NOTES ON THE NEW IRANIAN TOPONOMASTICS
(THE ELEMENT -bûr)

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The concentration of the place-names with the formant -bûr can be found in the central areas of western Iran, namely the plain(s) between the Bisutun, Ravansar, Pave, Sar-e Pol, Gilan and Chardavul rivers, running parallel on both sides of the so-called “Great Khorasan Road”,1 which started in the west at approximately the “Zagros Gates” and passed through Kirind, Kermanshah, Kangavar and Bisutun, to Hamadan and further.

An over-spill of such toponomy was also encountered in the neighbouring regions of Luristan and Azerbaijan, as well as on two traditional routes through the Alborz Mountain passes, that of Qizil-uzun/Sefid-rud, and Firuz-kuh. Another concentration of the geographical names with -bûr was found in the Amol- Sari region. Very few or no such place-names were found in the southwest, south, southeast, east, or in the central regions of Iran.

There are also many other towns and villages with a possible association with -bûr, such as the following: Bûrân and Burân (two different plurals of -bûr); Bûrak “little Bur”; Bûrakân, Bûrakî, Bûrî, Bûr-savâr “a rider on a grey (horse)” (in Dizful Bur-suvar is applied to the “Lurs who ride grey horses”); Hazâr-bûrân “thousand Burs”; Tapé-ye Bûr “hill (of the) Bur”; Bûrbûr-tapé “Bûrbûr hill”; Bûrî-mulk “Bur property/town”; Dih-i-Bûr, Dih-i- bûrê, Dih-i-bûra, all meaning “village (of the) Bur”; Bûr-mahala “Bur neighbourhood”, Bûr-xânt “spring of Bur”; Bûr-sar “head of Bur, or situated at the head of the river Bur”; Pišân-bûr, or Pišân-Bûr “anciently/ previously Bur”, etc.

Historical evidence of the existence of the formant -bûr may also be found in Mesopotamia: the city of Xa-bûr, situated on the river of the same name,2 at the confluence of the river Xa-bûr with the Euphrates.

Further to the above, fifteen locations bearing the tribal name of Bûrbûr (probably, the reduplication of -bûr) exist in present-day Iran:

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1 Also variously named the Silk Road or the High Road. See L. D. Levine, “East-West Trade in the Late Iron Age: A View from the Zagros”, Le plateau iranien et l’Asie centrale des origines à la conquête islamique, ed. J. Deshayes (Colloque CNRS) (Paris, 1977): 171-186.

2 Believed to have been built by the Sasanian Emperor Kavad (first reign 488-496 AD, second reign 498-531 AD); see Hamdullah Mustawfi-i-Qazvvilii-, The Târîx-i-GuzIda (compiled 1330 AD/730 AH), ed. E. G. Browne (Leyden-London, 1910), 1: 115; ed. ‘Abdol-Hoseyn Nava’i (Teheran, [1983]/[1362]): 116.

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Iran and the Caucasus, 6. 1-2