



BĀZARGĀN

BĀZARGĀN, a village on the Turkish-Iranian frontier eighteen kilometers northwest of Mākū (West Azarbaijan province, *šahrestān* and *baḳš* of Mākū, *dehestān* of Qaḷ'a Daresī). The old village is located at an altitude of 1,550 meters on an alluvial cone above the Āqčāy river. The population, which is of Turkish origin, engages in traditional agricultural activities on a small scale: very little irrigation farming, dry (*deymī*) farming of cereals with fallowing, raising of sheep, and weaving of kilims. The development of this village is very recent and of a limited kind, linked with the nearby frontier crossing.

Few travelers visited Bāzargān before the end of the nineteenth century. Flandin and Coste (1843) mention "Bazirgan" on the map which shows the itineraries followed by the French embassy to the shah in 1840. In 1894 Picot (see Adamec, s.v.) noted that caravans going from Tabrīz to Erzurum sometimes stopped in this little village of ten houses, which was ceded by Turkey to Persia in 1913. The normal caravan route did in fact pass farther to the south, linking K̄voy directly to Doğubayazıt via Āvājīq. The road through Bāzargān has been frequented only in very recent times, for there was very little communication between the Armenian plateau and the Tabrīz region until relations between the two governments became more fully developed. In 1930 the automobile route still stopped at Mākū on the Persian side and at Doğubayazıt in Turkey (Vyvyan, 1931); the frontier had to be crossed on foot after a day's walk that was frequently arduous, for the countryside is desolate and the climate very harsh in winter at the base of Mount Ararat, which towers over the frontier post. Under Reżā Shah the automobile route was



paved, but it did not really become passable all year round until after World War II. In cooperation with Turkey a building was constructed at the frontier pass for the customs and police administrations, but in 1963 it was estimated that no more than 800 people a week crossed via Bāzargān (Dagradi, 1963), which in 1956 had only 312 inhabitants. Gradually a second village grew up, consisting of buildings for the frontier post, which are located either in the pass or below, where they are sheltered from the wind. In 1966 Bāzargān had 783 inhabitants, electricity, a post office, and a minimum of public services (Census).

The development of this frontier post accelerated after 1971, when the road (the trans-Asiatic highway) was entirely surfaced with asphalt between Erzurum and Tabrīz. After 1974 and the increase in oil prices, Iran began to import large quantities of goods. As Bāzargān was the principal, indeed almost the only, frontier post on the overland route between Iran and Europe, the traffic there became considerable, reaching 2.5 million tons in 1975 (*Iran Almanac*, 1977), with trucks lined up for more than 40 kilometers. The frontier post at Bāzargān thus took on great strategic importance for Iran. This unusual situation has been very advantageous for the village as it led to the construction of restaurants, inns, and warehouses. The population surpassed 1,500 in 1986, but the transit trade has especially benefited Mākū, where the majority of the employees of the frontier post live.

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