



## ŞAWMA'Ā SARĀ

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**ŞAWMA'Ā SARĀ**, city and district in western [Gilān](#). The city is located at lat 37°17' N, long 29°19' E, in the Fumanāt plain, at a distance of 25 km to the west of Rašt, the center of the province. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Şawma'ā Sarā was a village with a market and was bound to Fuman and more precisely to the big village and marketplace of Kasmā (Melgunof p. 256; Rabino p. 175; tr., p. 196), which was the center of the [Jangali Movement](#) (1915-20) after the [Constitutional Revolution](#). It was promoted to the rank of center of a *baḳš* (district) under Reżā Shah (r. 1925-41) and subsequently grew into a township with a population of 8,000 souls, a number of government offices, a weekly market on Sundays, and some 250 permanent shops (Razmārā, pp. 180-81). In 1961, it became the center of a new *šahrestān* (sub-provincial district). Although its population has grown rapidly, from 8,439 inhabitants in 1966 to 21,411 in 1986 and 36,522 in 2006, its rather recent accession to urban status and functions can still be seen in its structure. Its commercial activity is distributed in a linear pattern along five axes forming a star-like design, and administrative buildings are scattered all around (Bazin, 1980a, II, p. 179).

The former *baḳš* that turned into the new *šahrestān* had been constituted from pieces of three traditional territorial units of Gilān: Gaskar to the west, Tulam to the northeast, and Fuman to the southeast. It covers 618 km<sup>2</sup>, a relatively small area with a high density of population: 210 persons/km<sup>2</sup> in 2006 for a total population of 129,870 and 136 persons/km<sup>2</sup> in the rural areas. In 1996, the *šahrestān* was divided in three *baḳš*, namely, Markazi, Tulam, and Mirzā Kuček-e Jangali. Markazi includes the three *dehestāns* (subdistrict) of Kasmā,



Ṭāher Gurāb, and Žiābar; Tulam includes the two *dehestāns* of Tulam *stricto sensu* and Hendekāla, and its center Marjaḡal (or Jom'ē Bāzār-e Marjaḡal), on account of its active Friday market, claims now the appellation of Tulamšahr (6,795 inhabitants in 2006); Mirzā Kuček-e Jangali includes the two *dehestāns* of Gurāb Zarmaḡ (the center of the *baḡš* with 4,183 inhabitants in 2006) and Markia. The appellation Mirzā Kuček-e Jangali was adopted in memory of Mirzā Kuček Khan Jangali, the leader of the Jangali Movement, like that of Sardār-e Jangal designating the *baḡš* of Māsula. These two names have been adopted in 1996, when the new administrative division was implemented.

The greatest part of the *šahrestān* belongs to the plain of Gilān, and its population is almost totally Gilak, with some Kurdish families settled in villages close to the Mordāb-e Anzali, such as Şufiāndeh and Gāz Giša. The only exception is the *dehestān* of Gurāb Zarmaḡ, which corresponds to the valley of one branch of the Palangrud River deeply cut in Ṭāleš mountains. Its mainly Ṭāleš inhabitants used to combine rice cultivation and sericulture in the valley and pastoral migrations with their herds of cattle and sheep.

The main activity of Gilak peasants is rice cultivation. Paddy fields benefit from modern irrigation networks fed by the canal of Fumanāt (SOGREAH-COTHA), which have completed and partially replaced the traditional use of local reservoirs (called *estaḡr* in Persian and *sal* in Gilaki and Ṭāleši). The density of paddy barns in the hamlets, which are found only around Žiābar and mostly have the shape of long rectangular buildings called *kuruḡ* rather than of the high *kuti* perched on strong pilings (Bazin and Bromberger, 1982, pp. 25-28 and map no. 12; for the photograph of a barn in Žiābar, see Sahami, p. 49, pl. 4B), and the presence of rice-husking factories in almost every village show the importance of this crop.

In the past, the ancient scarcity of water resources had left a significant portion of the place to three pluvial crops that have kept some importance. The culture of tobacco was introduced in Gilān in 1875 by Estepan Haroutounian, an American physician practicing in Rašt, in response to the decline of sericulture in that time (Sahami, p. 61; Kešāvarz, p. 103). After the cancellation of the monopoly given by Nāşer-al-Din Shah to a British company in consequence of the boycott successfully launched by religious leaders in 1891-92 (Keddie; Faḡrā'i, pp. 131-33), the market of tobacco in Gilān was distributed among a number of small private companies, until the creation of a state monopoly (*enḡeşār-e doḡāniāt*) by Reżā Shah in 1929. The *šahrestān* of Şawma'ā Sarā contains a concentration of the largest tobacco plantations of

Gilān and the largest production, with four local tobacco agencies (*doḳāniāt*) in Jom'a Bāzār (Marjaḡal), Şawma'a Sarā, Kasmā, and Ṭāher Gurāb (Bazin, 1980b, pp. 126-29). The main tobacco plantation area extends between the road from Jom'a Bāzār to Kasmā and the vicinity of the Mordāb-e Anzali.

Tea plantations, introduced after 1910, became predominant between Şawma'a Sarā and Fuman and have their production processed in two state factories located in those two cities. The production of tea suffered a hard crisis after 2000, subsequent to the liberalization of tea market, which resulted in a dramatic fall of prices and the end of financial support to tea-planters, as Céline Allaverdian (pp. 67-78) observed in the district of Şaft.

The third activity, silk production, was the main commercial production of Gilān as a whole until the mid-19th century (see [ABRIŞAM](#)). Many authors, like A. B. Chodzko (1850, III, pp. 70-74), have given detailed descriptions of the techniques of silkworm breeding and silk production, and Melgunof (p. 256) provided a long list of villages of the Fumanāt plain, mostly bound nowadays to Şawma'a Sarā, together with the silk production of each. But the spread of the pebrine disease of caterpillars in the 1860s resulted in a sharp decline of sericulture. The introduction of eggs from either Japan or Bursa in Turkey allowed a first period of renewal of sericulture in Gilān in the early 20th century, but the present distribution of mulberry groves and sericulture in the province dates back to a new expansion phase in the 1970s. The western part of Şawma'a Sarā is the first production area of western Gilān, with three agencies of the Sericulture Administration (Edāra-ye Nawḡān wa Kerm-e Abrişam) in Ṭāher Gurāb, Kasmā, and Şawma'a Sarā. The silkworm nurseries (*tilambar*) are here rectangular buildings of latticework supported by two rows of posts and covered with a two-slope, thatch roof, located in the residential compounds. The cocoons are sold to the Sericulture Administration that pulls the silk yarn in its cocoon-handling factory in Rašt or gives it to merchants who take them to other regions (Bazin and Bromberger, 1982, pp. 57-60). This activity, however, has entered into a new phase of decline in the 2000s; the total number of silkworm egg boxes sold to the farmers in Gilān as a whole has fallen from 203,599 in 2000 to 55,180 in 2007 (Black, Caspian Seas and Central Asia Silk Association).

Animal husbandry in the plain is limited to cattle and horses. Traditionally, every family raised one ox for pulling the short plow (*kāvāl*) that was used in paddy fields (Bazin and Bromberger, 1982, pp. 18-24 and map no. 6), one or two horses for carrying paddy sheaves and other crops and materials, and a



few cows for domestic consumption of milk and derived products. The marshy southern bank of the Mordāb-e Anzali offers extensive green pastureland which allowed the development of two specific forms of stock-raising (Pour-Fickoui and Bazin, pp. 7-8, 16-21). On the one hand, Kurdish families in Şufiāndeh and Gāz Giša are the only people in the area to raise buffaloes, although these animals love the muddy meadows surrounding the Mordāb. They are recognized as “buffalo specialists” by their Gilak neighbors. On the other hand, Siāh Darvišān and Hendekāla offer the most extensive group of green, humid pastures in Gilān with respectively 2,200 ha and 500 ha. Called *qoroq*, these preserved grazing lands in the 1970s attracted horizontal summer migration of cattle and horses from eighteen villages located at various distances to the west or south. Oxen were generally sent to these *qoroq* between the end of plowing and harrowing paddy fields and the end of harvest-time, which gave animals the opportunity to return home in order to eat paddy stalks remaining in the fields. Horses were sent for shorter periods according to the needs of transport, whereas milk cows were kept at home for providing daily family consumption. Even after the nationalization of grazing lands in 1963, cattle-owners had to pay the *qoroqbān* who looked after their livestock. The frequenting of such pastures must have decreased with the spread of mechanization; the small tillers who used both to plow the fields and to draw small trailers have replaced a great number of their oxen and horses.

As a whole, the district of Şawma'a Sarā remains a deeply rural area, despite submitting to the strong influence of the provincial capital Rašt.

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