



## MEYMA I. THE DISTRICT

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**MEYMA**, district in central Persia, on the road leading north from Isfahan to Qom.

### i. The district

*History.* Meyma itself is not mentioned by the early Arab geographers, but Ebn Kordādbeh (p. 58) in the 10th century mentions Rebāt-e Vazz as the caravan station after Borkvār (q.v.) on the road from Isfahan to Ray. Vazz, an arabicized form of Vaz, seems to be a reference to the modern village of Vazvān, an implication that it was originally the seat and name of the district. By the 14th century, Meyma was a *welāyat* of Isfahan (Yāqut, IV, p. 719), though Ḥamdallāh Mostawfī Qazvini, the principal Persian geographer of the 14th century, makes no mention of Meyma and its villages.

Transit routes played a role in the prominence of Meyma, which prospered from the commerce between Isfahan to Ray, two centers of the Jebāl super-province (see [JEBĀL](#)). The road through Meyma (even though it may have been used under the Saljuqs) was seldom used in the Safavid and Qajar era, when the main road ran within the Kargas mountains through Naṭanz or Qohrud and [Kashan](#) (Sireux, p. 11). Meyma gained in importance when wheeled transports, which favored the road that passed through the plains of Meyma and Delijān, were introduced on the Iranian Plateau (Houtum-Schindler, p. 54), replacing camel caravans (Bulliet). Even today, a sizeable part of Meyma's service economy consists of restaurants and stores centered on the Isfahan-Tehran highway that bisects the settlement.



True to the nature of the Meyma transit, several remnants of old transportation constructions still exist. In Meyma village there is a relic of a Saljuq *rebāt* near a Mongol mosque. North of Meyma, toward Delijān, stands Rebāt-e Tork, originally a military construction from the early Saljuq era, which later became a *caravansary* (Siroux, pp. 11-12).

*Geography and economy.* The district rests on a high plain on the western foothills of the Kargas range, which separates Meyma from Națanz on the east. To the west of Meyma, there is a wasteland across which rests the district of K̄vānsār (q.v.). The village of Meyma is situated at 33° 26' N, 51° 50' E, about 100 km north of Isfahan, on a high point (2,012 m) on the modern Isfahan-Qom highway. The district's villages are Vazvān, Ziādābād, Āzān (or Azun), Vandāda (or Vendā-deh), K̄osravābād, all clustered around Meyma, as well as Rebāt-e Āqā Kamāl and Čoqāda (or Čegā) on the northeast of the district, and the outlying Muta on the northwest, which stands isolated on a rural road leading to Golpāyagān. The population of Meyma *qaşaba* rose from 2,300 in the 1940s to 3,360 in 1966, and to 5,260 in 1996, and that of Vazvān was 4,800 in 1986 (Razmārā, pp. 296, 318, Moşāhab, III, p. 2970; MAI, *Āmārnāma*, 1987, p. 20; Mehryār, p. 783).

Meyma is an exemplar of the recurrent administrative rearrangements in contemporary Persia. In the late Qajar period, Meyma and its villages (Ziādābād, Azān, Vazvān and Van) were defined within the context of the *qorāʿe kamsa* “five villages” administered at Jowşaqān (Kalāntar, pp. 13, 35, 40). Under the Pahlavis, Meyma was initially within Kashan *şahrestān*, in Jowşaqān *boluk* (Keyhān, II, pp. 401-05), which later became a *dehestān* (Edāra, pp. 300, 304). The same *dehestān* became a *baķš*, which was now named after Meyma (Razmārā, p. 296). In 1957, Meyma *baķš* was passed on from Kashan to Isfahan *şahrestān*. The shift raised contempt among the Jowşaqāni cohabitants who wished to keep their association with Kashan (see JOWŞAQĀN i). The *baķš* of Jowşaqān and Meyma was thus split up, and each became a *baķš* of its own within the districts of Kashan and Isfahan, respectively. Ultimately, Meyma was merged with Borķvār in 1990 to form the *şahrestān* of Borķvār and Meyma, centered at the new town of Şāhinşahr (see BORKVĀR) within Isfahan province. Meyma now constitutes a *baķš* with two rural districts (*dehestāns*), Zarkān and Vandāda. In spite of all these administrative restructuring, the borders of Meyma proper have essentially remained unchanged since it was known as a *boluk*.

The economy is chiefly rural. Irrigation in Meyma is from a seasonal river and



from subterranean channels, known as *qanāts*. The latter has shown a decrease; in the 1930s, of the ten known *qanāts*, the only two functioning ones were Mordābād and Bir (Lambton, 1938, pp. 1-2; cf. Siroux, p. 11; Mehryār, p. 783). Nonetheless, contrary to the neighboring districts whose populations emigrated to Tehran in the 1930s, no flight from the land was observed in Meyma, which enjoyed a fairly constant water supply, good arable land, and vineyards (Lambton, 1953, p. 279). The chief crops of Meyma were cereals, beans, cotton, fruits and vegetables; cultivation of opium, a cash crop bought by the state, was forbidden in 1937. The surplus crops were stored in an old fort, which was used for storage of other valuables as well. Meyma was known for its dried fruits, which were sold in Isfahan and Kashan, in either plain fruit skin form or as *jowzeqand*, wherein the skin of the fruit was stuffed with sugar. Animal husbandry was also practiced, using the pastures within and outside of the district. Peculiar to the region are *bumkan(d)*s, the manmade underground caverns where the flock is kept during the severest parts of winter. Handicrafts included spinning and weaving of *karbās*, a coarse linen, used for local clothes and carpets, the designs of which were similar to Jowšaqān and were important in the export economy of Meyma (Lambton, 1938, pp. 1-5; idem, 1953, p. 354; MAI, *Village Gazetteer*, p. 20).

*Social structure.* Ann Lambton's ethnographic survey of Meyma and Jowšaqān in 1936-37 provides unique information on the socioeconomic norms of rural life in central Persia, at a time when the political reforms under Reza Shah's administration were about to transform society. According to Lambton, Meyma and its hamlets were *ḵorda mālek*, i.e. the villagers were mainly peasant proprietors. The available land was divided in 2,016 *ḥabbas*, and the average holding was two to five *ḥabbas*. A large portion of the land, however, was owned by a single *arbāb* "landowner," whose family also owned a few thousand sheep and goats. The village had a carpenter, a blacksmith, a potter, a builder, a mud-brick maker, a couple of shopkeepers and two garment peddlers. Meyma had two public baths and two mosques (Lambton, 1953, pp. 275, 278, 376; idem, 1938, pp. 1-5).

Meyma was the seat of the *nāyeb al-ḥokuma* (deputy governor) of the district of Meyma and Jowšaqān. His primary function was presiding over the *ṣolḥiya* court that met in the village and was concerned mainly with financial disputes. Other disputes were largely settled by the gendarmerie officials stationed at posts in the surrounding country. Traditional education under the mullahs was already abolished, and the district now had a *ra'is-e ma'āref*



(head of the [Department of] Education) who administered the two schools in Meyma and Jowšaqān. A post office official and a physician were also sent from Kashan. In each village, one local official was appointed as a *kadkodā* (head of the village) by the governor of Kāšān on the recommendation of the locals. He had three subordinates known as *pākār*, and his duties were chiefly concerned with agriculture, including the cleaning of the *qanāts*. A *mirāb* was in charge of water distribution, based on a *piāla* system, which was strictly enforced. The *arbāb* had the water two *ṭāqs* (24 hours) every fortnight (ibid).

As elsewhere in central Persia, Meyma district is bound to the mainstream national traditions. An important tradition that bounds Meyma to the cultural province of Kashan, rather than to Isfahan, is Esbandi (see [KASHAN vi. Esbandi Festival](#)). It is associated with Esfand, the last month of the Jalāli solar calendar, and is held on 14 February (Enjavi, pp. 43-51, 91-107). The currency of this festivity in Meyma is known only from the invaluable dialect texts collected by Lambton, one of which reflects the rite of offering gifts to a fiancée (Lambton, 1938, p. 34).

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