



RUDBĀR

RUDBĀR, town and district in southwestern [Gilān](#). Rudbār is located on both banks of the Safidrud river at lat 36°51' N, long 49°25' E, at an average altitude of 300 m. The toponym “Rudbār” is common in Iran (with ten occurrences in L. Adamec’s gazetteer); the district has thus sometimes been confused with Rudbār-e [Alamut](#) in Qazvin district (Eastwick; Bosworth), since both belonged to Deylam in medieval times. In order to avoid such confusion, this district was often called Pildeh Rudbār (“Pyle Rubar” according to Olearius, 1659, II, p. 12) or Rudbār-e Zeytun. The latter refers to the climatic and ecological specificity of this district: the deep cut of the Safidrud valley, the only one to cross through the Alborz chain, reinforces the sea-breeze phenomenon of the strong and steady north wind of Manjil which blows during summer afternoons, as observed by most travelers and described by Tholozan. It creates an area of rapid climatic transition between the semi-arid Iranian plateau and the humid Caspian region.

This Mediterranean characteristics can be observed between Lowšān to the south and Rostamābād to the north, which have a sparse and degraded forest of cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens* var. *horizontalis*; cf. Tābeti, pp. 124-29) on the hills and irrigated orchards of olive trees around villages, combined with mainly rain-fed wheat and barley cultivation and important animal husbandry with migrations to *yeylāq* during spring and summer and wool handicraft (especially production of *šāl*, a coarse material of sheep’s wool in plain weave). Paddy cultivation appears only to the north, downstream from Jubon. According to a tradition reported by Rabino (p. 210), the olive tree was



brought from Syria under Timur. Travelers such as [Adam Olearius](#), Father de la Maze, William Monteith, [Edward Eastwick](#), and others admired the size and fruitfulness of these trees (for the description of traditional techniques of oil pressing, see [Gilān xviii](#). Rural production techniques). E. Orsolle noticed that Gilānis were the only people in Persia to use olive oil, which was also sold to Russia or used to produce soap. [Albert Houtum-Schindler](#), who visited the region in 1878, heard about an unsuccessful attempt of a German to develop oil production 25 years earlier, and of French specialists studying the possibility of founding an oil-processing plant. Actually, in 1890 a monopoly of olive buying and processing was granted to Messrs. Kousis and Theophilactos, two Greek traders from Baku, under Russian protection, who established a factory in Rudbār and installed presses imported from Marseilles, but it soon failed. It was only from the 1970s that large mechanized factories could process most of the olive production.

In this transition area between the Iranian plateau and the Gilān plain, traditional houses remain capped with a flat roof, covered with thin layers of mud applied and compacted by means of a stone roller.

The inhabitants mainly speak Tāti (a dialect slightly different from that of Šāhrud *dehestān* in *Ḳalkāl* [q.v.]; see Yarshater; Bazin and Bromberger, pp. 13-14 and map 3). Kurds belonging to the Rišvand tribe were settled by Shah Abbas I in a number of villages in Raḥmatābād and ‘Ammārlu sub-districts east of the Safidrud; the latter owes its name to the Turks from the ‘Ammārlu tribe [see Comment] settled there by Nāder Shah (Rabino, pp. 260-61, 270; see also [Gilān xiv](#). [Ethnic groups](#)). The district also includes the fringes of the Tāleši-speaking area to the west and of the Gilaki-speaking area to the north.

For a long time the district has been crossed by the main route between Qazvin and Gilān, with successive stages in Lowšān, with a stone bridge on the Šāhrud; Manjil with another stone bridge across the impetuous Safidrud, replaced by an iron bridge in the early 1900s (Stahl); Rudbār itself; and finally Rostamābād, with a caravansary on the Pošta hill, the remnants of which are still to be seen together with a cistern and a bathhouse (Sotuda, p. 463). Two supplementary stages were necessary to reach Rašt from Rudbār: Emāmzāda Ḥāšem and Kohdom. The strategic position of the Rudbār area was peculiarly sensitive during the Jangali movement. The German officer Von Paschen who joined the Jangalis controlled this access to Gilān until he was arrested in Rudbār in 1919.



Thanks to the construction of the highway Tehran-Qazvin-Rašt, Lowšān, Manjil, Rudbār, and Rostamābād have grown into small towns. Rudbār remains the administrative and commercial center of the *šahrestān* (bazaars of Kalilābād, Rudbār-e Bālā, and Rudbār-e Pā'in) together with one of the olive oil processing centers (with another big factory a few kilometers downstream in Ganja). The Safidrud reservoir dam, built by the French company Sogreah from 1954 to 1961 and set into operation in April 1962, has allowed Manjil to add to its olive oil and soap industry various industrial plants; Lowšān has received a gas power plant and industrial estates (in particular cement factories), whereas Rostamābād has developed its commercial role.

The region and its borders include some famous *boq'as* (mausoleums), where local people and travelers go on pilgrimage (*ziārat*). Noteworthy are the *emāmzādas* of Ḥamza b. Musā Kāzem in Lowšān; Abu'l-Ḥasan and Abu'l-Faẓl, also sons of Musā Kāzem, in Fildeh; Ebrāhim, son of Zayn-al-'Ābedin, looking down upon Harzavil; and the numerous *boq'as* in Darestān: Bābā Mollā Asad-Allāh, Pir-e Sayyed Jalāl-al-Din, Pir-e Sayyed Moḥammad, Shaikh Mofid, among others (see more in Sotuda, 463 ff.). As in other parts of Gilān, remarkable trees are objects of worship (see [Gilān xvi. Folklore](#); Bazin; Sotuda, pp 54-59, 194-95). Significantly in Lowšān the sacred tree is called *qorbān dār* “tree of sacrifice.”

The whole region was severely damaged by the Manjil-Rudbār earthquake of 21 June 1990, with a magnitude of 7.4 on Richter's scale (AFGP; Earthquakes, Table 45). The three towns of Rudbār, Manjil, and Lowšān and some 700 villages were destroyed; 40,000 people were killed, 60,000 injured, and 500,000 left homeless, far beyond the limits of Rudbār *šahrestān*. In spite of a rapid reconstruction and of the building of a Qazvin-Rašt freeway, which doubled the preexistent highway, Rudbār did not recover its previous population, with 11,454 inhabitants according to the 2006 census, while Manjil, Lowšān, and Rostamābād respectively reached a population of 16,028, 14,596, and 11,987 inhabitants (see Markaz). In 2006, the *šahrestān* had four *baḳš* (sub-districts): Markazi (on the western bank of the Safidrud), Raḥmatābād and Bolukāt, Ḳorgām, and 'Ammārlu (on the eastern bank), with a total population of 102,387 inhabitants on an area of 2,750 km² (*ibid.*).

The filmmaker 'Abbās Kiārostami has devoted three of his best-known films to the region of Rudbār before and after the earthquake: *Ḳāna-ye dust kojā-st?* (“Where is my friend's house?” 1987), *Zendagi o digar hič* (“Life and nothing else,” 1992), and *Zir-e deraktān-e zeytun* (“Under the olive trees,” 1994).



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