



## RUDSAR

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**RUDSAR**, city and sub-provincial district (*šahrestān*) in eastern [Gilān](#). The city is located at lat 37°08' N, long 50°18' E, at the place where the Caspian coastal highway crosses the small river Rudsar or Kiārud, 14 km southwest of [Langarud](#). Rudsar is the easternmost district of Gilān and is separated from the province of Māzandarān by the coastal river Miāndehrud, east of Čāboksar. Rudsar district was formerly known as Rānakuh (Chodźko, p. 270; Rabino, pp. 335-81) and encompassed the catchment basin of two major rivers, Šalmānrud and Polrud, and several shorter rivers. The greater part of southern Rānakuh was mountainous, with a northern range divided by the transversal Polrud valley into North Čākrud range to the west (Kuh-e \* Omām, 2,485 m) and East Polrud range to the east (Kuh-e Somāmus, 3,620 m), and a southern range marking the limit with Qazvin province, the North Šāhrud range (Kuh-e KĶorramdašt, 3,329 m).

The center of the district shifted several times, successively from Kutom to Tamijān and to Šufiān (Chodźko, p. 270; Rabino, pp. 335-41), and for a time Langarud, after Langarud had been integrated into Rānakuh in about 1855. The place called “Rood-e Sir” by J. B. Fraser (p. 117) or “Rud-i Sar” by W. R. Holmes was just a big village until it was chosen as the site for a new urban settlement in the framework of the urbanization policy under Reza Shah Pahlavi. Rudsar was taken, together with [Bābolsar](#) in Māzandarān, as a commendable modern city by E. Ehlers (1971, pp. 14, 18-19), who gives a sketch of its central square with administrative buildings on both sides, stores in the extremities, and a green space with a statue of the shah in the middle.



The administrative reform of 1937 gave the new town the status of the seat of a district (*bakš*) within the sub-province (*šahrestān*) of Lāhijān (Digard et al., p. 81). Rudsar district covered the largest part of the former Rānakuh, whereas the western part, corresponding to the catchment area of the Šalmānrud, was bound to Langarud district (see the supplementary map in Razmārā). With the administrative reform of 1961, those two districts of Langarud and Rudsar became were turned into new sub-provinces (*šahrestān*), with an important change in delimitation: the middle and upper parts of the Šalmānrud valley and Amlaš and Kojid subdistricts were integrated into the district of Rudsar (now 1,969 km<sup>2</sup>), whereas the district of Langarud, restricted to a part of the coastal plain, became one of the smallest districts of Gilān. In the administrative reform of 1998 [Amlaš](#) was separated from Rudsar and became a new sub-province (*šahrestān*).

Rudsar sub-province in its present limits (2012) covers 1,369 km<sup>2</sup> and is divided into 4 districts (*bakš*: Markazi, Raḥimābād, Kalāčāy, and Čāboksar) and 10 subdistricts (*dehestān*). Its population (145,376 in 2006; Markaz) is Gilak and speaks Gilaki (see [GILĀN X. LANGUAGES](#)); the Gils of the plains speak the Lāhijāni dialect, and the Gāleš in the uplands speak the Gāleši dialect (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 14 and map 3; Mohebhoseini, pp. 39-46).

In the early 19th century, the coastal plain was covered by mulberry groves (used for silkworm breeding), paddy fields, orchards, and patches of forest with lofty trees (Fraser, p. 117). It has been widely opened to agriculture with the spatial expansion of paddy fields and the introduction of two major cash crops, tea and citrus fruit, mostly on the first slopes of adjacent hills. In 1986 the cultivated area in the lowland covered 20,600 ha, including 8,941 ha of paddies (43 percent), 5,981 ha of tea plantations (29 percent), 1,550 ha of mulberry trees (7.5 percent), and 3,916 ha of citrus trees (19 percent; Balai, p. 107). The natural configuration of this lowland induces a conspicuous dissymmetry between its western and eastern parts: to the west of the Polrud river, the plain is wide and gives the first role to rice cultivation (62 percent of the cultivated area), whereas it reduces to a narrow strip to the east of the Polrud, with only 31 percent of the agricultural land devoted to paddies. The land reform of 1963 resulted in fragmented holdings, with an average of 1.5 hectares of paddy per holding (*idem*, p. 127). Outside of the Safidrud basin, this easternmost part of the Gilān plain could not benefit from the modern irrigation system fed by the Manjil dam, and still suffers from a frequent shortage of water. In the mid 1970s, a dam on the Polrud (ACE) was projected

but not realized. In spite of the modernization of paddy cultivation, studied in detail by M. Mohebhoseini (pp. 154-82, with comparative tables on pp. 179-82), the scarcity of water resources reinforced the relative role of permanent crops, not so much mulberry groves (idem, pp. 147-54) but tea and citrus.

Rudsar and its former subdistrict Amlaš combined rank first in Gilān and the entire country for tea cultivation, even above Lāhijān, the birthplace and hub of tea farming in Iran (Ehlers, 1970). Rudsar's tea farms occupy the lower slopes of the hills in piedmont, up to an altitude of 400 m, especially on the right side of the Polrud, where they covered 36 percent of cultivated land in 1986. The division of labor in tea cultivation is described in details by S. Balai (pp. 201-6) and Mohebhoseini (pp. 127-46). Planting and upkeep are carried out by men, between November and spring, and picking by women, from May to November. This work requires much labor force, which is provided not only by women of the planter's family but also by migrants coming from the mountainous hinterland. The traditional method of tea processing is still observed in a few families in Qāsemābād for domestic consumption, but the greatest part of the green leaves is processed in numerous factories, in Raḥimābād, Vājārgāh, Siāhkalrud, Qāsemābād, and Čāboksar.

The most original produce of Rudsar is citrus (*morakkabāt*), which is cultivated mainly in eastern Rudsar and constitutes 44 percent of the national citrus cultivation (Malekchahi). Rudsar's citrus orchards cover 28 percent of its agricultural land; in Qāsemābād alone there are 811 ha of citrus orchards, constituting 48 percent of its cultivated land (Mohebhoseini, p. 81). Picking the fruit, from December to early spring, attracts many men from the neighboring Gāleš areas but also from remoter places, in the interior of the country, such as 'Ammārlu, Kaḵkāl, and [Ardabil](#).

Animal husbandry is limited in the rice-growing plains, where the Gil peasants raised only oxen for pulling the short plow (*gājema*), horses for carrying crops, and a few cows for domestic dairy consumption. The number of domestic animals has been declining with the mechanization of paddy cultivation; thus, there were in 1986 only some 3,400 head of cattle and 4,000 horses in the plains, compared with 23,500 head of cattle, 110,000 sheep, and 21,000 equids, mainly horses, in the hills and mountains (Balai, p. 208). This activity is in the hands of the Gāleš, who combine pastoral life and rain-fed cultivation of cereals in the mid-altitude villages of Eškevarāt. They still constitute a hierarchized society, with a small number of *sar-gāleš* owning large herds and flocks, a middle class who tend their own animals, and *čupāns*, shepherds



hired by the *sar-gāleš* (Mohebhoseini, pp. 45-46, 206-8). Pastoral migrations are still quite active; in Qāsemābād Mohebhoseini (pp. 201-2) observed in 2004 that they still followed about the same routes and calendar described in the mid-1970s by A. Pourfickoui and M. Bazin (pp. 55-57): cattle herders (*gāleš* in a narrow sense) use two levels, the immediate surrounding of the *maḥalla* in winter and the extensive summer pastures of Jawāherdašt, 40 km to the south at an altitude of 1,700 m, where they arrive in late April and stay until the end of August, when they can bring their livestock to the newly mown paddy fields. Shepherders use three levels: the forest-clad hill slopes behind the villages in winter, Jawāherdašt and similar pastures as an intermediate stage (*nešferudkān*) in spring and autumn, and high pastures (*yeylāq*) of Dāqola (2,300-2,400 m) in summer. More intricate migration patterns can be found, with a *yeylāq* used by *gāleš* and cattle halfway between the *nešferudkān*, and *yeylāq* of *čupān* and sheep (villages around Raḥimābād), or totally distinct intermediate and summer pastures for cattle and sheep (Pourfickoui and Bazin, pp. 60-64).

A significant number of small mountain villages have also permanent inhabitants, who are called *kālāhi*. They grow rain-fed wheat and barley, have tiny orchards of walnut and hazelnut trees, raise cattle and sheep, and supplement their resources by seasonal migrating towards lowlands of Gilān and western Māzandarān—men for picking oranges in winter and women for picking tea leaves in summer.

The main products of animal husbandry are dairy products, from both cow milk and ewe milk through the two traditional operation chains leading respectively to cheese and to yoghurt, butter, and buttermilk, whereas a more recent technique produces butter from the cream of cow milk (Mohebhoseini, pp. 210-27). As for wool and derived crafts, sheep are shorn twice a year, in spring and autumn, and lambs once, in August. Raw wool is either pressed into felt or spun with the spinning wheel and woven\*\* into several kinds of fabrics (Bazin and Bromberger, pp. 64-72 and maps 32-34). Felt makers constitute a well-identified professional group, mainly based in Qāsemābād or in Ākund Maḥalla, a village near Rāmsar in Māzandarān. They either move about to their customers' homes or summer pastures and press felt on the spot, or buy the wool and sell the felt to urban dwellers and tourists. A mountain village in Eškevar-e Soflā, Šavak, has specialized in modeling felt skullcaps from thin felt plates. Wool threads are generally woven in this area with a wooden loom called *pāčāl*, set up above the ground on a rectangular frame, operated by two

pedals, and having two rows of heddles. It is called *čādor-šab* loom by H. Wulff (p. 204), because it is used to weave the *čādor-šab*, a long strip of cloth tied around the waist of women in Gilān and Māzandarān. Qāsemābād is known for its woolen and especially silk *čādor-šabs* (Bazin and Bromberger, pp. 62-63 and plate IX-B) as well as for the women's long, kilted skirts. More generally, there was a significant domestic silk-processing activity in this easternmost part of Gilān, described by Bazin and Bromberger (pp. 60-62 and map 31; see also [ABRIŠAM ii](#)), but the industry has plummeted with the fall of silk production in Gilān since the 1970s; the number of silkworm egg boxes sold to the farmers fell nearly four times during 2000-2007 (see online, "Brief Information about Sericulture Status in Iran," <http://bacs-silk.org/en/iran>).

Whereas commercial activity in the highlands is limited to small centers such as Šu'il, which serves as a summer pasture, the densely populated coastal plain shows a hierarchal network of central places, classified by Balai according to their facilities and commercial offerings (pp. 255-56, 267-83, map on p. 278). He distinguished two levels of rural centers: 29 secondary centers like Siāhkalrud and 11 main centers like Qāsemābād, and above them four small towns in the eastern part, including the three district centers Raḥimābād (with 6994 souls in 2006, a weekly market on Mondays), Kālāčāy (11,304 souls, market on Thursdays), and Čāboksar (7,891 souls), plus Vājārgāh subordinate to Kālāčāy (2,974 souls).

The city of Rudsar, although in a peripheral position close to the northwestern boundary of the sub-province, exerts its influence on the whole sub-province, as well as on the nearby, much smaller Amlaš, which has recently been promoted to become the seat of a new sub-province. Rudsar city has a full set of administrative establishments, a weekly market on Sundays, and an active commercial center. Initially built on the right bank of the Rudsar 2 km upstream of its mouth, the city is expanding towards the seashore and had a population of 33,321 according to 2006 census (Markaz).



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