



TĀLEŠ DISTRICT

TĀLEŠ (Ṭāleš) **DISTRICT**, Gilān. The Tāleš region altogether stretches north from the [Safidrud](#), which cuts through the western Alborz mountains in western Gilān, to the the Araxes-Kura (see [ARAXES RIVER](#)) plain in the south of the Republic of Azarbaijan; there it includes the districts of Āstārā, Lenkarān, Lerik, Yardymly, Masally, and Jelilābād, with the exception of the small subdistrict of 'Anbarān located on the western side of the mountain chain in the province of [Ardabil](#). The region is inhabited by an ethnic group speaking *tāleši*, one of the northwestern Iranian languages. The present author took the use of a single term, Tāleš, to designate both a geographical entity (toponym) and an ethnic group (ethnonym) as a starting point of his study (Bazin, 1974) of this area, focusing on the links between ethnic identities and regional geography, a rather rare feature in the Iranian world (Bazin, 1980a).

A comprehensive article on Tāleš as a whole, describing its general characteristics and including the northern part, will be published online; the districts belonging partially or totally to Gilān (e.g., Asālem, Āstārā, Fuman, Māsāl, Māsula, Rezwānšahr, Šama'a Sara, Šaft) are treated in detail in individual articles. The district that now bears the official name of Tāleš is presented below.

Present-day Ṭāleš District. Since the administrative reform of 1998, when Rezwānšahr and Māsāl were assigned the rank of *šahrestān*, the name Tāleš officially designates the remaining part of the former Ṭavāleš or later Tāleš district, that is, its former central part (*baḡš-e markazi*), corresponding to the ancient khanates of Asālem and Kargānrud (see Chodzko, pp. 263-64;



Häntzsche, pp. 27-29, 50-54; Melgunof, pp. 273-75; Rabino, p. 89-136). The former *dehestān* of Asālem has become a *bakš* with three *dehestāns* (Asālem, Kāla Sarā, and Kārjagil), that of Kargānrud-e Janubi now comprises the Markazi *bakš* (*dehestāns* of Tulārud, Jowkandān-e Sāheli, and Kuhestāni-e Tāleš), and that of Kargānrud-e Šomāli has been divided into two *bakš* of Kargānrud (*dehestāns* of Lisār and Koṭba Sarā) and Ḥaviq (*dehestān* of Ḥaviq and Čubar).

The district encompasses the catchment basins of Nāvruđ, Kargānrud, Rud-e Hara Dašt and a number of smaller rivers to the north. The cultural features of its population mark the transition between the traditional *tāleši*-speaking and Sunnite core of Tāleš, to which Asālem belongs, and the turkicized and “Shi’itized” northern area (with the exception of Vizna valley, which is still totally *tāleši*-speaking and Sunnite). Christian Bromberger has pointed out the peaceful coexistence between the Sunnite and Shi’ite communities, marked by common pilgrimages, for instance, to the mausoleum of Šāh Milarzān on a hill above Koṭba Sarā (for this shrine, see Sotuda, pp. 39-42; *Ketāb-e Gilān* II, pp. 570), and mixed marriages. The narrow coastal fringe is devoted to rice paddies with some tobacco fields around Jowkandān and Kašli (Bazin, 1980b) and various orchards, and the mountain area has kept a significant agricultural activity with wheat and barley fields together with intensive pastoral life. Complex migratory patterns consist of simple movements of paddy-growers, who take their cattle to one single summer pasture, such as in Kāla Sarā (Pourfickoui and Bazin, pp. 33-35), and movements of specialized stock raisers with a greater mobility, using up to five different pastoral levels for their cattle and sheep, as in the valley of Lomir (Pourfickoui and Bazin, pp. 62-65). This seasonal rush of population to the mountains gives a flourishing activity to summer bazaars in the villages of Nāv and Āq Evlar and the summer pastures of Aspā Huni along the Asālem-Kalkāl road and Subātān above Lisār (Bazin, 1977; idem, et al.).

The permanent commercial centers are all located along the Anzali-Āstārā main road, which carries the important traffic of long-distance travel buses (Ardabil-Rašt or Ardabil-Tehran) and local minibuses. The most important locations have been designated as *bakš* centers: Ḥaviq in the north (1,237 inhabitants in 2,006), Lisār north of Haštpar (2,500 inhabitants) and Asālem in the south (3,347 inhabitants), with a considerable sawmill nearby in Kālifa-ābād-e Asālem. All these centers are dominated by Haštpar, which has rapidly grown as the district center (41,486 inhabitants in 2006; see [HAŠTPAR](#)). Thus

the urban population reaches a total of 48,669 inhabitants out of a total population of 178,803 in 2006, that is, only 27.2 percent (Markaz-e āmār, 2006).

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