



## BĪSTĠĀNĪ

**BĪSTĠĀNĪ**, Persian term for pay and rations of troops used in classical texts, corresponding to Arabic *ʿešrīniya*. According to the 4th/10th-century encyclopedist K̄vārazmī (*Mafātīḥ al-ʿolūm*, p. 65; Pers. tr., p. 66), in Khorasan *ešrīniya* was paid four times a year. Qodāma b. Jaʿfar (d. 337/948-49) calls the troops' pay *tesʿīniya* and describes it as due four times a year on every ninetieth day (pp. LXIV, 16). Gardīzī (ed. Ḥabībī, p. 143) and Ebn K̄allekān (*Wafayāt* V, p. 464), using the now lost *Ketāb al-taʿrīḳ fī-aḳbār wolāt K̄orāsān* of Abū ʿAlī Sallāmī (d. 300/912-13), state that in the reign of the Saffarid ʿAmr b. Layṯ the troops were reviewed and paid in cash every three months. Ebn K̄allekān refers to the precedence of this practice under Anōšīravān which, according to Barthold, was not just coincidental (*Turkestan*<sup>2</sup>, p. 221; Pers. tr. K. Kešāvarz, *Torkestān-nāma*, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973, I, pp. 478-79; see also Zarrīnkūb, pp. 653-54).

According to Ebn Ḥawqal nowhere in the east in his time (4th/10th cent.) was there a government which paid the *ʿešrīniya* of its troops so regularly as the Samanids did; the amir Abū Šāleḥ Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ never failed to disburse each man's pay punctually at the end of every ninety days (pp. 468-69; tr. J. Šeʿār, Tehran, 1345 Š./1966, p. 198). ʿOtbī (d. 427/1035-36), the historian of the early Ghaznavids, uses the plural *ʿešrīniyāt* in reference to payments made to the troops of Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ's accession, which probably points to the use of *bīstġānī* in the Samanid period (cf. the use of *bīstġānī* in *Tafsīr-e Ṭabarī*, p. 1381, and ʿOtbī, tr., p. 187). The Saljuq vizier K̄vāja Neẓām-al-Molk (*Sīāsāt-nāma*, p. 135) defines *bīstġānī* as the payments made to the *ġolāms* (slave-



soldiers) and the army every three months from the treasury, which dated back to the time of the ancient kings' custom and was still practiced by the late Ghaznavids.

In Bayhaqī's account of the reign of the Ghaznavid Sultan Mas'ūd (ed. Fayyāz, pp. 65, 336, 348, 507, 555, 581, 600, 660, 679) two terms *ejrī* (= *jīra*, i.e., rations) and *bīstgānī* are used together but clearly distinguished (pp. 709, 726, 886, 926), *bīstgānī* being soldiers' wages paid in cash (p. 709), or sometimes by drafts (*barāt*, p. 600) called *tasbīb* (p. 336), and handed over in advance (p. 726; cf. *Tārīk-eSīstān*, p. 293, Tūyserkānī, p. 115), Bosworth (*Ghaznavids*, pp. 123-24) notes that payment of the *bīstgānī* often took place on the occasion of a troop review and was made in advance so that the troops might equip themselves for a forthcoming campaign; while the officials and pensioners of the Ghaznavids received monthly stipends (*mošāhara*), it was no doubt preferable to pay the troops at longer intervals because they were often away at distant outposts or war-fronts.

According to Ebn Ḥawqal, the Samanids paid all their civil and military staff on the same preannounced day, first the *ḡolāms* and the high officials and generals, then the rest (pp. 468-69, Pers. tr., p. 198; cf. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 124). From some passages in the *Tārīk-eBayhaqī*, too (pp. 199, 581), it appears that the term *bīstgānī* was applied to the pay of servants and *ḡolāms*.

The question why *bīstgānī*, a derivative of *bīst* "twenty," was used in this sense has been much discussed. One surmise is that the troops were paid every twenty days (Kazimirski, s.v. *'ešrīnīya*; *Farhang-e tārīkī*, s.v. *bīstgānī*; 'A. Eqbāl, p. 123 n. 1; M. Dabīrsiāqī, p. 177). This is not convincing, since there was no reason to make payments at twenty-day intervals when a twelve-month calendar was in use. Manīnī's explanation (I, p. 89) that a soldier's pay was twenty dinars is untenable because twenty dinars was too large a sum for a soldier's pay (Bayhaqī, ed. Nafīsī, II, comm., p. 1068). Twenty dirhams per month is more plausible. Barthold suggested tentatively that the total payment made to army under the Samanids was 20 million dirhams, hence the term *bīstgānī* (*Turkestan*, p. 230 n. 11). Still another suggestion is that *bīstgānī* referred to the number of men (*bīst*) paid at a time (Anwarī, pp. 79-82). In later periods, however, the term *bīstgānī* in the sense of twenty dirhams per month seems to have acquired a wider meaning in military-bureaucratic parlance and remained in use despite changes in pay rates and pay dates (Gardīzī, ed. Ḥabībī, pp. 86 n. 12, 269 n. 4, 311). Nafīsī, however, noted in his detailed commentary that the suffix *-gānī* was used by early writers with reference to



the *meṭqāl* (measure of weight = 4.68 grams), e.g., *kamar-e zar-e hazārgānī* (sword belt [adorned] with 1,000 *meṭqāls* of gold), *sākt-e hazārgānī* and *ostām-e zar-e hazār-meṭqāl* (harness and trappings with 1,000 *meṭqāls* of gold), and *kamar-e haftšadgānī* (sword belt with 700 *meṭqāls*) (Bayhaqī, pp. 190, 347, 351, 352, 430, 477; cf. Sanā'ī, p. 758, and Kāqānī Šervānī, p. 566, where *hazārgānī* means “very valuable”). From these and other examples, Nafīsī (II, pp. 1065, 1068) inferred that *bīstgānī* denoted a twenty-*meṭqāl* coin circulating and customarily used for paying troops in the early period and that it later came to mean remuneration in general. This was thought probable by Fayyāz, (*Tārīk-e Bayhaqī*, Tehran, 1324 Š./1945, p. 59 n. 1) and was also endorsed by Reżāzāda Šafaq (p. 73). An alternative meaning, suggested by Nafīsī in view of the use of *dah-dahī* (ten-tenths) and *panj-dahī* (five-tenths) with reference to gold, might be that a *bīstgānī* was a coin containing 20 percent of pure gold; but Nafīsī preferred the first interpretation (II, pp. 1066, 1068). The coin weight hypothesis certainly sounds plausible. Nafīsī's doubts (II, p. 1068) concerning the willingness of soldiers to wait three months for their pay are unfounded, because the troops were usually paid in advance and the custom of paying the *bīstgānī* four times annually is mentioned in independent sources.

It is not improbable, however, that changes in the timing of payments to troops were gradually introduced, as evidenced in a passage in the *Sīāsāt-nāma* (p. 154) where Alptegīn asks a Turkish *gōlām* whether he was not receiving *bīstgānī* and *mošāhara* every month. This may also explain why some lexicographers define *bīstgānī* as a monthly wage (e.g. *Farhang-e Jahāngīrī*, p. 22-26; *Farhang-e rašīdī*; *Farhang-e Ānand Rāj*; Vullers, I, p. 299; Wolf, *Glossar*; Eqbāl, p. 123 n. 1). Moreover the word later came to include servants' wages, officials' salaries, and any payment of money to civil and military staff on a fixed date (*Farhang-e jahāngīrī*, loc. cit.; *Borhān-e qāṭe'*, ed. Mo'īn; Hedāyat, s.v.; Eqbāl, p. 123 n. 1).

The compound *bīstgānk̄vār* (receiver of *bīstgānī*) is also used by Gardīzī (pp. 269, 272) and Bayhaqī (pp. 199, 581).



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