



BĀLANG

BĀLANG, citron, the fruit of a species of citrus tree (*Citrus medica cedrata*). The candied unripe fruit is an article of commerce under various names; in Europe it is used as a flavoring in cakes, particularly Christmas cakes. In modern Iran, chiefly in Gilān and Māzandarān, a tasty jam called *morabbā-ye bālang* is made from the ripe fruit.

The word *bālang* (also, in vulgar speech, incorrectly *pālang*) appears to be derived, through a putative metathesis *bārdang*, from *bādrang* which in turn is derived from Middle Persian *vātrang*. No explanation has yet been found for the Aramaic ideogram BYLBWŠY' (or something similar) given as the lexigraphic symbol for *vātrang* in the *Frahang ī Pahlavīk*.

This plainly Iranian word passed by way of Aramaic into Arabic as *toranj*, *otronj*, *otroj* (Pers. *toranj*, *otroj*). It is found in the Talmud as *etrōg* (Hebrew) and *etrōgā* or *etrūgā* (Aramaic), and likewise in Syriac, perhaps reflecting a putative *vaθrāng/vaθrāy* with change of the *v* to *'*. For the Jews, the *etrōg* or “apple of paradise” is one of the four plants of the festive bunch of flowers in the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth).

The same word *bālang/bādrang* is also a name of the sweet basil (usually called *rayhān*) and appears to have been wrongly applied to some other plants. It enters into compounds such as *bādrangbū(ya)*, *bālangū*, *palangmešk* or *palangmūš* (varieties of calamint) and probably also *bādrū*, *bādrūj*, *bādrūz*, *bādrūča*, and the like (a variety of basil).



As regards the etymology of the Middle Persian *vātrang*, the word is probably to be explained as a compound of *vāt* (New Persian *bād*) “wind” with the connotation of “scent” plus *rang* “color” or “variety,” thus meaning scented (cf. *rayḥān*, the Arabic word for sweet basil, from *rīḥ* “wind” with the connotation of scent). Another possibility, however, is that it might be a popular adaptation of a foreign, perhaps Eastern loanword; the ending *ang* could be derived from an old form *an-(a)k*.

Unrelated to the above are the homonymous words *pālang* (oxhide shoe worn by peasants), *pālang/pālank* or *palang/palank* (bed), *peleng*, *pelengak* (filliping, snapping of finger) in the dialect of Shiraz, also *pālang* (small window) and *palang/palank* = *peleng* (width of a gate), which may be from *pā(y)* (foot) plus *leng* (leg, also step as a measure of length).

See also [citrus fruits](#).

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