



DARRAGAZ I. ŠAHRESTĀN AND TOWN

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According to the natives, the area owes its name to the abundance of tamarisk trees (*gaz*) growing in the valley (cf. Curzon, *Persian Question* I, p. 192; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 394), which is surrounded on all but the northern side by mountains and is accessible through the difficult Allāh Akbar and Hazār Masjed passes. Annual precipitation is 301 mm, and the valley is well watered by seasonal and permanent rivers (i.e., the Darūngar river), *qanāts*, and wells. The main agricultural products include wheat, barley, cotton, potatoes, sugar beets, fruits and vegetables, and goats and cows are also raised (*Farhang-e joġrāfiāʔ*, pp. 35-36).

The *šahrestān* of Darragaz is bounded on the north by Turkmenistan, on the west by Qūčān *šahrestān*, and on the east and south by Mašhad *šahrestān*. It contains four districts (*bakš*) and ten rural subdistricts. According to the 1365 Š./1986 *census*, the population was 65,715 (14,124 families), 29,684 living in urban areas, 35,625 classified as rural, and 406 counted as nomads (Markaz-e āmār). They are mainly Shiʔite Muslims speaking Persian, Kurdish, and various Turkish dialects. A cotton gin and several carpet-weaving workshops are located in the valley (*Farhang-e joġrāfiāʔ*, pp. 35-36)

The main urban center of the *šahrestān* is the town of Darragaz (formerly



Moḥammadābād; *Times Index-Gazetteer of the World*, p. 205), situated at 37° 22' N and 59° 8' E, about 290 km northwest of Mašhad on the gravel road between Lotfābād and Qūčān.

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