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THE FIRST CENSUS OF IRAN

62

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I GENERAL

Before the first nation-wide census of Iran was conducted in November 1956, the size of the Iranian population could only be roughly approximated from personal observation and from an outmoded and incomplete system of birth and death registration. Experimental censuses conducted in 1954 and 1955 resulted in population counts as much as 27 percent under the pre-census estimate in one shahrestan and 64 percent over the official estimate in another.

In order to obtain the statistical data necessary for economic planning and development, the Government of Iran decided early in 1954 to investigate the possibility of conducting a complete census of population. Data were needed to show the geographic distribution of the population, the age-sex composition, literacy and educational attainment, employment status and occupational skills, not to mention a total count of the population. A request was forwarded to the U. S. Operations Mission in Teheran for a statistical adviser who might assist the Department of Public Statistics to plan, organize and conduct the first census of Iran. This request was directed through the International Cooperation Administration, Washington, to the U. S. Bureau of the Census. The Bureau serves as a participating agency with ICA in the providing of technical assistance in statistics. A Participating Agency Service Agreement was concluded in the spring of 1954 in which the Bureau agreed to provide an adviser to the Department of Public Statistics in Iran for a two-year term. After a brief period of orientation with ICA, I left Washington on May 20, 1954, and arrived in Teheran three days later.

II CENSUS PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

A. Cartographic Survey

A major undertaking in preparing for the census enumeration was the drafting of a complete set of maps covering each of the 119 shahrestans and each city and town with an estimated population of 5,000 or more. These maps were prepared by the Department of Public Statistics with valuable assistance from the Cartographic Department of the Ministry of Defense. From the best available sources of information in Teheran, a draft map was prepared for each shahrestan (scale 1:25,000) showing the cities, villages, roads, and principal geographic features. These maps were then taken to the field where the name and location of each village was verified and road conditions were noted. At the same time, maps of the cities were checked and brought up to date and sketch maps were prepared for all villages with an estimated population of 5,000 or more. These maps were revised after the census when the corrections made by enumerators and supervisors in the field were transmitted to the central office.

The preparation of base maps for the census was a difficult job and required two full years to complete. While the map work was in progress, however, other phases of the program were being developed. Several experimental censuses were conducted in different regions of the country; the staff was trained in the techniques of data collection, editing, coding and tabulation; a series of statistical bulletins was published containing results of the experimental censuses; and plans were made for a nation-wide census to be conducted in 1956.

B. Experimental Census of Kashan

The first experimental census was conducted during the month of November 1954, in Kashan Shahrestan, a province about 100 miles south of Teheran. Two types of questionnaires were used - a village questionnaire which included information on number of schools, radios, public baths, medical facilities, agriculture and livestock production; and a household questionnaire which provided basic population data for each member of the household. Information for the village questionnaires was obtained in most instances from the village chief and members of the village council, while the household questionnaires were completed by personal interview with the head or other responsible member of each household.

In addition to Kashan city, the census covered 151 villages and 19 independent farms. Approximately 350 enumerators were recruited and trained locally for the field count. During the census period (November 8 to 20), these enumerators visited nearly 41,000 households and enumerated approximately 166,000 persons.

This census revealed some interesting facts about the population of Kashan Shahrestan. For example, 24% of the males and only 3% of the females ten years of age and over were able to read and write. These figures for Kashan Shahrestan are probably close to the national averages, although subsequent tests showed considerable variation in literacy rates throughout the country. The complete results of the Kashan census are published in Statistical Bulletins, Series 1, Number 1 - 15.

C. Special Census of Abadan and Khorramshahr

In March 1955 a special census was conducted covering all of Abadan Shahrestan and the most populous part of Khorramshahr. This census was requested by the two municipalities and part of the field costs were borne by the municipal governments. The questionnaires for this census were similar to those used in Kashan except that a few questions on housing were added to provide some measure of over-crowding in the area.

Approximately 600 enumerators and supervisors - most of them school teachers and upper class students - participated in this census. The enumeration was completed in nine days and resulted in a population count of 256,494 for Abadan Shahrestan and 65,018 for the Khorramshahr area. By comparison with the official estimate for Abadan Shahrestan (156,000), the census count was 64% greater than the pre-census figure. Although part of this difference may be explained by in-migration resulting from the reactivation of the oil refinery, the wide discrepancy between the actual count and the official estimate emphasized the need for an accurate population inventory of the entire country.

The housing statistics resulting from this census are especially interesting. In Abadan city, for example, the census showed that 67% of the households were living in one-room dwelling units, and the average floor area for a family of five persons was less than 16 square meters. The complete results of this census are published in two series of statistical bulletins, Series 3, Numbers 1 - 18 for Abadan, and Series 4, Numbers 1 - 18 for Khorramshahr.

D. Test Census of Rezaieh, Sabzevar, Zabol and Dasht-Mishan

A final pre-test census covering four shahrestans, Rezaieh, Sabzevar, Zabol and Dasht-Mishan, was conducted during the first week of November 1955. Approximately 800 enumerators and supervisors were employed in the four shahrestans which have a combined population of about 650,000.

After the census was taken, data for the Zabol area was requested by the Iranian delegation to the United Nations in connection with a dispute between Iran and a neighboring country over the Hirmand River waters. A special hand tabulation of the Zabol census questionnaires showed a total of 35,275 households in the shahrestan with a combined population of 152,055. Seventy-two percent of the households were reported to be dependent for their livelihood on agriculture and 66 percent reported that they kept some livestock. These and other data were transmitted to the Iranian delegation in New York and are now published in Statistical Bulletins, Series 5, Numbers 1 - 17.

The purpose of these experimental census was to test the questionnaires proposed for the national census, the method of recruiting and training personnel in the field, the optimum size of enumeration areas, and the response to particular questions such as those relating to religion, identification card, monthly rent, agricultural production and livestock. As a result of these tests, the training period for the national census was extended from three days to one week (about three hours per day), the size of enumeration areas was increased from about 600 persons to about 1,000 persons, and the enumeration period was extended from 10 days to 15 days. Several questions were deleted from the national census questionnaire, some were revised, and for others the instructions were modified.

The test censuses provided valuable training and experience for the staff of the Statistical Office in all phases of the census operation field organization, map preparation, public relations, data collection, tabulation, and publication and analysis of results. The test censuses also provided the first scientific data on age, marital status, literacy and education, citizenship, occupation, industry, employment status and a variety of other subjects and demonstrated to Government officials the utility of a nation-wide census.

E. Training Activities

An important part of my program in Iran was the training of young men and women in statistical methods and techniques so that they might assume an increasing share of responsibility for the census program. Practical training and experience was one of the primary objectives in conducting the series of experimental censuses described above.

Something more formal, however, than on-the-job training was necessary to meet the increasing demand for basic training in survey methods. Accordingly, in November 1955, a class in statistical survey techniques was organized at Teheran University. This course was sponsored by the Institute for Administrative Affairs, a cooperative institute supported jointly by the International Cooperation Administration and Teheran University. The course was offered primarily for Government

employees and met two hours a week for twelve weeks. Approximately 70 students enrolled for the class. Participation in the classroom discussion was excellent and indicated a keen interest in applying the techniques learned to various Government activities. The experience of teaching this class was one of the most interesting and rewarding activities of my entire assignment.

Previous to my tour of duty in Iran, I had been in charge of the training program for foreign technicians at the U. S. Census Bureau and had worked closely with six participants from Iran. Four of these men now occupy responsible positions in the Department of Public Statistics in Teheran.

In April 1955 I spent one week at the International Statistical Education Center in Beirut where I conducted a series of discussions on statistical organization with a group of 32 participants from the Middle East. Included in the group were technicians from Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

F. Completion of Preparatory Activities

A detailed budget for the census was approved by the Council of Ministers early in 1956 and it was then agreed that a nation-wide census would be conducted in October or November of that year. It was further agreed that the Civil Registrar in each shahrestan would serve as the census supervisor for his district. Classes were held in Teheran to acquaint the Civil Registrars with the general plan for the census and to provide them with specific instructions for organizing the field offices. Upon returning to their respective districts, the Registrars were responsible for recruiting and training the field staff, distributing posters, pamphlets, and other publicity materials, and finally, supervising the actual enumeration in the field.

Most of the preparatory work on the census was completed when I returned to the United States in the summer of 1956. The questionnaires were designed; manuals were drafted; the enumeration plan was prepared; and the Civil Registrars were trained. Arrangements were made for me to return for a second tour of only one year.

III THE NATIONAL CENSUS

A. Pre-Enumeration Problems

The primary purpose of my second tour in Iran was to assist the Department of Public Statistics in carrying out the census plan, to advise on problems relating to the field enumeration, to develop tabulation procedures in the central office, to assist further with the training of technical staff, and to design statistical tables and graphic illustrations suitable for the publication of results. Upon my return in August, 1956, I learned that only a small fraction of the money needed for the census had actually been transferred to the Department of Public Statistics. No funds were available for printing instruction materials, posters and report forms. In addition, pens, portfolios, and special crayons for numbering the houses remained to be purchased. The situation was reported to the Council of Ministers and to His Majesty, the Shah.

An immediate decision on the census was required because weather conditions would not permit the field enumeration to extend beyond November.

After some deliberation, it was agreed to proceed with the census as planned. Funds were transferred to the Department of Public Statistics; supplies and equipment were purchased; arrangements were made for printing the instructions, posters, and miscellaneous office forms; and a contract was signed with the International Business Machines Corporation for tabulating equipment. The date of the census was fixed for 10 Aban 1335 (1 November 1956) and the enumeration began simultaneously in each of the 119 shahrestans on that day.

B. The Enumeration Phase

1. Field Organization and Training

Approximately 27,000 enumerators and supervisors participated in the field count, visiting every household in their respective areas and recording the desired information on the specially designed questionnaires. Most of the enumerators and supervisors were school teachers and advanced students, who were excused from their regular classes in order to participate in the census. The field work was supervised by the 114 Civil Registrars, who were regular employees of the Statistics Department. General inspection and control were provided by 25 area supervisors, who were detailed from the Central Office in Teheran and were responsible directly to the Chief of the Census Office. During the month of October, evening classes were held in each of the shahrestan centers to familiarize enumerators and supervisors with the questionnaires and instruction manual and to provide basic training in interview technique. In the three weeks preceding the enumeration, I visited 19 of the census field offices to observe training classes, to check on the distribution of supplies and equipment, and to discuss arrangements for publicity, transportation and other aspects of the field work. In nearly every instance, I was favorably impressed with the manner in which the field supervisors had organized their work program, and, particularly, with the interest shown by local officials in the census.

2. Publicity

In many of the cities, the houses had no numbers and the census enumerators were obliged to number the structures before proceeding with the enumeration. The house numbering operation was completed in most places by the end of September. Publicity materials including posters, pamphlets designed especially for school teachers and Government officials, printed match books, and brief announcements inserted in tea cartons and packages of cigarettes, were distributed throughout the country during the month of October. At the same time, newspapers and radio stations carried spot announcements regarding the census, and a special effort was made to enlist the cooperation of the tribes.

3. Period of Enumeration

The enumeration proceeded quickly and, except for a few remote areas, was completed in about 15 days. By November 1, most of the tribal groups had completed their fall migration and were already settled in villages or tribal compounds for the winter. Tribes which were still in the process of migration were enumerated wherever they happened to be at the beginning of the census period.

Although the nation-wide enumeration was completed in approximately 15 days, it was several months before all of the questionnaires could be transported to Teheran. In fact, because of the poor condition of roads during the winter months, the questionnaires for some areas were kept in the field offices until early spring.

4. Census Questionnaires Used

As in the experimental censuses, two types of questionnaires were used for recording the information: a household questionnaire and a village questionnaire. On the household questionnaire the following information was recorded for each member of the household: name, relationship to the head of the household, sex, age, marital status, place of birth, citizenship, religion, education, and occupation. For heads of households there were a few additional questions relating to the housing unit, agriculture, and household industries. On the village questionnaire, the enumerator recorded information for each village relating to school enrollment, medical facilities, sources of water, principal crops and livestock production. The information for the village questionnaire was obtained from the "kadhoda", or village head man, while the information for households was obtained by interviewing the head or other responsible member of each family unit.

C. The Processing Phase

1. Coding, Editing and Card Punching

Processing of the census questionnaires has been somewhat delayed due to the lack of space, personnel and electric power. Gradually, however, these problems are being solved and rapid progress is now being made in the tabulation of results. As of September 1, 1957, approximately 7,000,000 lines (individual reports) had been processed through general coding, approximately 3,500,000 lines had been completed through occupation coding, and more than 500,000 IBM cards had been punched for machine tabulation. A total of 295 persons were employed full time on the census program. Assuming some increase in staff during the next few months, it is estimated that the tabulation of the census will be completed by the spring of 1959.

2. Census Results

The results of the census will be published in a series of detailed reports—one for each of the 119 census districts (shahrestans), a special report for Teheran city, and a summary report for the entire country. Each of these reports will contain a brief analytical text, reference tables and graphic illustrations. The first report in the series—that for Karaj shahrestan—was released in November 1957. Similar reports for other areas will be issued as the data become available.

Although final and complete results of the census will not be available for some time, preliminary reports of total population were submitted by the field supervisors upon completion of the enumeration. These reports indicate a total population of about 19,000,000 distributed as follows:

Central Ostan (Teheran)	2,715,545
First Ostan (Gilan)	1,629,327
Second Ostan (Mazandaran)	1,683,691
Third Ostan (Azarbayjan)	2,859,132
Fifth Ostan (Kermanshahan)	1,572,340
Sixth Ostan (Khozestan)	1,890,462
Seventh Ostan (Fars)	1,091,682
Eighth Ostan (Kerman)	581,893
Ninth Ostan (Khorasan)	2,006,582
Tenth Ostan (Esfahan)	1,283,325
General Governorate of Baluchestan, Sistan and Zahedan	428,608
General Governorate of Ports and Islands of Persian Gulf	228,321
General Governorate of Ports and Islands of Gulf of Oman	207,379
General Governorate of Kordestan	358,770
Independent Governorate of Behbahan	174,646
Independent Governorate of Bakhtiari and Chahar Mahal	233,118
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Total	18,944,821

Ten cities were reported to have more than 100,000 inhabitants, as follows:

Teheran	1,513,164
Tabriz	290,195
Esfahan	254,876
Mashad	242,165
Abadan	226,103
Shiraz	169,088
Kermanshah	125,181
Ahvaz	119,828
Rasht	109,493
Hamedan	100,029
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Total	3,150,122

It should be noted that the above figures are based on preliminary reports of the field supervisors and may be slightly revised when the total count is verified in the central office.

As a result of the census program, scientific data are now available for representative areas of Iran showing total population, age-sex distributions, literacy and educational attainment, employment and unemployment, family composition, and housing characteristics. When the tabulation of the national census is completed, similar data will be

available for the country as a whole, for every shahrestan, and for the principal cities of Iran. In the planning, conduct, and evaluation of Iran's economic development program, the results of the census have already proved to be extremely useful.

D. Financing of the Census

The total census operation including map preparation, experimental censuses, enumeration, tabulation and publication of results is estimated to cost approximately 200,000,000 rials (\$2,700,000, or about 14 cents per person). It is significant that the Government of Iran has recognized the importance of census statistics in connection with its development program and has been willing to expend the considerable sum of money required for the census. Except for the services of the census advisor and a few items of specialized equipment, the entire cost of the census has been borne by the Government of Iran. Approximately 100,000,000 rials was allocated for the census from the regular budget by the Finance Ministry. This money was expended over a three-year period and covered primarily the cost of personal services for the experimental censuses and the national census. The cost of map preparation, supplies and equipment including transportation, and tabulation has been supported largely by Plan Organization funds. The United States contribution to the census program has totaled approximately \$100,000 to date and includes principally the salary and expenses of the technical adviser, rental for a demonstration period of IBM tabulating equipment, and purchase of office supplies and equipment.