

Babolsar, a coastal city with a charming river in northern Iran



● itto.org

On the way to Mazandaran Province from Tehran, the winding road which snakes around the mountain brings you to the land of the sea. Humid air, paddy fields, intact forests, and nice, pure people call you. No one can know Mazandaran Province merely by photos. You have to pick up your backpack and leave freely for the land in order to understand the beauty of the northernmost province of Iran.

At the end of the road, coming down a hill, the humidity is the first thing to greet you. You sense that you are approaching your destination. The road turns green and, sudden-

● mazbus.com

ly, you find yourself in the middle of a forest, in Ziran, com wrote.

On the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, Babolsar is bordered by Babol in the south, Juybar in the east, and Fereydunkenar in the west. The city has humid subtropical climate, with warm summers and cool, humid winters.

Babolsar was formerly known as Mashhadsar (the way to Mashhad) because



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the only road connecting the northwest of Iran to the city of Mashhad in the northeast passed through the city.

The founder of the Safavid Dynasty, Shah Abbas I (1571-1629 CE), is said to have visited the city twice and written about the many ships docked at its pier waiting for the right time to set sail. During the

Qajar era (1781-1925 CE) the city served as a port for the market town, Babol. From Babolsar goods such as cotton, silk and rice were transported to Russia, and Russian goods were brought back to Iran. The city lost its status as a commercial port when Anzali Port in Gilan Province gained more popularity. Babolsar is a city with a

charming river, crowded with fishing and recreational boats. In fact, the main part of the city is located along this river. Walking alongside the river, you can see old buildings of the city built in Russian style.

Modern buildings are vis-



● IRNA

ible next to the ancient ones. Local people have tried to preserve the antique style of the city's bazaar. Many farmers and fishermen bring their products here to sell. People with dark skin and sweet accents tell you everything you want to know

about the town. At the end of the river, you reach the Caspian Sea. The confluence of the river and the sea creates an inimitable scene of which one should have first-hand experience. The city is full of beautiful stylish coastal villas, which are so gorgeous that you will imagine for a moment that you have traveled to Spain. These villas are for rent, and everyone can enjoy the sea and the beach. The city is popular because of its many hotels and villas as well as Darya Kenar town, located five kilometers from Babolsar, where many Iranians vacation.

Significance of water in ancient Iran



Euphrates River
● JOEL CARILLET/GETTY IMAGES

In the era of Achaemenid, the Imperial government of Iran extended from Black Sea and Mediterranean to Persian Gulf, Indus Rivers and Caspian Sea. And the people of those lands were the sovereignty of Iranian government. Obviously, in such an extensive territory there were many military expeditions in order to suppress opponents and rebels. Those events have been written down in the texts of civilization history of middle and Near East. Besides the roads and bridges, some of the Iranian military expeditions had some marine strategy aspects, two of which are mentioned in brief as the following:

Babylonia fall

Cyrus the Great was the founder of Iran extensive imperial and the progenitor of Achaemenid dynasty. During Cyrus monarchy, Iranian civil and military affairs were unique and the army was

the strongest one in those days.

The Kings of Babylonia, Syria and Egypt were trying to stop the progression of young Iranian imperium, and united against Cyrus. But the Iranian army defeated them at last. Occupying Syria and Asia Minor, Cyrus moved toward his major enemy, the government of Babylonia and surrounded their city, which had very strong towers and seemed unconquerable. The city was located near the Euphrates River and Bagdad. After surrounding, Iranian army's engineers excavated a diversion canal to divert the river. The Babylonia's guards watched the Iranian and made fun of them. One night when the people of Babylonia celebrated one of their festivals, the army diverted the river through the new pass.

Consequently, the water level in the Euphrates dropped and soldiers crossed the river and oc-

cupied the city. And Babylonia government was overthrown.

Belsazar, the king of Babylonia was killed that night. Heinrich Heine, the famous German poet described the celebration in a satirical poem.

So the fall of Babylonia which was impossible by land; the victory came true by the engineers and experts thought and genius.

Waterway between Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea

After Cyrus the Great, his successors were his son Cambyses (529 to 522 BCE), Usurper Gaumata and finally Darius the Great (523 to 486 BC) who ruled in Iran Empire. Darius the Great ordered to connect the Red Sea to Mediterranean Sea by a canal. He decided to complete the project by the year of 517 BCE. Unfortunately, he was compelled to leave Egypt in order to vanquish the rebels,

so he couldn't succeed in this huge historical project. The reason why he couldn't complete the project wasn't the lack of technical ability. In fact, there were many other duties in the country, which caused him not to follow the aim.

But it should be remarked that the idea of excavation the Suez Canal was taken from his thought. When Cape of Good Hope was discovered as a waterway from Europe to India in 1498 CE, the thought of the Suez Canal between Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea came to a new and serious era. The excavation of the project got more serious by German philosopher Leibniz, Napoleon the Great and Meternikh the famous commander (1848 CE). Finally, this great project was designed and executed by Negrellis and supervised by F. Lessep during the years of 1859 to 1869 AD. It was inaugurated on Nov. 17, 1869.



Aerial view of the Suez Canal
● wikipedia.org

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled "The Strategic Structures", from a book entitled, "Water and Irrigation Techniques in Ancient Iran", written by Gholam Reza Kuros and Majid Labbaf Khaneiki, published by Iranian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.