



BĪĀR

BĪĀR (from Arabic *be'ār*, plur. of *be'r* “well, spring”), a small settlement of medieval Islamic times on the northern fringe or the Dašt-e Kavīr, modern Bīārjomand, described by the medieval geographers as being three days' journey from [Bestām](#) and as being comprised administratively within the province of Qūmes (q.v.), although in Samanid times it seems to have been attached to Nišāpūr in Khorasan. It lay to the south of the routes connecting northern Iran with Bayhaq and Nišāpūr, hence seems to have played no recorded role in historical events.

From the later 4th/10th-century geographer Maqdesī ([Moqaddasī] pp. 26, 356-57, 365, 367, 371, 372) we possess a description of Bīār which seems disproportionately detailed for the size of the place but which is explicable by the fact that, as the author explains in extenuation for this, his maternal forebears came from there. It had agricultural lands and orchards, with pastures for animals, but the water supply was exiguous, and water for irrigation had to be controlled by timing devices (*ṭarjhāra*; cf. *Ḳvārazmī, Mafātīḥ al-'olūm*, ed. G. van Vloten, Leiden, 1895, p. 235), while water mills had to be constructed below ground level because of poor surface flow. A local specialty was cakes made with butter and honey (*āfrūša*). There were two strongholds and walls but no mosque with a *menbar* i.e., a Friday mosque. The inhabitants were mainly Hanafites, with some Shafe'ites and adherents of the [Karrāmīya](#), a sect which was strong in Khorasan; Yāqūt, *Mo'jam*, Beirut, I, p. 517, mentions some Hanafite *faqīhs* stemming from Bīār. Politically, it had passed in Maqdesī's time from control by the Buyids of Ray to control by the



Samanids and was subsequently to come under Ghaznavid rule before the general conquest of northern Iran by the Saljuqs; coins of the Samanids from the 4th/10th century and of the Ghaznavids from 426/1035 are extant (E. von Zambaur, *Die Münzprägungen des Islams, zeitlich und örtlich geordnet I*, Wiesbaden, 1968, p. 83).

From the later 18th century onward, European travelers crossing in the northern edges of the great desert begin to mention BĪārjomand, as it was by then called; thus Captain C. Clerk mentions some 200 houses there, with irrigation water from *qanāts* (JRGs 31, 1861, p. 53). At present, BĪārjomand is the center of a *baḳš* of the same name in the *šahrestān* of Šāhrūd in the province of Semnān; in 1950 its population was about 2,600 (Razmārā, *Farhang III*, p. 54).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text. See also Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 366, 368.

Schwarz, *Iran*, pp. 823-26.

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A. Gabriel, *Durch Persiens Wüsten*, Stuttgart, 1935, pp. 119-20.

Idem, *Die Erforschung Persiens*, Vienna, 1952, p. 303.

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