



BĀRŪT

BĀRŪT (also *bārūt* and *bārūd*) “gunpowder” is a loanword from Arabic; it passed from Turkish into Persian usage. This is also clear from the subsidiary Arabic term for gunpowder, *dawāʾ* or “remedy,” which in fact is the first word used in Arabic to denote gunpowder. In India and Afghanistan, where the word *bārūt* was borrowed from the Persian, the subsidiary term *dārū* “remedy” is also used. Similar usage is also found in Iran where, for example, the Jaft tribe in Kurdistan refer to gunpowder as *darmān* “remedy”; the same word is also used in that sense by the Baluch (Schlimmer, pp. 469-70). The author of *Borhān-e qāteʾ* (ed. Moʿīn, I, p. 216) explains that *bārūt* or *namak-e čīnī* (Chinese salt) is *dārū-ye tofang* “powder for the musket” and adds that in Syriac it is the name given to *šūra* (niter, saltpeter), the principle element of *bārūt*.

The earliest use of the word in Persian probably dates from the last quarter of the 9th/15th century. According to an 11th/17th-century text, “*bārūt* and other war supplies were stored in the Ostūnāvand fortress” in 908/1503 (*ʿĀlamārā-ye šafawī*, p. 88). The same text, for the next year, also refers to the fact that there was *bārūt* stored in the citadel of Šūštar (p. 90). Similar information is offered by Lāhijānī (p. 78) and *Tārīk-e kāndān-e Maṛʾašī* (p. 64). Nevertheless, *bārūt* is not a word that is frequently used in the historical texts, and the same holds for the arms necessary to use *bārūt* effectively.

Guns and cannon, and thus gunpowder, probably were first introduced in Iran during Uzun Ḥasan Āq Qoyunlū’s reign; in 1473 he asked Venice for “artillery, arquebuses, and gunners” (Woods, p. 128). According to an early 11th/17th-



century source, the requested military personnel and cannon were sent; the Venetians sent “100 artillerymen of experience and capacity, for in the matter of their artillery the Persian armies suffered greatly from a paucity of cannon, while on the other hand the Turkish armies in Asia were very well equipped in this arm, and they could effect much damage in their attack” (*Don Juan of Persia*, p. 98).

Minorsky, however, in his *Persia in A.D. 1479* (pp. 89, 115-16) doubts whether the Āq Qoyunlū had the use of firearms, although in Appendix II of the book he seems to accept it as a fact. It is possible that the sultan’s personal troops had been the only group permitted to use firearms in the late 9th/15th century (Woods, p. 8). Two events indicate that cannon may have been used by the Āq Qoyunlū. According to Venetian sources the Āq Qoyunlū captured Ottoman artillery in 977/1472. The captured firearms were later used in the winter campaign against the Mamluks (Woods, pp. 129, 270 n. 109). In 890/1485, the Āq Qoyunlū used artillery against the infidel Samtzkhe in Georgia. The Persian account of this campaign is ambiguous about the nature of the artillery used; only once does the author use *tūp* “cannon,” while using the term *ra’d* (*ostād-e ra’d*; *dīg-e ra’d*), which spewed dragon-like fire, a few times. *Ra’d* usually refers to a grenade launcher or a pyrotechnic device used to hurl flammable material into the enemy’s camp. However, the text also mentions that rocks (*sang*) were hurled into the fortress, thus referring to a cannon (Abīvardī, pp. 51, 53-54). Another instance where the Āq Qoyunlū used cannon is reported to have occurred at Tiflis in 1489 (Woods, p. 285, n. 75). Finally, the Safavids in 913/1507, during the siege of Ḥeṣn Kayfā in Dīārbakr, used “a mortar of bronze, of four spans, which they brought from Mirdin [Mārdīn] This mortar was cast in that country at the time Jacob Solṭān (Ya’qūb Solṭān Āq Qoyunlū, d. 896/1490; *A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia*, p. 153).

The pre-1500 use of gunpowder and firearms seems likely in view of the fact that Shah Esmā’īl Ṣafawī used handguns and cannon in his fight for the throne of Iran. Qāzī Aḥmad Qomī (mistakenly) states that during the battle between the Āq Qoyunlū Alvand Shah and Shah Esmā’īl (907/1501) a gun (*tofang*) was heard for the first time in Iran (Glassen, p. 212), although he also refers to an earlier instance in 905/1499 (Glassen, p. 183; *tofang-e ra’d-āhang*). This is also confirmed by the 11th/17th century *Ālamārā-ye Ṣafawī* (p. 68). Thereafter, the use of (hand)guns (*tofang*) is attested by several sources (Ḥasan Rūmlū, pp. 171, 186, 206, 212, 221; *Ālamārā-ye Ṣafawī*, pp. 96, 102, 272, 290, 335, 483, 493, 519).



Gunpowder of varying quality was produced in many cities in Iran. In Isfahan, several gunpowder makers (*bārūtsāz*) were employed in the arsenal (*tūpkāna*; *Taḍkerat al-molūk*, p. 95). According to Thevenot the gunpowder produced in Lār was of good quality (II, p. 132). However, according to Du Mans (p. 208) the gunpowder makers did not purify their saltpeter or sulfur adequately or mix these with the correct amount of charcoal.

Gunpowder is also used in the traditional Iranian craft of stone quarrying. Quarrymen (*kūhborr*, *sangšekan*) pour ordinary powder into holes bored in the stone surface and plug them with cotton wads. They ignite these charges with saltpeter fuses (*fatīla*) to blast away the superficial layers of rock and thereby reach the valuable formations below the surface (Wulff, p. 127).

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