



REŽWĀNŠAHR

REŽWĀNŠAHR, small town and sub-provincial unit (*šahrestān*) in the western part of Gilān Province. The town is located at lat 37°33' N, long 49°07' E. The district is created from the traditional region of Ṭāleš Dulāb, which resulted from the division of the large district of Gaskar, when **Fath-ʿAli Shah Qājār** (r. 1797-1834), at the beginning of his reign, divided the Persian Ṭāleš between local leaders in order to weaken the family of Mir Moṣṭafā Khan of Āstārā. Ṭāleš Dulāb was given to Moḥammadqoli Khan of Punel, and it was subsequently known as one of the *Ḳamsa-ye Ṭawāleš* “Five Khanates of Ṭāleš” (Fraser, p. 145; Chodzko, p. 264; Häntzsche, pp. 54-55; Melgunof, p. 250; Rabino, pp. 90, 107; tr., pp. 97-98, 119).

This extensive district included, as it does now, several important valleys from the north to the south, namely those of the Lomir River (Rud-e Lomir), the two branches of the Šafārud that flow into the Caspian Sea together with intermediate smaller rivers, and the *Ḳošābar* River coming from the mountains of Šāndarman and downstream called the Čāfrud before reaching the western end of the Mordāb-e Anzali (Jaʿfari, pp. 172, 211, 294, 438). The population of the whole mountainous area and its piedmont, as already indicated in the 19th century by the above-mentioned authors, is Ṭāleš and exclusively Sunnite, in contrast to the Ṭāleš and Shiʿite inhabitants of the adjoining valley of Šāndarman and the Gilak and Shiʿite population of the small area between Punel and the Caspian Sea, called Gil Dulāb. On the limit of the latter area and Gaskar, in the forest of Haft Daḡanān, the tombs of the Gilak poet Pir Šarafšāh Dulābi (fl. 7th/13th cent.) and his mother Sayyeda Bānu



constitute an important Shi'ite sanctuary, while a number of "holy mountains" are scattered over the Sunnite mountain area, exactly as in Shi'ite southern and northern Ṭāleš. The tomb of Solṭān Barzkuh on the ridge over the Lomir valley is especially interesting for being associated with both holy trees and holy mountains, a common feature found throughout Ṭāleš. Located on the top of a conical wooded peak, it consists of two small buildings shaded by an oak tree of the subalpine level (*Quercus macranthera*), not very tall but thick and vigorous, and visited by both Sunnite and Shi'ite pilgrims (Bromberger, 2009, p. 106; Sotuda, pp. 85-88, 90). Others are limited to a tomb and a circle of stones like Golilarz on the ridge between Ḳoṣābar and Arda valleys, or Diagā on the Ḳoṣābar-Šāndarman boundary (Sotuda, pp. 90, 91; Bazin, 1978). Gregori Melgnuf (p. 272) reports that, among the Ṭāleš, those living in the southern valley were identified as belonging to a tribe called Ḳoṣābar, because its founder was said to have owned a house with a door (*bar*) made out of bone (*kāš*). This tradition is still alive in the Ḳoṣābar area, where the tribe is divided into several clans, each one having its own habitat and pastoral migratory pattern: namely, Malāl, Dašt Miān, Ḳeyla Gavan, Razdār, Golilarz, and Yegāna, all autochthonous and having each a *maḥalla* bearing their name, and also Širāzi, which is presented by Melgunof (p. 272) as a newcomer from around that city (Bazin, 1980, II, p. 41; for map of pastoral routes, see p. 40).

In reference to the economy, Melgunof mentioned only wheat, honey, silk, and stock-raising, while Chodzko (p. 264) and Häntzsche (p. 55) pointed out important production of rice as well, especially in the Gil Dulāb plain. Rabino (pp. 107-14, tr. 119-27) did not provide a precise report about the production of the district, but he mentioned a revenue of 49,462.95 krans for Gil Dulāb, 74,425.90 krans for Ṭāleš Dulāb *stricto sensu*, which made a total of 123,888.85 krans, much higher than the revenue in the neighboring districts: 63,228.87 krans for [Asālem](#), 28,953 krans in Māsāl, and 18,517.02 krans in Šāndarman (pp. 106, 118, 131, tr. pp. 117, 133, 146).

When the administrative reform implemented by Režā Shāh in 1937 (Digard, Hourcade, and Richard, p. 81) created ten provinces (*ostān*) divided into sub-provincial units (*šahrestān*) and districts (*baḳš*), Ṭāleš Dulāb was integrated as a *baḳš* into the *šahrestān* of Ṭawāleš and received the name of its main marketplace, Režwāndeh or Čahār-rāh-e Režwāndeh ("Režwāndeh Crossroad," being at the crossroads of the road from Māsāl to Asālem and Haštpar and that from Anzali to Punel and thence to Ḳalkāl through the valley of Šafārud). Although the new asphalted Anzali-Haštpar road passed around in order to

avoid this locality, it nevertheless made it notable and led to the changing of its name to Režwānšahr in the 1970s, and it was finally, in recognition of its urban dimension, made the center of a new *šahrestān* by the administrative reform of 1998. The present-day *šahrestān* is divided into two districts (*baḵš*): the central (*baḵš-e markazi*), which includes the two pre-existent *dehestāns* (subdistricts) of Ḳošābar and Gil Dulāb, and that of Para Sar. The latter includes two newly delimited subdistricts, namely Yeylāqi-e Arda in the upper valleys and Dināčāl in its lower part of the district, where Para Sar has developed—from an active marketplace (weekly market on Tuesdays and permanent shops and services) and center of the newly founded district—into a small town with 7,875 inhabitants in 2006. With 12,355 inhabitants in the town of Režwānšahr and a rural population of 44,228 persons, the district reached a total population of 64,458 inhabitants in 2006 (Markaz-e Āmār, 2006).

Along the coastal plain and lower valleys, the domination of rice cultivation is quasi-exclusive, since sericulture, still present in a few *maḥallas* of Gil Dulāb in 1949 (Razmārā, p. 266), and tobacco plantations, mentioned by the 1966 census in the vicinity of Punel, have almost totally disappeared. The traditional landscape, habitat, and practice of rice cultivation have been remarkably illustrated by the movie *Bāšu, ḡariba-ye kuček* (Bāshu, the little stranger), directed by Bahrām Beyzā'i in 1985 in Janba Sarā, a *maḥalla* of Para Sar (Devictor, pp. 161, 177). Paddy fields have a changing aspect in the course of seasons; the domestic compound includes a number of characteristic buildings, the large house where a lateral *tālār* constitutes the reception space, the high round paddy-barn perched on strong wood pilings (*kuti*), typical of this Para Sar subdistrict (Bazin, 1980, I, pp. 140-41), the oven for baking bread under a separate roof, the stable and the poultry roost (Bazin, 1980, I, sketch on pp. 173, photograph on p. 210). When paddy is ripening, night watches are organized on a wood platform (*kutām*) in order to protect it against wild boars.

In contrast to southern Ṭāleš, the mountain zone has kept a significant number of permanent settlements with extensive cultivated areas, especially in mid-altitude levels, which are also used as an intermediate stage in the pastoral migratory cycle. Unirrigated wheat and barley fields alternate with fallow lands, often collectively organized in vast groups of plots closed at their periphery and watched from wooden platforms in order to avoid intrusion of wild boars (Bazin, 1980, II pp. 17-21). Animal husbandry remains very active,



both in the hands of (exclusively Ṭāleš) paddy-growers of the plain and specialized cattle-breeders called *gāleš* and shepherds (*čupān*) living in mountain settlements. Thus all the mountainous area shows an intricate network of pastoral routes and various types of permanent and temporary settlements (see map in Bazin, 1980, II, p. 40, and a sketch of complex movements between the piedmont village of Ardajān and the mid-mountain village of Arda, on p. 36).

Two types of specific commercial structures serve this migrant agro-pastoral population during summer: the shops of the two main permanent villages of upper valleys, Lomir and Arda, and to the south of these two temporary bazaars on higher summer pastureland; the one in Yekšanba Bāzār used to be controlled by the khans of Punel, but it has declined with the loss of the khan's social and political influence, which benefited that of Šālrah serving summer pastures of Košābar and the northernmost summer quarters (*yeylāq*) of Šāndarman (Bazin, 1977, pp. 205-7).

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