



BĀJ (TRIBUTE)

BĀJ, a term denoting tribute to be paid by vassals to their overlord, in which sense it is also used as a generic term “tax,” or as referring to road tolls. Its original meaning may have been “portion, share” (from the root *bag* “to apportion,” *AirWb.*, col. 921). The term *bāji* is first encountered in an Old Persian inscription by Darius at Persepolis (ca. 500 B.C.): “. . . those are the countries that fear me and bring me tribute (*bājim*)” (DPe 1.9; Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 136). In Old Persian the tax collector was **bājikāra* (Frye, p. 139). In Middle Iranian times we find Parthian *bāž* (*b’z*) in the inscription of Šāpūr I on the Ka’ba-ye Zardošt at Naqš-e Rostam in which Šāpūr, after enumerating the parts of his empire, says, “all these lands (*šahr*) and kings (*šahrdār*) stood (or: were placed) in tribute and servitude (*pad bāž ud bandagīf*) to Us;” and about the vanquished Caesar Philippus the Arab he states that Philippus paid ransom money and “stood in tribute to Us” (ŠKZ 11.3-4; Gk. version 1.9 *eis phorous*). Early New Persian has the forms *bāz* (*Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*), *bāž* (*Šāh-nāma* and the Ghaznavid poet Bahrāmī Saraḡsī), and *bāj* (*Šāh-nāma* and Dawlatšāh Samarqandī [p. 49] when he records that Maḥmūd of Ġazna demanded tribute *bāj o karāj*, from the ruler of Daylam). The word is often found in compounds such as *bāžbān*, *bāžk’āh*, *bāždār* “tax collector,” and *bāžgāh* “tax collection office” (Wolff, *Glossar*).

The earliest mention of *bāj* in Islamic times is found in the *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam* (tr. Minorsky, p. 120), according to which in the town of Dār-e Torbat “there live Muslims who levy the toll (*bāz*) and keep watch on the road.” Ferdowsī used the word to mean “tribute,” as is clear from the phrase *bāž o sāv* “tribute and



tax” and from the term *bāž-e Rūm*, the tribute paid by the Romans to the victorious Sasanians.

Since Samanid times *bāj* most probably also designated road tolls, as evidenced from the *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*. This is also true of the Saljuq era. Under Sanjar, *bāj(-e masālek)*, or road tax, was levied to ensure safety on the roads (Horst, p. 78). This usage is also borne out by Nāṣer(-e) Ḳosrow, who calls Aleppo a *bājgāh* “customs house.” This use of the term is also borne out by a number of lexicographers. In the *Logāt-e fors* (ed. Dabīrsiāqī) the word is defined as *karāj* (p. 55), while ‘*Abd-al-Qāder* (ed. Salemann) explains it as customs duties, tithe, and tax. *Borhān-e qāṭe’* defines *bāj* as money taken from travelers on the road.

In Mongol times *bāj* was used as a synonym for *rāhdārī* (road tax). Rašīd-al-Dīn speaks about *bāj* taken from travelers at fixed stations on the road, at a specific rate (ed. Jahn, pp. 289ff.). Under the Jalayerids and the Timurids the word was used as meaning both road tax and tax. Naḳjavānī (pp. 167-69) uses the terms *bājgāh* and *bājdār* “road guards” and *bājdārī* “road tax,” and indicates that *bāj* was levied at a specific rate, namely, one cow: nine dinars; one donkey: eight dinars; one pack animal: seven dinars; one mule: six dinars; one camel: five dinars. Šaraf al-Dīn Yazdī (p. 378) uses it in a generic sense of “tax, impost,” as do contemporary texts (Aubin, p. 94; Asfezārī, p. 393). Ḳvāndamīr (p. 463) also uses it in a generic sense along with *tamgā*, taken from merchants, *zakāt*, and *karāj*. In Āq Qoyunlū and Qara Qoyunlū times *bāj* was used both for road and merchandise tax, as well as being a generic term. In a decree issued by Ya’qūb Qara Qoyunlū the word is used synonymously with *tamgāciān wa bājdārān wa mostahfezīn-e toroq-e dīvānī* (Modarres Ṭabāṭabā’ī, pp. 89-90). In the Ottoman fiscal *qānūns* for eastern Anatolia (formerly subject to the Āq Qoyunlū), which are slightly changed Āq Qoyunlū laws, the word *bāj* is used both for tax and road tax. The term *bāj-e tamgā* refers to a tax levied on all kinds of goods bought and sold in the city, while *bāj-e bozorg* was the customs duties levied on goods in transit or imported into the country (Barkan). According to Efendiev (p. 46) the levying of *bāj* under the Āq Qoyunlūs was heavy and one of the causes of the ruinous state of Iran. Under the Safavids the term is encountered less than in the preceding periods. Ḥasan Rūmlū (p. 337) uses it to denote tribute which neighboring tribes had paid for a long time to Herat. The unknown author of the ‘*Ālamārā-ye šafawī* (pp. 137, 309, 343, 473, 478, 539, 542, 596) writing around 1675 uses the phrase *bāj o karāj* in the sense of tribute that was paid every year by vassals (*bājgodār*) to



their suzerain. Eskandar Beg (ed. Afšār, 2nd ed., I, pp. 35, 492, 519) uses *bāj o karāj* in the general sense of tax.

In the eighteenth century Maḥmūd Ḥosaynī Monšī (fols. 305a, 360b, 660a) uses the phrase *bāj o karāj* several times to designate tax in general. Moḥammad-Hāšem Rostam-al-Ḥokamā' (p. 180) refers to Nāder Shah as *bājgīr-e kešvarsetān* "the tax-levying conqueror."

In Qajar times *bāj* is more frequently used, mainly with reference to merchandise or road tax. In Mašhad the city gate toll around 1840 was referred to as *bāj* (Ferrier, p. 117), while terms like *bāj-e rāh* (road tax), *bāj-e namak* (salt tax), *bāj o karāj-e koškbār* (dried fruit tax), *bāj-e filī* (elephant tax), and *bāj-e Šemrān* (Šemrān tax) are also found (*Majalla-ye māliā wa eqtešād* 1/2, Tehran, 1303 Š./1924, p. 4; *Qānūn-e elgā-ye māliāt-e šaṇ'atī wa māliāt-e šomārī*, 30 Āḍar 1305 Š./1926; Taḥwīldār, p. 123; *Qānūn-e 19 Bahman 1304 Š./1926*; *Qānūn-e 3 Rabī' I 1328/1909*; Kasrawī, *Mašrūṭa*, p. 39; *Baladīya-ye Ṭehrān, Dovvomīn sāl-nāma-ye eḥšā'ī-e šahr-e Ṭehrān*, Tehran, 1310 Š./1929, p. 193). However, the term is also used in the meaning of tribute; e.g., when the Qarabāg ruler Ebrāhīm Ḳalīl Khan Javānšīr was defeated by the Qajars, he offered to pay *bāj o karāj* and to give hostages (Fasā'ī, *Fārs-nāma*, p. 240). It is also used in the general sense of tax, as in the firman by Nāšer-al-Dīn Shah granting the bakers and butchers of Iran exemption from taxes in 1896 (Afzal-al-Molk, p. 20). The word is still used today, albeit with a rather negative connotation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ḡolām-Ḥosayn Afzal-al-Molk, *Afzal-al-tawārīk*, ed. M. Etteḥādīya, Tehran, 1361 Š./1982.

Mo'īn-al-Dīn Moḥammad Zamčī Asfezārī, *Rawzat al-jannāt fi awšāf madīnat Herāt*, ed. Moḥammad-Kāžem Emām, Tehran, 1338 Š./1959.

'Abd-al-Qāder Baḡdādī, ed. Salemann, *Abdulqadiri Bagdadensis lexicon Shahnamaianum*, St. Petersburg, 1895. *Ālamārā-ye šafawī*, ed. Yad-Allāh Šokrī,



Tehran, 1350 Š./1971.

J. Aubin, *Deux sayyids de Bam au XV^e siècle*, Wiesbaden, 1956.

Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, “Osmanlı devrinde Akkoyunlu hükümdarı Uzun Hasan Bey’e ait kanunlar,” *Tarihî vesikalar dergisi* 1/2, 1943, pp. 91-106, 1/3, 1943, pp. 184-97.

Dawlatšāh Samarqandī, *Taḍkeratal-šo‘arā’*, Tehran, n.d. O. A. Efendiev, *Obrazovanie azerbaïdzhanskogo gosudarstva Sefevidov v nachale XVI veka*, Baku, 1961.

J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys in Persia . . .*, London, 1857.

R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia*, Chicago, 1966.

H. Horst, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Grosselgügen und die Ḥōrazmšāhs*, Wiesbaden, 1964.

Ḳvāndamīr, *Dastūr al-wozarā’*, ed. Sa’īd Nafīsī, Tehran, 1317 Š./1938.

Maḥmūd Ḥosaynī Monšī, *Tārīk-eaḥmadšāhī*, Moscow, 1974.

Naḳjavānī, *Dastūr al-kāteb* II, Moscow, 1971.

Nāšer(-e) Ḳosrow, *Safar-nāma*, ed. M. Ġanīzāda, Tehran, n.d. Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-emobāarak-e Ġāzānī*, ed. K. Jahn, London, 1940.

Moḥammad-Hāšem Rostam-al-Ḥokamā’, *Rostam al-tawārīk*, ed. Moḥammad Mošīrī, Tehran, 1348 Š./1969.

Ḥasan Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīk*, ed. C. N. Seddon, Baroda, 1931, vol. 1.

Šāpūr I, inscription on the Ka’ba-ye Zardošt, ed. M. Back, *Die Sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, Acta Iranica 18, Tehran and Liège, 1978, pp. 284-371.

Modarres Ṭabāṭabā’ī, ed., *Farmānhā-ye torkmān-e Qara Qoyunlū wa Āq Qoyunlū*, Qom, 1352 Š./1973.

Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Khan Taḥwīldār, *Joġrāfiā-ye Ešfahān*, Tehran, 1342 Š./1963.

Šaraf-al-Dīn Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, Calcutta, 1888, vol. 2.



Search terms:

□□□ baj baaj