

Lake Hamoun On Lac Lemman

On Lac Lemman the negotiations continue – now in Lausanne rather than in Montreux. Another lake, Lake Hamoun, was the subject of a question I posted the other day: what does Lake Hamoun have to do with those negotiations? One person replied: "because as the lake dried up so is Iran with its demographic implosion and hence is like negotiating with a hostage-taker with an inoperable brain tumor." Not bad, but not quite what I was seeking. It's not the "demographic implosion" but the drying-up of Iran, the desertification of Iran, of which Lake Hamoun, which no longer exists as a lake, is one example. Lake Hamoun is in eastern Iran, in Sistan-Baluchistan. It used to be one of the largest lakes in the world. Now it has dried up. The Iranians allow themselves to believe that this desertification is the result only of the diversion of waters that used to feed into Lake Hamoun from Afghanistan, but that is only part of the story. The main part is global warming, and the decrease in rainfall all over Iran, and the ancient system of irrigation, the famous qanats that are tunnels that serve as underground aqueducts, that is no longer able to rescue the situation, because the water-table has gone down.

Why does this matter? Aside from its oil revenues, which have been halved in the last year, the largest part of Iran's revenues comes from agriculture. But Iran's water supply keeps going down. It needs Western knowhow, Western technology; the qanats alone will no longer suffice. That's why the disappearance of Lake Hamoun matters, and should be mentioned by the American negotiators, those quasi-prisoners of their own Chillon, by the shores of Lac Lemman.