



East Azerbaijan Province is one of the 31 provinces of Iran. It is located in Iranian Azerbaijan, bordering with Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Ardabil Province, West Azerbaijan Province, and Zanjan Province. The capital of East Azerbaijan is Tabriz. East Azerbaijan Province is in Regions 3 of Iran, with its secretariat located in its capital city, Tabriz.

Geography

The province covers an area of approximately 47,830 km²; it has a population of around four million people. The province has common borders with the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Autonomous Nakhchivan in the north, West Azerbaijan in the west, Zanjan in the South, and Ardabil in east. A fine network of roads and railways connect East Azerbaijan to other parts of Iran and also to neighboring countries.

The highest point in East Azerbaijan is the volcanic peak of Sahand Mountain at 3,707 m (12,162 ft) of elevation, lying south of Tabriz, whereas the lower lying areas are around Garmadouz (Ahar). The hills and mountains of the province are divided into three ranges: the Qara Daq Mountains, the Sahand and Bozqoosh Mountains, and the Qafan Mountains.

Climate of East Azerbaijan is affected by Mediterranean Continental as well as cold semi-arid climate. Gentle breezes off the Caspian Sea have some influence on the climate of the low-lying areas. Temperatures run up to 8.9 °C in Tabriz, and 20 °C in Maraqeh, in the winter dropping to -10 to -15 °C at least (depending on how cold the overall year is). The ideal seasons to visit this province are in the spring and summer months.

History

East Azerbaijan is one of the most archaic territories in Iran. During the reign of Alexander of Macedon in Iran (331 BCE), a warrior known as Attorpat led a revolt in this area, then a territory of the Medes, and thereafter it was called Attorpatkan. Since then this vicinity has been known as Azarabadegan, Azarbadgan and Azarbayjan.

Islamic researchers proclaim that the birth of the prophet Zoroaster was in this area, in the vicinity of Lake Orumieh (Chichesht), Konzak City. Needless to say, this province was subject to numerous political and economical upheavals, attracting the interest of foreigners. The Russians in particular have tried to exert a lasting influence in the region over the past 300 years, occupying the area on numerous occasions. The constitutionalist movement of Iran began here in the late 19th century.

Ethnic tensions in Azerbaijan can legally trace their origins back to the colonialist policies of Imperial Russia and later the Soviet Union. In a cable sent on 6 July 1945 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the local Soviet commander in Russian (northern) held Azerbaijan was instructed as such:

Begin preparatory work to form a national autonomous Azerbaijan district with broad powers within the Iranian state and simultaneously develop separatist movements in the provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran, Gorgan, and Khorasan".[4]

In 1945, the Soviet Union helped set up the Azerbaijan People's Government in what is now East Azerbaijan.

Administrative divisions

At the 1986 census there were twelve counties in East Azerbaijan Province. By the 1996 census two additional counties had been formed, Jolfa from part of Marand, and Malekan from part of Bonab. Between 1996 and 2002, five new counties were formed: Ajabshir, Azarshahr, Charoimaq, Osku, and Varzaqan.[5] In 2010 Kalibar was split in half with the northern part becoming Khoda Afarin, while the southern part kept the name Kalibar.