



BARDA AND BARDA-DĀRI I. ACHAEMENID PERIOD

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i. In the Achaemenid Period

At the beginning of the Achaemenid period, the institution of slavery was still poorly developed in Iran. In Media a custom existed whereby a poor man could place himself at the disposal of a rich person if the latter agreed to feed him. The position of such a man was similar to that of a slave. However, he could at any time leave his master if he was poorly fed (see I. M. D'yakonov [Diakonoff], *Istoriya Midii*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1956, pp. 334-35). By the time their own state had emerged (the first half of the 6th cent. b.c.), the Persians knew only of such primitive slavery, and slave labor was not yet economically significant.

The most common term to designate slaves in ancient Iran was the word *bandaka-*, a derivative of *banda-* “bond, fetter” (see *banda* and Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 199). This word was utilized not only to designate actual slaves, but also to express general dependence. For instance, in the Behistun [Bīsoṭūn] inscription, Darius I calls his satraps and generals his *bandakas* (in the Babylonian version *qallu* “slave”). Likewise Darius I calls Gadates, his governor in Ionia, his slave (*doulos*; see W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* I, Leipzig, 1915, no. 22), just as in many countries of the ancient



East, all the subjects of the king, including even the highest-ranking officials, were considered slaves of the king. Therefore the Greek authors wrote that, with the exception of the king, the entire Persian people were a crowd of slaves (see, e.g., Herodotus, 7.135; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.5.38). In the same way, the authority of the heads of patriarchal families over members of their own families was tyrannical and they could treat their children as slaves (see Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 9.12).

One of the Old Iranian terms to designate slaves was **grda*-the original meaning of which was “household slave(s).” This term is attested in the Aramaic letters of Aršām, the satrap of Egypt in the 5th century b.c., in Babylonian texts of the Achaemenid period in the form *garda/u*, and in Elamite documents from Persepolis as *kurtaš* (see G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1957, p. 63). These persons were workers of the royal household and of the households of Persian nobility in Iran, as well as in Babylonia and Egypt. The overwhelming majority of *kurtaš* consisted of foreigners. In terms of their composition and legal status, the *kurtaš* were not homogeneous. In all probability, there were among them a significant number of slaves who were prisoners of war, a few free people who worked voluntarily for wages, and some individuals who were temporarily working off their labor service. Thus, with the passage of time the word *kurtaš* acquired the broader meaning “worker.”

In the Elamite version of the Behistun inscription *kurtaš* is the equivalent of Old Persian *māniya*-(in the Babylonian version it is rendered with a term meaning “hired laborers”). *Māniya*-probably meant “household slave(s)” (see Kent, *Old Persian*, p.202).

As a result of the far-flung conquests of the Achaemenids there occurred a sharp change in the royal household and in the households of the Persian nobility from primitive patriarchal slavery to intensive utilization of the labor of foreign workers in agriculture and partly in crafts. A portion of these foreigners were exploited as slaves, while the remainder were treated as semi-free people and were settled on royal land. Usually they were prisoners of war recruited from those who had rebelled against Persian rule or put up resistance to the Persian army (see M. Dandamayev, “Foreign Slaves on the Estates of the Achaemenid Kings and their Nobles,” in *Trudy dvadtsat' pyatogo mezhdunarodnogo kongressa vostokovedov* II, Moscow, 1963, pp. 151-52).

A substantial number of slaves who performed domestic work for the



Achaemenids and Persian nobility (bakers, cooks, cupbearers, eunuchs, etc.) were also recruited from among the representatives of vanquished peoples. Babylonia alone was obliged to supply the Persian king for these purposes an annual tribute of 500 boys (Herodotus, 3.92). A certain number of such slaves were purchased by Persians on the slave market as well (Herodotus, 8.105).

Our information on privately owned slaves in Iran is scanty and haphazard. A Babylonian slave sale contract from Persepolis has been preserved and dated to the reign of Darius I. However, the contracting parties as well as the slave himself were Babylonians (see M. W. Stolper, "The Neo-Babylonian Text from the Persepolis Fortification," *JNES* 43, 1984, pp. 299-303). In 523 b.c. a certain Razamarma, son of Razamumarga, and Aspumetana, son of Asputatika, sold their slave women Kardara and Patiza to a Babylonian for $2 \frac{2}{3}$ minas of silver (J. N. Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Cambyses, König von Babylon*, Leipzig, 1890, no. 384). The contract was drafted in Babylonian at Humadēšu (Uvādaicaya in the Old Persian version of the Behistun inscription), a city in the Persepolis area (see R. Zadok, "On the Connections between Iran and Babylonia in the Sixth Century B.C.," *Iran* 14, 1976, p. 74; Stolper, art. cit., p. 306). The sellers and the slave women, judging from their names, were of Iranian descent, but the buyer was a Babylonian. In 528 b.c. a slave woman who had been purchased in Elam was sold in the Babylonian city Opis (Strassmaier, op. cit., no. 143). In 508 b.c. there was among the slaves of the Egibi business house in Babylon a slave woman from Gandara (J. N. Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Darius, König von Babylon*, Leipzig, 1897, no. 379, line 44). In 511 b.c. one Babylonian sold "his slave woman, a Bactrian" in Sippar (see for references M. A. Dandamaev, *Slavery in Babylonia*, DeKalb, 1984, p. 108; cf. *ibid.*, p. 111, on a slave with the Iranian name Patiriddta). These slaves apparently were prisoners of war (the "booty of the bow").

Under the Achaemenids in Babylonia and other conquered countries Persian nobles became large slave owners (see for references Dandamaev, op. cit., p. 111). According to some documents, Iranians sold their slaves in Babylonia (see, e.g., H. G. Stigers, "Neo- and Late Babylonian Business Documents," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 28, 1976, no. 22).

On the whole, there was only a small number of slaves in relation to the number of free persons even in the most developed countries of the Achaemenid empire, and slave labor was in no position to supplant the labor of free workers. The basis of agriculture was the labor of free farmers and tenants and in handicrafts the labor of free artisans, whose occupation was



usually inherited within the family, likewise predominated. In these countries of the empire, slavery had already undergone important changes by the time of the emergence of the Persian state. Debt slavery was no longer common. The practice of pledging one's person for debt, not to mention self-sale, had totally disappeared by the Persian period. In the case of nonpayment of a debt by the appointed deadline, the creditor could turn the children of the debtor into slaves. A creditor could arrest an insolvent debtor and confine him to debtor's prison. However, the creditor could not sell a debtor into slavery to a third party. Usually the debtor paid off the loan by free work for the creditor, thereby retaining his freedom.

Judging from Babylonian documents and Aramaic papyri of the Achaemenid period, slaves were sometimes set free with the stipulation that they continue to serve the master or provide him with food and clothes as long as the latter was alive (see Dandamaev, *op. cit.*, pp. 438-55).

In Babylonia, the slaves often worked on their own and paid a certain quitrent from the *peculium* they possessed. The size of the quitrent on the average when calculated in monetary terms amounted to 12 shekels of silver a year. Such a sum was also what the average annual payment of a hired adult employee amounted to, regardless of whether he was free or a slave. The slave himself cost around 60-90 shekels of silver, and for 1 shekel it was possible to purchase 180 liters of barley or dates.

Bibliography : Given in the text.