



BĪJĀR

BĪJĀR, a town and a *šahrestān* (county) in the Kurdistan province of Iran. The town, which has the highest elevation in Iran (1,920 m), lies ca. 120 miles north-northwest of Hamadān, on the old route from this city to Tabrīz, and is a center of an important and internationally renowned carpet industry. Mentioned in the 9th/15th century as a village belonging to the property of Shah Esmā'īl, the first Safavid ruler, Bījār developed to the size of a town only in the 13th/19th century. During World War I it was besieged and occupied by Russian, British, and Turkish troops. While its population before 1914 was said to be about 20,000 people, destructions of the war and a great famine in 1918 reduced it considerably. In 1976 its population was 17,224 inhabitants, predominantly Kurds.

Bījār is famous as one of the leading carpet weaving areas of Iran. According to Edwards (p. 123) the weaving area comprises the town itself and about forty villages within a radius of thirty miles. Here, as elsewhere, carpet manufacturing is mainly a cottage industry and there are no factories. The district of Bījār (former Garrūs) comprises a relatively small (6,084 km²) area in a rough, mountainous country (several peaks well over 2,000 m) traversed by the rivers Safīdrūd and Talvār, in which, due to severe winters, grain growing and animal husbandry (sheep) are beside carpet weaving the main occupations of the villagers. The total population of the district was 111,510 in 1976, with 36.8 percent of the total labor force (34,991 persons) employed in agriculture, and 44.1 percent in carpet weaving. According to Razmārā (V, p. 63) the district is made up of seven *dehestāns* (Pīrtāj, Kosrowābād, Seylatān,



Siāh Manṣūr, Karrānī, Gāvbāza, and Najafābād) comprising 276 villages.

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