INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to make a geographic analysis of some aspects of Iran's population based upon 1966 census data. Iran is passing through a phase of considerable change in its demographic patterns in association with the recent transformation of its economy and society. The country is taking steps to develop its industrial potential; its people are under a growing influence of modernization; its administration is carrying out policies on reformist lines and efforts are being made to uplift the rural areas particularly by providing educational, medical and extension services in the countryside through a variety of corps. All these developments are making a visible impact upon the population geography of the country.

It must be stressed here that South West Asia as a region has failed to get its due attention from the scholars in their academic pursuits. Only a few studies have been conducted on various aspects of this region. Moreover, if any study was done, it was guided by a specific purpose, such as prospecting of oil. The region remains practically a virgin field as far as systematic research in its population geography is concerned. Only a few studies on the population of limited areas have been carried out so far, but none covers the whole country. Some foreign geographers, of course,
devoted a few pages to Iran in their treatises on population geography of the less developed realm\(^1\) or of developing countries,\(^2\) and also in the land of Iran\(^3\) and in a number of books dealing with the geography of Iran in general but their treatment of the subject - population geography - is sketchy and not free from errors. The proposed study intends to provide a detailed picture of the population geography of Iran. The expression 'some aspects' in the title is not intended to limit the scope of the work but to accept the constraints of data availability.

**Importance of Population Geography**

The present study belongs to the recently developing branch of systematic population geography. The geography of population suffered neglect for a long time. However, ever since Trewartha recommended a serious and sustained effort to develop this systematic branch of geography,\(^4\) the studies

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pertaining to population have acquired a place of prominence in the discipline of Geography. Of all geographic phenomena, population, in terms of its various attributes, is the most representative of the total personality of any area. Population is the point of reference from which all other elements are observed and from which they all singly and collectively derive significance and meaning. Population is, thus, the pivotal and most dynamic element in area differentiation and spatial organization, which is the central theme of the science of geography. It was this consideration which stimulated the author to do work in this branch of geography.

The studies pertaining to population are, of course, not the sole monopoly of geographers. Scholars from diverse disciplines of knowledge, like demography, sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, history as well as geography have shown interest in the analysis of population. However, this does not mean that geographers are duplicating what the scholars belonging to other disciplines are doing. A population geographer does perform a distinctive function in the study of population. While a demographer is interested in formulating population theories based upon quantitative observations, ⁶ a sociologist studies the social groups in their institutional

⁵ *Ibid.*., p. 83.

organizations, an anthropologist is concerned with man as a physical and cultural being, a psychologist is interested in the problems pertaining to human behaviour, an economist analyses the economic implications of any demographic patterns and a historian traces the population trends through time, the geographer is interested in understanding the spatial aspect of population in the context of aggregate nature of places. Thus, a geographer studies population in the context of area and not as a phenomenon in itself. The emphasis of a geographer is particularly on area differences and spatial organization which is the most distinguishing feature of geography and which sets it apart from other disciplines.

Year of Study

The present work pertains to the analysis of the 1966 census data. It is true that Iran conducted its first complete census in the year 1956 and pledged to repeat census taking every 10 years. The 1966 census was an improved census and provided comprehensive data on various attributes of population. Moreover, when the present study was undertaken in the year 1975, the 1966 census was the latest census of the country.

7 ibid., Vol. 15, p. 2.
8 ibid., Vol. 1, p. 305.
9 ibid., Vol. 13, p. 84.
Although by now 1976 census has been conducted but its results are yet awaited. Initially the writer's desire was to study the changes in the demographic character of the country during 1956-66 but since the boundaries of various administrative units, which form the basis for data collection, were changed significantly, a comparison of the census data for 1956 and 1966 became almost impossible. Therefore, it was decided that the 1966 census data alone may be subjected to a geographic analysis.

**Collection of Data and Research Methodology**

The present work is based upon published census data. The census data, which have a fair degree of reliability and cover a variety of population aspects, are available for all levels of administrative units such as, provinces (ostan), general governorships (fermandarikol), townships (shahrestan), cities (shahr), towns (shahrek), sections (bakhsh), rural districts (dehestan), and villages (deh). There are 13 provinces, 8 general governorships, 146 townships, 259 cities and towns, 462 sections, 1,520 rural districts, over 65,000 villages in the country. Though it would be ideal to use data by individual villages and obtain the most realistic patterns of population, yet the village as a unit of study could not be adopted because firstly, it is almost impossible for a single person to use data for over 65,000 units and...
MAP 1

The Study Area

INDEX
- INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
- OSEAN BOUNDARY
- SHAHISTAN BOUNDARY
- BAKHJ BOUNDARY

Source: Reduced from 1,900,000 map of Iran supplied by the Statistical Centre, Tehran
secondly, its mapping would have been extremely difficult for a limited project as this. On the other hand, data used at province level will give a highly generalized picture. The data by individual rural districts which number 1,520 under the circumstances would have provided a reasonably realistic picture but unfortunately the data with regard to various attributes of population are not published by individual rural districts. Therefore, it has been deemed proper to use data by all the 462 individual sections (Map 1). Mapping even at this scale has brought out the areal pattern in various population characteristics fairly well. However, wherever data by sections were not available, figures by townships had to be used. But for urban population, data by individual urban places have been made use of.

A geographic approach has been maintained in the entire work, viewing population as an area characterising and area differentiating element. A five-fold research procedure has been adopted: (i) requisite data have been collected from the census and other sources; (ii) the data have been processed by using suitable techniques; (iii) the processed data have been represented cartographically; (iv) spatial patterns emerging on these maps have been identified; and (v) these spatial patterns have been made the basis of discussion on the subject.
Cartographic Techniques

In population geography map is an indispensable tool not only for numbers but also for almost all other demographic phenomena. In the present study the discussion is based upon what emerges on the maps portraying the spatial patterns of the various population characteristics of Iran. Though the author hails from Iran and has fair knowledge of the area, yet two trips to Iran were made during the course of the study to conduct field work and to understand the genesis of the patterns revealed by maps.

Most of the maps showing the spatial patterns of various attributes of population were prepared by the choropleth technique because these maps were to represent percentage or ratio values and the data were to be plotted for 462 individual units. Nevertheless, other cartographic techniques such as graduated circles alone or combined with choropleth, dot, and isopleth methods were also used, wherever necessary.

In the planning of the choropleth maps one of the major problems was the choice of number of categories for each map and the selection of interval between the different categories. In the present study, each choropleth map was provided with 3 to 7 categories as the human eye can conveniently differentiate

11 ibid., p.6.
this range of shades from black to white. The task of determining the class interval between the categories on different maps proved to be more tedious. However, there were two main considerations while selecting these class intervals for different maps. Firstly, the frequency graphs were prepared for each demographic element, and its median and average values were taken into consideration while choosing the class intervals. Secondly, the class interval on the same type of maps, like those showing general literacy, male literacy, and female literacy; and maps portraying proportion of employed population in different occupations, were kept identical so as to render comparability.

Organization of the Material

The present study is organized in 10 chapters and its closing pages provide a summary of the conclusions arrived at in different chapters. Chapter I introduces the country in terms of its physical, cultural and historical setting so as to provide a background for the study of population geography of the country. Chapter II details upon distribution and density of population, which is fundamental to any study in population geography. Growth of population which is another important attribute of population, however, could not be studied for want of comparable data. Chapter III

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deals with sex-composition patterns and Chapter IV pertains to the age-structure of Iran's population. Chapter V deals with the ethnic composition of the country. This discussion is followed by three chapters dwelling upon literacy, occupational structure, and migration patterns. Chapter IX is devoted to the study of urban population with respect to the distribution, size, spacing and growth of urban centres. Chapter X synthesizes what has been discussed in previous chapters by dividing the country into population regions and describing the chief characteristics of each region. The various conclusions emerging in the study have been given in the end.