



MEYBOD

MEYBOD, name of a sub-province (*šahrestān*) and town in Yazd Province (32°14'45" N, 54°2'10" E; elev. 3,637 ft.) on the road to Tehran, at a short distance south of Ardakān (see [ARDAKĀN-e YAZD](#)) and about 48 km northwest of the city of Yazd. It is the smallest *šahrestān* in Yazd Province, comprising the rural districts (*dehestān*) of Bafruya and Šohadā.

The origin of Meybod predates the Sasanian era; however, it was during this period that this city was expanded and its morphological structure or urban form established (Puya, p. 15). It was formed as a rectangle centered around two crossroads (*čahārsu* or *čahār kustag*) that led to four city gates. This design has been interpreted by some as based on the belief that the world was divided into four parts and that cities should be built such that their gates would open to the four corners of the world (Puya, p. 15, citing Ashraf, p. 8; cf. the “chessboard” analogy for [Gondēšāpur](#) given by Ḥamza Ešfahāni, p. 49, ll. 7-9). The Sasanian wall simply circumscribed the rural settlement of Meybod, Nārin Qal‘a, and Maḥalla Kučak (Puya, p. 15).

The 9th/15th-century historian of Yazd, Aḥmad b. Ḥosayn Kāteb (p. 32), relates the popular notion that attributed the foundation of Meybod to a military commander of [Yazdegerd II](#) (r. 439-57), called Mebodār (otherwise unattested). He further (pp. 38-40) relates another legend alleging that the town itself was laid down by Šāh Mobed, whom he refers to as a brother of [Ḳosrow I Anušarvān](#) (r. 531-79), and its fortress, Nārin Qal‘a, by Dāl Div, a demon under the command of King Solomon, in order to store some of Solomon’s treasures here.



Another Sasanian monarch, Kawād I (r. 488-531) is also given the credit for founding a township (*qaṣaba*) in the Meybod district. There he built a Zoroastrian temple, whose initial fire was provided out of fires brought from seven other temples in Fars, Balkh, Azarbaijan, Nesā, Isfahan, Ġaznin, and Ṭisfun (*Ctesiphon*). The new town was named Haft-āḍar “Seven Fires” (Aḥmad Kāteb, p. 38).

By the 10th century CE, Meybod had become a notable settlement. It was mentioned by geographers (e.g., Eṣṭakri, pp. 100, 135; Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 266, 286; *Hodud al-‘ālam*, ed. Sotuda, p. 136, tr. Minorsky, p. 129) and appeared on maps as a part of the district (*kura*) of Eṣṭakr in Fars Province (e.g., Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 261). Its major growth and expansion took place in the 14th century, during the reigns of the Moḏaffarids, particularly under Šaraf-al-Din Moḏaffar and his son Mobārez-al-Din Moḥammad (r. 1314-58), who expanded the city’s fortification and infrastructure, including new gates, a *kānaqāh*, and a bathhouse (Ja’fari, p. 33).

Aḥmad Kāteb mentions twenty-four settlements under the domain of Meybod in the 15th century, among them Badrābād, Roknābād, Bārjin, Firuzābād, Ardakān, Aḥmadābād, Torkābād, Bafruya, Dehābād, Mehrjerd-e Bideh, and Šamsābād (Puya, pp. 37-38; see also Afšār, pp. 67-104). Many of these settlements still exist. However, Ardakān has evolved into a separate city and is currently the center of Ardekān Sub-province.

Three of the old Meybod city gates remained operational up to the 20th century. These gates were called Fārs (or Šamsābād, more recently), Kaṭnavā, and Kučak (a modified pronunciation of Kušk), and were located in the southern, western, and northeastern sections of the city (Puya, p. 48). The fourth gate, previously a major gateway, lost its purpose after a major settlement was established there. That section, known as Bašniḡān, also contained seven smaller gateways, named Sarkura, Baḡ-e Kān, Kowli-kāna, Ḥāji Mollā Reżā, Āsiāb Lakag, Salmān, and Kanzihā (Puya, p. 50).

The crossing of two major roads that ran through old city had divided it into four separate sections. The area at this intersection was named Ḥowzu Bāzār. Due to its centrality and availability of resources, this location housed a number functions and their associated buildings, including the Masjed-e Jāme’, two smaller bazaars, a *caravansary*, a water reservoir (*āb-anbār*), Madrasa-ye Moḏaffariya, a bathhouse, and two plazas (*meydān*; Puya, p. 51).

The older section of the city has largely maintained its morphological structure; however, the construction of a road connecting Meybod to Ardakān has interrupted the urban pattern in the old section and destroyed portions of the Nārin Qal'a (Afšār, I, p. 80). Recent urban growth has translated to gradual spatial continuity between Meybod and its surrounding settlements, such as Bafruya and Šurak. Not unlike other cities in Iran (including Yazd), recently built houses and neighborhoods have abandoned local vernacular architecture and urban forms that fully incorporated and adapted to the local climatic conditions.

Today the city of Meybod and its vicinity house a number of historical landmarks that include shrines, mosques, tombs, fortresses, and water reservoirs (for a detailed list, see Afšār, I, pp. 67-105).

Population. In the national census of 1956 (the first official census) Meybod was identified as a township with a population of 3,202 (Ministry of Interior, November 1956, XIV, p. 9). Bafruya and Šurak, although historically a dependency of Meybod, were then considered separate entities; their respective populations were reported as 1,939 and 1,824 souls (ibid., pp. 1, 11).

By 1966, the population of Bafruya had increased to 2,308, Šurak to 2,464 (Plan Organization, November 1967, Table 2, p. 5), and Meybod to 15,191 souls (Sāzmān-e Barnāma 1980, p. 4). All three settlements were identified as villages in these first national censuses and were, therefore, excluded from detailed socioeconomic tables. In 1976, when Meybod population had reached 17,800 (ibid., p. 4), it was included in the data tables of the sub-province of Ardakān. However, detailed socioeconomic indicators were not made available in regularly published data books for that census year.

The demographic evolution within Yazd Province meant that various political divisions, including the boundaries of a given sub-province or rural district, changed from one census year to the next. For instance, Meybod was separated from Ardakān Sub-province in 1989 and became the center of Meybod Sub-province. As a result, demographic analysis becomes challenging when dealing with smaller settlements. For Meybod and similar jurisdictions, census publications of the 1990s are vitally important, since they provide some of the missing data for settlements whose status and political affiliations had changed.

From 1976 to 1986, Meybod's population grew by 52 percent, to 27,146



(Sāzmān-e Barnāma, 1994, p. 35—a more than eightfold growth from 1956. This level of growth brought significant changes in the infrastructure and the geographic pattern of the city, making necessary the construction of new streets and neighborhoods. During the same period, Šurak, whose location on the road to Tehran made it commercially viable, also experienced a rapid population growth, and so did Bafruya to the north.

By 1993, Meybod Sub-province had 66 elementary schools (with 9,526 students), 19 middle schools (with 4,703 students), 13 high schools (with 2,808 students), and 3 technical/vocational schools (with 589 students). It had at least a small hospital (with 50 beds) and seven health centers, which was served by twenty physicians, including eight specialists (Sāzmān-e Barnāma va Budje, 1994, pp. 67-68, 105-6). In 1992, the city issued the second largest number of building permits among the cities in the Yazd Province; and a significant majority of them were for residential units (ibid., 1994, p. 213). An interesting point is that two-thirds of all building permits were for two-storey structures (ibid., 1994, p. 219), suggesting that a non-traditional style had become the dominant building form in Meybod. In comparison, the neighboring city of Ardakān issued fewer building permits in 1992, and the majority were for single-storey buildings. The shift toward higher density, two-storey buildings in Meybod is indicative of a more rapid urbanization in this city and its environs.

In 1996, with no changes to its geographic boundaries, Meybod Sub-province reported a population of 59,141, while the city itself reached a population of 38,061. The two rural districts of Bafruya and Šohadā had reported populations of 9,285 and 12,354, respectively (Sāzmān-e Barnāma, 1998, p. 52, 61, 64).

By 1996, the city of Meybod had grown 40 percent since 1986, accompanied by further growth in the overall urban infrastructure. In 1996, the city was still the second largest issuer of building permits in Yazd Province. While residential units continued to be the dominant recipients of permits, single-storey buildings now outnumbered multi-storey buildings (Sāzmān-e Barnāma, 1998, pp. 210-12). The shift to lower-density development suggests two simultaneous factors: building more rapidly outside the traditional city boundaries and higher investment in housing units. In both cases, the city of Meybod was moving away from its village-like atmosphere and increasingly embracing a more modern urban form, growing outward from the traditional city core. This extensive growth is reflected in the 1997 tax revenue data,

which shows the Meybod tax center's revenue ranking third in the province after Yazd and Bāfq. The majority of this revenue was attributable to land-related investments and exchanges (ibid., 1998, pp. 266-67).

This level of improved prosperity enabled the sub-province to house sixty-nine elementary schools, thirty-seven middle schools, and twenty-five high schools, during the academic year of 1997-98. Compared to 1993, there was a significant growth in the number of middle schools and high schools in this county. By 1998, the city of Meybod was also home to the Azād University of Meybod and its 3,640 registered students (ibid., 1998, pp. 300, 318).

During the last decade, the city of Meybod has witnessed further growth in its population and urbanization rate. According to the latest census data from 2006, the city of Meybod reached a population of 58,295. Including its other, smaller settlements, the sub-province had grown to 70,728—a growth of 53 percent over a decade. The cumulative growth across five decades suggests that the city of Meybod has grown 18-fold since 1956, becoming a major node in the urban and economic structure of Yazd Province and an important stakeholder in the future of the region.

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