



TAFT

TAFT, town and district in Yazd province. The town is located 20 km southwest of Yazd, on the road to [Abarquh](#), at an altitude of 1,560 m. The district, formerly known as Piškuh, is an arid piedmont consisting of the rural districts of Piškuh, Šurkuh, ‘Aliābād, Našrābād, Dehšir, Bonādkuk, Zardin, Saḳvid, Garizāt, and Kahdu’iya (Razmārā, *Farhang* X, p. 48; Mošāḥab, p. 650; Ja’fari, p. 293).

An early mention of Taft is found in the 15th century; it was known for its pleasant climate, water, and produce, especially pomegranates and grapes. A dry riverbed, flooded seasonally, bisected the town into two rivaling quarters, Garmsir and Sardsir, with a Friday mosque in the former (Kāteb, pp. 214-27). Taft was home to the 15th-century mystical leader Shah Ne‘matallāh Walī, who built a *kānaqāh* there (Afšār, I, p. 412); his offspring built other structures (Bāfqi, pp. 685-88). The tomb of Ne‘matallāh’s great-grandson, Shah Ḳalilallāh Tāni, whose corpse was carried to Taft from Herat, is still revered by the locals (Afšār, I, pp. 414-16). There is a cave near Taft, mentioned by several travelers (e.g. Khanikoff, tr. pp. 219-20), inside which there is a waterhole that has been the subject of fascination and myth for the natives. Another landmark is a lofty waterfall nearby.

The township of Taft (designated a village until recently) has retained part of its traditional form, and constructions from as early as the 15th century can still be seen. These point to a period of economic prosperity that lasted until the end of Safavid rule. There is no indication that Taft was walled at any point in its history, suggesting a predominant farming community. However,



there were several forts and watchtowers in the area, probably built during the Qajar period (Afšār, I, p. 423).

Following the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, which affected the district only some years later, a rebellion broke out in Taft, led by Ostād Moḥammad Bannā, who, together with his armed bandits, briefly took over the government seat in Yazd. The rebellion was promptly suppressed in September 1911 by Prince Amir A'zam, causing Moḥammad Bannā to flee back to Taft (Ṭāheri, p. 83).

The population of the district remained low until recently. It was estimated at 14,100 souls in 1938 (Ṭāheri, p. 28). The town's population, 6,451 as of 1956 (Ministry of the Interior, 1956, XIV, p. 1), did not grow significantly in two decades, probably due to emigration. In those years the literacy rate was at 26 percent (idem, p. 23), a relatively high number that continued to climb in subsequent decades. The population of the town doubled in the first post-Revolutionary decade, and continued to rise, concomitant with the claimed economic growth caused by the implantation of various industries and a college.

As are the neighboring districts, Taft has long been a home to Zoroastrians. In the 19th century, consul Abbott (Amanat, 1983, pp. 104-05, 137-39, 198) and N. Khanikoff (tr. p. 218) reported that the Zoroastrians were repressed, although they had a fire temple in their quarter north of Taft. As a religious minority, Zoroastrians were obliged to wear distinctive yellowish robes, a signifier of shame (Browne, pp. 394-96). Only a few Zoroastrian families still live in the town, while the villages Zaynābād, Čam, and Mobāraka were mainly occupied by Zoroastrians until recently.

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