



GARMSĀR

GARMSĀR, a region (Qešlāq and Garmsār) in the province of Semnān situated beyond the Caspian Gates. It has been known particularly as a stopover on the great road to Khorasan. It had an abundance of water (rivers, canals, and *qanāts*) and fodder, but no great caravansary or town developed there due to its proximity to Varāmīn and Rey. Garmsār was also a station on the Safavid road linking Isfahan to Māzandarān across the Ḥablarūd valley, bypassing Tehran via the desert (*kavīr*) of Masīla and the heights of Sīāhkūh, where several Safavid and Qajar caravansaries and a small palace (Qaṣr-e ‘Ayn-al-Rašīd) were built, as well as a paved road (*rāh-e sang-farš*) to cross the marshlands south of Garmsār (Mostawfī, pp. 10-16, photos; Siroux, p. 140). The mountains of Sīāhkūh between the plain of Garmsār and Dašt-e Kavīr (q.v.) are particularly rich in game and are now part of a natural park. The railroad has provided a new vitality to the town of Qešlāq, which has been given the name of the station (Garmsār), from which branch out the lines going to Māzandarān across the Alborz Mountains and to Mašhad. The town, which had only a population of 3,500 people in 1956, developed very rapidly (18,600 people in 1996) between the railway station quarters and the old town center, which, however, remains without a real *bāzār*. In contrast, other settlements of the county remain relatively small in size (in the period 1956-91, Ārādān’s population rose from 2,400 to nearly 4,000 and Ayyvānakey from 3,200 to 8,100; *National Census*, 1956-86, 1996). The proximity of Tehran has helped the rapid development of agricultural enterprises (melons, vegetables, cereals, and cotton). This explains why the agricultural reform of 1962 was fully carried out there, notably with the establishment in 1970 of a Šerkat-e kešt o šan‘at,



comprising a new, yet unfinished, town that was supposed to house the population of all the villages in the plain (author's unpublished research).

The plain of Garmsār and the mountains of Sīāhkūh are also winter pasture to several nomadic groups such as the 'Alī Kāy (q.v.; population 2,200 in 1987, census of the nomads) and Oṣānlū (population 150), who practice animal husbandry and weave kilims; they spend summer with their livestock (200,000 sheep) in the mountains near Fīrūzkūh (q.v.; *National Census*, 1987). A part of the population of Garmsār also spends the summer in the villages of the Ḥablarūd valley, where they possess houses and orchards of *qeysī*, a type of apricot that is dried before being sent to the market.

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