APPENDIX SEVEN

FÁRS AND SHÍRÁZ

Iran has had a long, rich, and complex history—a history comprising many cycles of expansions, invasions, revivals, survivals, and reversals of fortune. From the very beginning, the history of Iran has been inexorably tied to the Province of Fárs. The Iranian-speaking Aryan tribes first came to northern Fárs in the middle Paleolithic period; later the valleys of the Kur and Pulwar Rivers became their centers and remained so until the time of the Sassanid Dynasty in the seventh century AD.

Cyrus the Great founded the Achaemenian Dynasty (559–330BC) in Fárs, and his son Darius the Great (reigned 522–486BC) built Persepolis where the Pulwar flows into the Kur on the plain of Marv-Dasht. The nucleus of their Empire was called Persis and had its seat in the royal cities of Pasargadae and Persepolis. The kings of Achaemenian were wise and benevolent, ruling their empire for 229 years until Alexander the Macedonian founded the Seleucid Dynasty (311BC), spreading all across Iran, where he founded many new towns in the Párs (Fárs) region. Párs was part of this dynasty until the period of Antioukhous IV. After the Parthians liberated the central parts of the Seleucid Empire, Párs became an independent state.

Another town on the banks of the Pulwar, called Istakhr in the Middle Ages, was the focal point of the Sassanian Dynasty (224–651, founded by Ardishir Babakan). Other cities of Fárs, such as Shíráz, Fasá, Siraf, and Arrajan, later outshone Istakhr in terms of size and significance. Coins found in the region as early as 250BC have imprints of Pahlaví scripts with Iranian figures and Zoroastrian braziers.

Muslim Arabs first invaded Iran during the reign of ʿUmar, the second caliph. The people of Fárs displayed much bravery in face of the invading Arabs and in 638 defeated the Ibn Hazrami forces. In spite of Iranian resistance, ultimately towns in Fárs submitted to the Muslims and by force were converted to Islam.

In the tenth century, at the time of the caliphate’s weakness, Fárs was overtaken by Yaʿqūb Laís, the founder of the Saffarian Dynasty, and Shíráz became their capital. Yaʿqūb’s brother constructed the city’s Jum’ih mosque. Subsequently, Fárs fell into the hands of the next set of rulers, Al-i Buyih and Siljukians. And with the demise of the latter, Ibn Mudúd
established Atábakan Dynasty in the province and ruled until 1149 when
the Mongols invaded the entire region.

In 1353, the Al-i Muzafar Dynasty came to power in Fārs and ruled
until 1490. With the founding of the Safavid Dynasty at the beginning
of the sixteenth century, the entire country, including Fārs, was compelled
to adopt Shiʿi sect of Islam.

In short, throughout history, Fārs flourished and waned according to
the fortunes of the ruling party. Often Shíráz served as various monarchs’
capital, but eventually power, money, and influence shifted to the north-
ernerly cities of Tihrán and Isfahán. Fārs nevertheless remained a significant
commercial and cultural center. Today, its capital, Shíráz, is not only the
bustling hub of commerce for the Fārs region but also one of the most
industrialized cities in Iran. It is a major destination for tourists who
appreciate historical sites and art centers and who wish to pay homage
at the tombs of the poets Saʿdí and Háfiz.

Several nomadic ethnic groups, including the Qashqáʾís, Buyír-Ahmadís,
Lurs, Khamsih, and Kuh-Kiluyih, continue to inhabit Fārs. Nomads typi-
cally spend summers on the high plateaus and move south to the Persian
Gulf in winter to search for pastures for their herds; others spend winters
in a city. These groups represent not only an economic mode of produc-
tion but also a lifestyle that has strong cultural and traditional roots in
many parts of Iran.551

At the present, Fārs remains one of the largest Iranian provinces, with an
area of 133,294 square kilometers. In 1998, this province had a population
of 4.2 million people of whom 42% resided in rural areas and the rest
were urban settlers. It is a region with great historical significance.

Geography and Climate of Fārs

The Zagros mountain chain crosses the province from the northwest
towards the southeast, dividing the province into two distinct parts.
The first is located in the north-northwest, while the second is located
in the south-southeast area of the province, and both are mountainous
highlands. The north part starts from Semirum elevations and ends south
of Ábádih, at the point called Kuh ‘Azimat, and its arduous pass. The
southern part consists of the highlands of the Shíráz area, including the

551 Readers interested in further materials on Fārs should consult: Barthold, An Histori-
cal Geography of Iran.