



BOJNŪRD

BOJNŪRD, a town and district in Khorasan.

i. The town and district.

ii. History.

iii. Basic population data, 1956-2011.

i. The Town and District

The town of Bojnūrd (1976: 47,719 inhabitants), situated at 37°29' north latitude and 57°17' east longitude at the foot of the Ālādāg (q.v.) and in the center of the Khorasan trench, is of relatively recent origin. Possibly founded by the Safavids in connection with the resettlement of the Kurdish Šādlū tribe and the fortification of the Safavid frontiers, the traditional town consisted of a walled enclosure with *bāzārs*, four mosques, four gates, and eleven quarters within the enclosure. It was surrounded by fertile gardens and stretches of irrigated and rain-fed agriculture. Whether or not Bojnūrd is a successor to a former settlement, Būzanjerd, is still open to discussion.

In 1896 and 1929, severe earthquakes destroyed the town and its surroundings. The present town, open and without any historical or recent fortifications, was rebuilt in a rather modern grid-pattern. Today it serves as an administrative and trading center for the central parts of the Khorasan trench.



The district (*šahrestān*) of BojnŪrd covers an area of 17,245 km² and has a population of 235,760 (1976). Among them there are strong communities of Turkmans and Kurds. More than 75 percent of the population live in rural areas. This and the fact that more than 60 percent of all employed are engaged in agriculture are proof of the relatively great fertility of the *šahrestān*. Besides grains of different kinds, sugar beets, cotton, melon, pomegranates, and other fruits are grown.

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(Eckart Ehlers)

ii. History



Bojnūrd did not apparently exist as a district and town in pre-Safavid times; at least, it is not mentioned in the Timurid-period *Tārīk* of Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū (written 817-23/1414-20). Bojnūrd was in fact one of the five districts on the northeastern frontier of Iran facing the hostile Uzbeks and the Turkmen of Gorgān where Shah ‘Abbās I established in about 1008/1600 five Kurdish groups, three of which, those of Qūčān (Ḳabūšān), Daragaz (qq.v.), and Bojnūrd were still in existence till the end of the Qajar period.

According to local tradition, the Bojnūrd district had been ruled since the Mongol invasions of the 7th/13th century by Qarā-ilī Turks (Yate, pp. 179-80). Under the Šādellī Kurds, Yale was told (p. 195) that Bojnūrd town was founded “some 200 years ago” (i.e. ca. 1100/1700) by Dawlat Khan II, but destroyed during the local revolt in northern Khorasan of Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Sālār in 1849. During the 13th/19th and early 14th/20th centuries, several British travelers visited Bojnūrd and stayed with its chiefs (see A. Gabriel, *Die Erforschung Persiens*, Vienna, 1952, pp. 157-59, 219), including Fraser (1822), Napier (1874), Yate (1894), and Sykes (1908). Napier noted that the chief or *īlkānī* of Bojnūrd, as in the other Kurdish principalities of Daragaz and Ašraf, held the land there substantially free of taxation, on this strategic northeastern march, in return for providing the central government in Tehran with troops or for maintaining contingents of frontier guards, with the *īlkānī* raising the sums to support this force from the local villages. Yate (p. 195), visiting the then chief Yār-Moḥammad Khan, Sahm-al-Dawla, estimated that the new town of Bojnūrd had some 1,500 houses. The power of these tribal chiefs of Khorasan ended in the post-Qajar period.

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