CHAPTER X

POPULATION REGIONS

The preceding chapters presented a systematic geographic analysis of various aspects of Iran's population. Striking regional differences were observed in respect of each element: distribution and density, sex ratio, literacy, occupational structure and urbanization. The spatial patterns of various population elements were not without a fair degree of correspondence with each other. For an understanding of the total demographic character of an area, it is essential to examine these elements in integration. This is possible through division of the area into population regions, each region having similarity and unity of population conditions.

A fundamental problem in the delineation of population regions is the choice of suitable criteria. Any regionalization of population has to be based on population characteristics themselves. Among the various population attributes, its distribution and density are of fundamental importance as these unfold the interplay of the multitude of economic, cultural and physical factors. The degree of urbanization and the rates of literacy indicate the stage of socio-economic development the area has attained. The ethnic and linguistic composition has its own significance in cultural terms. The occupational structure
of a population is an index to the type of economy. The mobility patterns in terms of migration, transhumance, and nomadism give an idea about the balance or imbalance between the population and resources in different parts of a region. Thus, the above mentioned population elements can be adopted as criteria for determining the population regions of Iran.

Another problem that faces the task of regional division is to fix the order of importance of the various population attributes taken as criteria. Since the relative importance of the various elements of population varies from place to place, it would depend upon an individual geographer as to what he considers the most proper order of criteria for the area he is studying. In the case of Iran, distribution and density of population has been found to be the most vital. The ethnic composition of population, particularly the language or dialect they speak, was identified as the criterion of next importance. The third place went to migration and mobility patterns. The degree of urbanization, diversification of occupational structure and literacy rates followed in that order. The role of sex ratio as an area differentiating element was found of secondary importance.

The next problem relates to the determination of boundaries of the population regions. For this purpose, 

\[1\] In the absence of data on language and dialect, this statement is based upon empirical observation.
maps showing regional patterns of various population elements were superimposed upon each other. Areas having similarity in population characteristics were identified and their boundaries drawn by subjective judgment. A consistent quantitative application of the criteria selected was found difficult in practice. A recourse was taken to empirical approximations in arriving at the boundaries of the regions. It may not be out of place to refer to the dictum that a regional division is not an end itself; it is only a means toward the goal of understanding the variable character of the earth's surface.

Accordingly, Iran was found divisible into the following fifteen population regions, each with its own distinctive demographic character (Map 77):

1. Caspian Coastlands
2. Azarbaijan Region
3. Talesh-Alborz Region
4. Northeast Iran
5. Tehran Region
6. Northern Zagros
7. Southern Zagros
8. Dasht-e-Kavir
9. Dasht-e-Lut
10. Kerman Region
11. Eastern Rim Land
12. Sistan Basin
13. Baluchestan
14. Makran Region
15. Persian Gulf Coastlands

A brief description of each of the regions follows:

1. Caspian Coastlands

Accommodating one-eighth of Iran's population on only 3 per cent of its area, the Caspian Coastlands are the most densely populated part of the country. It has a density of 65 persons per sq. km, which is four times the national average. The reasons for this lie in a long history of human settlement, an intensive agriculture in rice and other crops, and a fair degree of industrial development. The region was also lucky in having escaped most of the invasions from outside, thanks to the shield of Alborz mountains on its back. Population went on steadily growing under stable conditions.

A settled way of life has been traditional to this area. The rural population is distributed in loosely knit villages, each comprising of a number of dispersed hamlets. This pattern has resulted from the historical process of settlement under which land was brought under cultivation piece by piece at different times. Hence, there are
differences in systems of land ownership and methods of cultivation within the same village. The fact of the matter is that the entire region is densely but discontinuously populated. About 60 per cent of the population derives its livelihood from primary activities like agriculture, fishing and forestry.

With nearly one-fourth of its population in towns, the Caspian Coastlands are only moderately urbanized. The urban places are numerous and closely spaced. Most of them are agricultural markets, some are industrial centres and a few are tiny ports. The industrial towns are marked by dominance of agro-based industries, such as cotton textiles, rice milling, tea processing, fruit canning and vegetable oil manufacturing. The prominent industrial centres include Resht, Chalus, Shahi, Behshahr and Gorgan.

With moderate degree of urbanization, literacy rates are comparatively high. More than one-fourth of the population was recorded as literate as compared with about one-fifth in the whole country. The region had a long tradition in learning due to its consistent contact with other countries throughout the history.

The region is not without its population problems. The most outstanding problem has been the increasing pressure of population on the land resources. It caused sizable
out-migration especially to the Tehran region. Since the out-migration was male-selective, sex ratio became relatively high, around 950. The median age dropped to about 16 years as migration was selective of young adults. Attempts are under way to accelerate industrialization and reclamation of agricultural wastelands to check outflow of people from this area.

2. **Azarbaijan Region**

This region includes the whole of the East and West Azarbaijan ostan as well as parts of Kordestan ostan and Zanjan fermandarikol. Due to its geographical contiguity with Turkey and the rule of Turks over this area in the past, most of the people in the region are Turkish speaking. This feature provides a kind of psychological unity to the region which is otherwise so diverse from the physical point of view. It is essentially a mosaic of a number of river basins and its topography consists of a series of highly dissected plateaus. In spite of the topographic handicaps, the region is one of the most densely populated parts of the country. Its density of 40 persons per sq.km. is two and a half times the national average. This is associated with intensive agriculture which is attributed to abundant supply of water from the various streams, relatively high amount of precipitation and presence of
fertile volcanic soils in local areas. Nearly two-thirds of the total population depends upon agriculture.

In its distribution, population is concentrated in comparatively lowland areas along the drainage lines. The presence of the water points and shelter from strong winds are the main considerations in the location of human settlements. The rural settlements are mostly in the form of compact villages. With nearly one-fourth of its population living in towns, the region is moderately urbanized. Most of the towns evolved along the traditional routes which connected this area with neighbouring countries of Turkey, Iraq and the Soviet Union. Tabriz, the regional heart of this area, well illustrates this point. Enjoying a nodal position on the ancient east-west routes, it has always held a prominent position in international trade, defence and political life of the country.

Out-migration has been a salient feature of the population geography of this region. This was necessitated by increasing population pressure on the cultivated land. Towns of the region had little to offer in terms of employment opportunities due to lack of industrial development. The people had to migrate to other areas, particularly Tehran, in search of avenues of livelihood. The enterprising nature of the people, partly a product of their constant
contact with other countries, also favoured the process of migration. Thus, the region requires more intensive development so as to create new employment opportunities and to spread education.

3. Talesh-Alborz Region

Lying to the south of the densely populated Caspian lowlands, the Talesh-Alborz region presents a contrast by the sparseness of its population. The entire area is hilly and mountainous having an elevation of about 2,000 metres to more than 3,000 metres. It is only along the valleys of the various streams that some pockets of cultivable land are available and human settlements strung. Settlements are in the form of compact villages built near or around a spring or some other accessible water point. The compactness of the settlements is explained not merely by the factor of proximity to a water resource but also by considerations of protection against wild animals which abound in this area. This type of settlement also provides a greater scope of social interaction in an otherwise sparsely populated region.

Within the Talesh-Alborz region, the northern slopes are more populated than the southern. They account for nearly three-fourths of the total population. This is attributed to a higher amount of precipitation favouring
intensive agriculture. Their proximity to the densely populated Caspian Coastlands is also responsible for this.

More than two-thirds of the population depends directly upon agriculture. Pastoral activities are integral part of the agricultural economy. This involves some movement of population to higher parts of the valley for summer pasturing. Many of the villages located in lower parts of the valleys have a satellite at a distance of 10 to 25 kms. upstream. These serve the purpose of temporary abode from May to September. Complementary to this upstream movement is the downstream migration to the Caspian Coastland towns or to Tehran during winter when normal agricultural activity slackens. This movement involves mostly men. Women stay at home and get engaged in handicrafts like spinning and weaving of wool, preparing the silk threads and making of mats. Women play an important role in the economy of the region.

Temporary migration during winter is typical of almost all parts of this region. Migrants from the southern slopes move to Tehran and those from the northern slopes move to various towns in the Caspian Coastlands. The pull factor of employment opportunities in not too distant places combined with the push factor of severe winter climate explains this kind of migration.
In view of the overwhelming dependence on primary activities and virtual absence of manufacturing industries, it is not difficult to understand the low degree of urbanization in this region. Literacy rates are also considerably below the national average.

There is a need to develop this region through better management of its natural resources. The hope lies in establishing forest based industries, extending horticultural gardens and developing recreational sites. The resources of the area, at the moment, are being exploited through dams and barrages across the streams for the benefit of people in the adjoining regions.

4. Northeast Iran

The northeastern Iran derives its distinctiveness from the Khorasani dialect which is spoken throughout the area. Turkish and Kordish are also spoken in some parts along the northern margins. The people in the area, as in most of Iran, belong to Shia sect of Islam as compared with the dominance of Sunni Muslims in the adjoining parts of the Soviet Union and Afghanistan.

The topography of the region is dominated by parallel mountain ranges separated by wide fertile lowlands drained by perennial streams. The lowlands are fairly populated. A density of 23 persons per sq. km. may seem to be lower than what one would expect in such an agriculturally productive
area. The reasons for this are historical. The region was frequently invaded in the past by Turkmen, Mongols, Uzbeks and Afghans and large parts of the lowlands remained uninhabited.

By its very nature of march land, the region was actively involved in trade during the times of peace. This gave rise to a number of trading towns on the caravan routes connecting this area with other countries. About one-fifth of the region's population is urban. Mashhad, which enjoys world fame for its shrine of Emam Reza, is the most important place. The place has a special attraction for the old people who crave to spend the last days of their lives in this sacred city.

The economy of the people is based primarily on agriculture which engages nearly two-thirds of the working force. Some handicraft industries oriented to the needs of the pilgrims visiting Mashhad are also notable. Modern industrial development has been lacking as the region is distantly located from the main centres of population concentration and development in Iran.

The major problems of the region arise from its continuing dependence on agriculture. The need is to establish new industries so as to create additional employment and raise standard of living. Sugar, fruit processing and leather goods industries hold a good promise.
5. Tehran Region

With Tehran as its centre, this region spreads over the whole of Central ostan and southern part of Zanjan farmandari kol. It is distinguished by its high degree of industrial and urban development. About one-fourth of the urban population of the country is concentrated here and more than two-thirds of the region's population is urban.

Tehran, the capital of Iran, dominates the economic and social life of the region. The city had a population of 2.7 million in 1966. Being the national capital and the hub of industrial activity, it attracted migrants from practically all parts of Iran. The major industries located here include textiles, food processing, metal works, engineering goods and transport vehicles. The excessive concentration of industries in Tehran led to their over-spilling to nearby towns which became satellites of Tehran.

Industrialization in Tehran and its satellite towns generated commuting on a large scale. Many people in rural areas shifted from agriculture to non-agricultural jobs in towns and cities. Hardly one-third of the population in the region is agricultural. Dairying, vegetable cultivation and fruit gardening have emerged as important activities in rural areas around Tehran.
The population geography of the Tehran region has been greatly influenced by ever increasing inflow of migrants. Tehran is a typical primate city. Its population is more than six times the population of Esfahan which ranks second in Iran. People who hail from different parts of the country have also created serious problems in its wake. The city is overcrowded and over-congested. Its housing situation is worsening day by day. The solution lies in decentralization of industrial and administrative activity to other cities of Iran.

6. **Northern Zagros**

With a sub-humid climate, numerous perennial streams, and fertile alluvial pockets along the drainage lines, the Northern Zagros is a more densely populated part of the country despite its mountainous topography. Its population density of 24 persons per sq. km. is one and a half times the national average. Population is distributed in compact, stone built settlements wherever the cultivable land is available.

About 60 per cent of the population is directly dependent on agriculture. Pastoral activities are a part and parcel of agricultural life. The economy of the people is rather a combination of regular cropping, transhumance and semi-nomadism. Transhumance involves seasonal movement of the people with livestock to different altitudes within a given locality. Semi-nomadism is a more horizontal
activity, and it involves seasonal migration from one locality to another for pastoral activities.

Apart from this seasonal intra-regional mobility, the northern Zagros has experienced considerable out-migration which was induced by the location of this region between two major sources of employment - the Tehran region to the north and the Khuzestan region to the south. The former is the biggest industrial-urban concentration of Iran and the latter is famous for its oilfields and petrochemical industries. The proximity of the Northern Zagros to these two regions was also instrumental in intensification of its agriculture, expansion of orchard farming and development of dairying activities.

By contrast, the Northern Zagros was a region of in-migration all through the historical times. Its climate and water resource were the main attractions. The population settled in this area was relatively protected from the invasions to which Iran was a frequent victim. People from other areas settled from time to time and that explains the diversity of ethnic groups living in this region. Northern Zagros is the home of Kords, Lors, Farsis and Turks concentrated in its different parts.

The economic and social life of the region is becoming active with rapid development of transport and
growth of towns. About one-fourth of the population in the region is urban. Urban places are located either in the foot-hill zone or in the midst of the fertile valleys. Kermanshah, Hamadan, Khorramabad and Esfahan are the places of great importance.

7. Southern Zagros

The Southern Zagros is different. With climate becoming warmer and drier, agriculture becomes less intensive and population density declines to only 9 persons per sq.km. This density is only one-half of the national average and nearly one-third of that in Northern Zagros.

The economy of the region is more diversified than that of Northern Zagros. About a half of the population derives its livelihood from agriculture, nearly one-fifth from manufacturing, one-tenth from construction and the remaining from other activities like services, transport and trade. Agriculture in the area is a combination of sedentary cultivation and pastoral nomadism. The incidence of nomadism in Southern Zagros is higher than that in Northern Zagros because the pasture lands in the south are more extensive and more serviceable during a year due to relatively mild winters. Pastoralists move for long distances toward the north during summer and toward south during winter.
Manufacturing is considerably developed in the area. Shiraz, along with its satellite towns, is a prominent industrial concentration. It is noted for textiles, petrochemical, fertilizers, food processing, electronics, and carpet weaving industries. The construction activity in the region has benefited from new schemes relating to road transport and housing. This is a part of the effort to develop this area.

A distinctive feature of this region is the homogeneity of the people. Almost the entire population is Farsi. It speaks of a greater social integration of the people than was the case in Northern Zagros. It was the area where the Persian language achieved a high degree of maturity. Saadi and Hafez, the two renowned poets, were born at Shiraz, the cultural and economic heart of the region. The tradition in learning is reflected in relatively high literacy rates in this area. About one-third of the population was recorded as literate in 1966.

Interestingly, the region has experienced neither in- nor out-migration on any significant scale. It does not seem to be suffering from the problem of population pressure. There is, however, a need to make a more intensive use of its resources in order to raise the level of living of the people.
8. Dasht-e-Kavir

Girdled by the Alborz to the north, the Central mountains to the west and south, and Qeyen and Birjand mountains to the east, the Dasht-e-Kavir is the largest desert basin of Iran. It is an area of extreme aridity and most of it is covered with a sheet of salt encrusted material, unfit for cultivation or even vegetation. A large part of this region is a desolate wilderness. Population distribution is exceptionally thin with hardly one to two persons per sq. km. Most of the population is settled along the margins of this desert basin where some water is available from the minor streams coming out from the neighbouring mountains. On the other hand, there are extensive negative areas in the heart of the basin. All the urban places, such as Shahrud, Damghan, Semnan, Ardestan, Nain and Tabas, also find their location on the margins of the region. They originated as the halting stations on the caravan routes in the past. These are now functioning as administrative centres for their surrounding areas and some have attracted manufacturing industry, especially carpet weaving on a small scale.

The economy of the region is a combination of agriculture by males and household industries (especially carpet weaving) by females. There is some mining of
chrome, lead, copper and zinc in local areas. Pastoral activities are almost absent since the region is practically devoid of pastures.

The level of economic development is low. Economic opportunities are limited. There was considerable out-migration from this area to other parts of Iran. The region holds little promise of development.

9. Dasht-e-Lut

Dasht-e-Lut is a mini prototype of Dasht-e-Kavir. The physical and human conditions in Dasht-e-Kavir are faithfully repeated in Dasht-e-Lut which is one third of the former in area. Density of population remains as low as one to two persons per sq. km. It is again on the margins of this region that most of the population is distributed. Bam is the only urban settlement of any import. It is a market place specialising in dates.

The economy of the region is self-contained and backward. Agriculture and household industries are the dominant activities. Literacy rates are low. A tendency toward out-migration in search of better economic fortunes is emerging. The scope of development within the region is limited as in the case of Dasht-e-Kavir.
10. **Kerman Region**

Sandwiched between the Zagros to the south and the Dasht-e-Kavir to the north, the Kerman region forms a transitional zone between the two. Its density of population is only 4 persons per sq. km. as compared to 9 in the case of Southern Zagros and about one in Dasht-e-Kavir. The concentration of population is relatively high near the Zagros and gradually decreases toward Dasht-e-Kavir. The middle portion of the region is occupied by a saline marshland and it is devoid of any human settlement.

The region is fairly urbanized as nearly one-third of its total population lives in urban places. These urban places again have a location marginal to this region. Kerman, Yazd, Sirjan, Baft, Jiroft and Rafsanjan are among the notable places. All of them find a position on strategic routes connecting Tehran with the Persian Gulf. Kerman and Yazd are the chief administrative and industrial centres of the region. They specialize in carpet weaving and textiles. The other urban places are famous for processing of dry fruits, particularly pistachio.

As in most parts of Iran, agriculture and household industries constitute the main basis of economy. Mining of copper is another notable economic activity. Efforts
are under way to develop this area in respect of agriculture, mining and manufacturing industries. New rails and roads are being constructed. This is in an effort to check out-migration which has been a characteristic feature of this region.

The distinctiveness of the Kerman region also lies in being one of the earliest areas of human settlement in Iran. The archeological findings testify that it enjoyed a moderate and fairly humid climate in the past. Deforestation is said to have been responsible for bringing aridity to this area and thereby damaging its agricultural productive base. It is in the fitness of things that this historic land should receive due attention in matters of development. It is going to be prominent, among other things, for copper smelting and coal mining.

11. Eastern Rim Land

The eastern margin of Iran (called as the Eastern Rim Land) adjoining Afghanistan distinguishes itself as a population region by virtue of the dominance of Birjandi speaking people. Its topography is characterized by fold mountains separated by undulating lowlands. The climate is continental and arid. This explains the low density of only 3 persons per sq. km. The population is distributed in small villages concentrated along the
streams and near aanāts (a series of wells connected with each other at their bottom) where some cultivation is possible with the help of available water. Birjand, Qayen and Ferdows, situated in the midst of fertile, irrigated pockets of agricultural land, are the three prominent urban settlements in the area.

The economy of the region is under-developed and self-contained. Most of the people depend upon cultivation, pastoral activities and household industries. Agriculture accounts for about 60 per cent of the working force and household industries for about 25 per cent. While agriculture is predominantly a male occupation, household industries are run mostly by females.

Practically the whole of the population was born within the region. There was hardly any in-migration to it. There was rather sizable out-migration which was male-selective. The number of males and females was consequently almost at par with each other.

The scope of industrial development is limited as the region is situated away from the main population concentrations of the country. Agriculture, including orchard farming, can be encouraged. Development of irrigation is a must for this.
12. **Sistan Basin**

Of all parts of eastern Iran, the Sistan Basin is exceptional in having a lowland topography, fertile soil and fresh water throughout the year. It is, drained by Hirmand river which rises in Afghanistan and terminates in the heart of this region, giving birth to a fresh water lake known as Hamun. As a result, agriculture is intensive and a density of population of 21 persons per sq. km. is unusually high for this part of Iran.

Almost 90 per cent of population is rural. Only Zabol is an urban place of some importance. The low degree of urbanization is explained by the region's remote location and subsistence nature of economy. It is notable that the traditional caravan routes by pass this region to the north and south.

Hardly one per cent of the population was recorded as having been born outside the area. It is a typically self-contained region with most of the people depending on agriculture and household industries. An overwhelming majority of the population is illiterate.

Agriculture in the region suffered a set-back during recent years from construction of a dam on Hirmand river by Afghanistan. A lot of land went out of cultivation due to loss of irrigation water. It necessitated
resettlement of some of its agricultural population. The newly reclaimed agricultural land in Dasht-e-Gorgan near Caspian Sea came to the rescue of these people.

The fact remains that Sistan is one of the exceptional areas in eastern Iran in being endowed with fresh, sweet water. Its potential for future development is high. In the past, it used to be famous for export of wheat. It can regain this position by advancements in agriculture.

13. Baluchestan

Inhabited by Baluchi speaking people, this population region coincides with one of the linguistic territorial units of Iran. To its east, it adjoins with the Baluchi speaking province of Pakistan.

With only 2 persons per sq. km., Baluchestan is one of the sparsely populated parts of Iran. Hardly one per cent of the total area is under cultivation. The distribution of cultivated land is patchy and follows the availability of water points along the streams, near the springs and around the qaanats. Accordingly, population is also scattered, resembling oasis settlements. The eastern part of the region is more populated due to greater frequency of water points.

An overwhelming majority of population resides in rural areas. Urban places are few and far between. Zahedan,
the capital of Baluchestan, is the only urban place of some importance. Most of the population is illiterate.

About two-thirds of the population is agricultural. Household industries provide an additional avenue of employment to the people. Keeping in view the strategic importance of this area, the government initiated several road construction schemes. Construction has emerged as a notable activity and engages about one-tenth of the population. Besides, the army basements have increased the proportion of workers in services.

The construction and defence activities caused some in-migration from other parts of Iran. This broke the isolation of this remote region. There was a counter-stream of out-migrants in a larger number. Out-migration has emerged as a prominent feature of the population geography of this region with not so bright economic prospects.

14. Makran Region

There are only a few coastal areas in the world which are as sparsely populated as the Makran region of Iran. Its population density is less than even 2 persons per sq.km. The Makran does not offer a favourable physical environment for human settlement. The entire area is overlain by impermeable rocks which cause quick loss of surface water. Rainfall itself is not only low but extremely variable,
causing droughts and floods to alternate with each other. Such a precipitation regime wrecks any system of irrigation even if developed. There are, of course, some perennial streams like Jagin, Gabrich, Rabeh and Dashtiyari running through the area. Whatever population exists in the region it is concentrated along their courses.

About 95 per cent of the total population is rural. This is a measure of the economic backwardness of this area. Almost the same proportion of the total population is illiterate. Minab, Jask, Gowater and Chahbahar are the only large settlements. None of them is very big and all but Minab are coastal in location.

Practically the entire population of the region was recorded as having been born within the area which had little to offer in terms of economic opportunities to in-migrants. Rather it experienced sizable out-migration, particularly to oilfields of Khuzestan. The economy of the region revolves around agriculture and household industries that together engage more than 80 per cent of the population.

The strategic importance of Makran to Iran outweighs its economic importance. Efforts are under way to develop the Makran coast from naval point of view. Special attention is being given to Chahbahar port. This port can be of crucial economic importance to eastern Iran.
15. **Persian Gulf Coastlands**

There is not much to distinguish between Persian Gulf Coastlands and Makran Coastland in terms of their physical environment. Both are equally hot and arid. The similarity ends here and the two areas contrast in their economic and population geography. While the Makran is a stagnant agricultural region, the Persian Gulf Coastlands have a dynamic oil based economy. Being one of the major oil producing areas in the whole world it has enabled Iran to become the second largest exporter of oil after Saudi Arabia. The foreign exchange earned through oil export is being used for an over-all development of the country. Hence, the contribution of this region to Iran's progress cannot be underestimated.

The oil is being produced not merely for export but also for use in petrochemical industries scattered throughout the area. The important petrochemicals manufacturing centres include Abadan, Shahpur, Bushehr and Khark. Nearly half of the region's population is urban. The oilfields, oil refineries and petrochemical centres have stimulated sizable in-migration from all parts of the country, especially from the Zagros region. The population composition of this area is a conglomerate of a variety of people usually found in metropolitan cities. The number of foreigners, especially from the U.S.A., the U.K., France, Holland, Belgium, West Germany, India and Pakistan, is large.
In spite of high degree of urbanization and large in-migration, population density of the region is moderate - 17 persons per sq. km. This is explained by poor agriculture over large areas. There are extensive saline marshes rendering a lot of area unfit for cultivation. Cultivation is confined practically to the northern parts adjoining the Zagros mountains where water is available for irrigation. It is here that most of the rural population is concentrated. This concentration is more marked along the Karun and Karkheh rivers.

In association with a high degree of mining and industrial development, the economy is more diversified than that of many parts of Iran. About 40 per cent of the total population is in agriculture, about 20 per cent in general services and 10 per cent in manufacturing. The proportion of its workers in mining is also high.

The region is likely to prosper in future as well. It has already been provided with an elaborate structure of oil based industries. Efforts are being made to connect this region with all parts of the country through efficient transportation. There is no neglect of agriculture either. Barrages are being constructed across all the perennial streams to enhance the agricultural potential of the area.
The above discussion brings to light the regional diversity in the population geography of Iran. The various regions of the country display sharp differences in their population characteristics. These differences are the most pronounced in the case of three population elements: population distribution, migrational patterns and ethnic composition. The role of physical factors, especially availability of water, has been dominant in the case of population distribution. Economic forces were the main determinant of migration patterns. Historical factors came in for the explanation of ethnic composition of different areas. On the whole, the periphery of Iran was found more developed than its core.