitants of the triple districts did not consider themselves as Māzandarānis, while the Māzandarānis called them Gilaks. Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin (1744-74), who visited the district in late August 1771, enumerates the thirteen districts of Māzandarān, beginning with Kalārestāq, which included Tonekābon. The district produced silk, rice, and sugar on the plains and wheat and barley in the highlands, where animal husbandry was practiced widely (Gmelin, III, pp. 446, 459; tr., pp. 234, 241). Kalārdašt's clement conditions and its relative proximity to the Qajar capital made it an ideal venue for royal summer camps, and Nāṣer-al-Din Shah had a nine-foot-wide cobbled road built between Tehran and Kalārdašt (Afzal-al-Molk, pp. 141-43; Noel, p. 411). From one of these trips survives the unpublished manuscript of *Safarnāma-ye Kalārdašt*, written ca. 1303/1886 by Afzal-al-Molk (op. cit.).

Among the Caspian districts Kalārestāq was one of those most affected by tribal transplantations since the early modern period. Here the greatest role was played by the Kurdish Ḳvājavands, who are sometimes mentioned together with the Laks and ʿAbd-al-Malekis (see Rabino, 1928, p. 12; Planhol, 1964, p. 38; Kazembeyki, pp. 10-11, 230, n. 57). The Ḳvājavands were brought to Kalārestāq and Kojur from Garrus and Ardalān by Nāder Shah Afšār, and although a part returned to their native country at the end of the reign of Karim Khan Zand, they were brought back by Āqā Moḥammad Khan Qajar, “to keep down the turbulent inhabitants of these districts” (Fortescue, p. 317). The Ḳvājavands would provide 500 mounted troops to the government (Afzal-al-Molk, p. 142), and an attempt in 1855 to remove the tribe to eastern Māzandarān proved unsuccessful (Rabino, 1928, p. 22). In 1920 there were



some 1,500 K̄vājavand households in Kalārestāq (Fortescue, p. 317), consisting of the clans of Sangzorāli, Malāmiri, Kermānšāhi, and Tork, while the Laks comprised the Karak, Delfān, Tork, and Nanakali (Rabino, 1913, p. 441). Although the K̄vājavands had lost their nomadic character, settled in villages, and mixed with the indigenous population (Noel, p. 412), they still moved about in tents in summer. They kept cattle, bred a fairly good stock of horses, and were engaged in dry (*daymi*) farming. While a small branch of the K̄vājavand tribe, numbering a hundred households, had remained Sunni, the rest had converted to Shi'ism, and most of the Laks belonged to the [Ahl-e Ḥaqq](#). As a whole, the K̄vājavands and Laks were abhorred by the locals, not only on account of their faith, but principally because they occupied the best summer pastures (Rabino, op. cit.; cf. Kazembeyki, p. 11).

Tribal migrations of the previous centuries have left an imprint on the ethnic composition of Kalārestāq. The aboriginals refer to themselves as *gil* “farmer, settled folk” and speak a Caspian dialect (see ii, below) locally known as *geleki*. The *gil* stands in contradistinction to the *il*, the local ethnonym for the K̄vājavands, who have practically lost their original Kurdish and Laki idiom in favor of Persian, yet they remain somewhat distinct for practicing the rites of Ahl-e Ḥaqq in the temples known as *jam'-kāna*. There are also traces of the Baluch and Afghans, particularly in the *yeylāq*. Although the time and events that caused migration of these tribes is not clear, they have resided in Kalārestāq long enough to have become largely assimilated into the local population. Moreover, a sizeable Tatic population lives in the district, with various degrees of assimilation; they are the descendants of the seasonal laborers from Ṭāleqān.

Kalārdašt. A sub-district of Kalārestāq, Kalārdašt has undergone a rapid development since the Pahlavi era. Following the Qajar example, Reza Shah built a mansion there, along with a small airport. The construction of the Karaj-Čālus highway in 1931-33 and Kandovān tunnel in 1938 reduced the four-day journey from Tehran to just a few hours, and therefore made the district easily accessible to the growing population of the capital (Planhol, 1964, p. 41; Šāyān, pp. 168-69; Nušin, p. 38). Thanks to seaside tourism, Kalārdašt became increasingly known to vacationers, and by the early 1970s it was a major summer resort throughout the nation. The real estate boom has been growing uninterrupted, and Kalārdašt is becoming ever more commercialized.

Archeological finds point to the existence of an ancient culture in Kalārdašt,



especially around Tepe Kalār (Stark, 1934a). Many gold and silver artifacts and textile pieces have been recovered in various construction works (Vanden Berghe, 1966, see index). The golden wares, bronze objects, and ceramics excavated during the construction of Reza Shah’s palace are kept as Ganjina-ye Kalārdašt in Irān Bāstān Museum (Samadi). Systematic excavations, however, have been rudimentary, without professional reports. The district is also dotted with structures built since medieval times, mostly rural shrines and mausoleums in Caspian architectural styles (for an inventory, see Sotuda, pp. 101-62).

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