



ČERĪK

ČERĪK (also *jerīk*, from Mongol *tserig* “warrior[s]”), originally troops sent by an individual or camp (*yort*) to serve in the royal army (Petrushevskii, II, p. 769). The *čerīk* system persisted in Iran for many centuries, in slightly varying forms.

The Mongol period. In the 7th-8th/13th-14th centuries the term *čerīk* was used mainly in the sense of “army,” and *čerīkčī* referred to an individual soldier (Quatremère, p. 380; Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 85, 99, 183, 290, 306). For military purposes the Mongols had divided their territory into regions called toman (Pers. *tūmān*, Mong. *tümān*; cf. Doerfer, II, p. 632), each of which was to supply 10,000 men when called upon; such a contingent was commanded by an amir-e *tūmān*, each group of 1,000 men by an amir-e *hazāra*, each group of 100 men by an amir-e *sada*, and each group of ten men by an amir-e *čerīk* (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, p. 309). In reality, however, the toman almost always supplied fewer than 10,000 men; for example, two toman in the region of Isfahan and the toman of *Ķūzestān* sent only 1,000 and 277 men of the sedentary population respectively in the case of war (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 34, 122-23). Bertold Spuler (*Mongolen*⁴, p. 333) has therefore suggested that the term *tūmān* referred to an area with 10,000 inhabitants, rather than to a fixed levy of soldiers. Nevertheless, Rašīd-al-Dīn consistently uses the word *čerīk* in the sense of army (*Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 71, 76, 99, 185, 290, 305-6, 324) and also in the collective sense of “the military” (*mardom-e čerīk*, p. 307). Nomads also were all liable for military service, but the sedentary population was supposed to supply *čerīk*; each nine families (about



40 people) were to send one man (Petrushevskii, tr. Kešavarz, II, p. 770).

Jovaynī (ed. Qazvīnī, II, p. 197; tr. Boyle, II, p. 465) referred to the element drawn from settled areas and probably not of Mongol stock as *čerīk-e pīāda* (infantry), as opposed to the mounted Mongol cavalry. Čerīk service was compulsory: Naḵjavānī reported that since ancient times each yort was supposed to supply a number of men from a specific age group (*čerīk yortčī*) for the Mongol armies but that many tried to avoid such service (p. 494; II, pp. 51, 64, 150). According to Jovaynī, the Mongol governors Mahmud Yalavāj and his son Mas‘ūd Beg abolished “compulsory service (*mu’an*) in the levies (*ḥashar*) and the cherig” in Transoxania (I, p. 75; tr. Boyle, I, p. 97).

The Timurid and Turkman period. By the end of the 7th/14th century, čerīk had also come to mean an impost to finance military operations. In 818/1415 and 857/1453 it was in use in the Kermān area both as a fiscal term and in its earlier military sense (Aubin, pp. 42, 69, 72). The čerīk could apparently be paid either in cash or in kind. Under the Qara and Āq Qoyunlū rulers the Mongol toman system was continued; by that time the word čerīk referred not only to one of several special imposts but also specifically to irregular troops; Ḳonjkī refers to Shaikh Ḥaydar Ṣafawī’s followers in 983/1483 as “an innumerable levy (*ḥašar*) of people” (Minorsky, p. 71). In one instance a firman (decree) explicitly mentions the *zar-e čerīk o pīāda* (“gold for the levies and footsoldiers”; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, pp. 109, 126), which suggests that the čerīk included both mounted and infantry troops; the latter were especially scorned by regulār mounted troops (Petrushevskii, pp. 290-91).

The Safavid and Zand periods. Under the Safavids the čerīk continued to be collected either in service or in cash. Several firmans mention it as an irregular impost (Bāstānī Parīzī, pp. 155, 160; Schimkoreit, pp. 110, 114, 120, 130, 193, 418). Christians, who were exempt from military service, had to pay *zar-e čerīk* (Bāstānī Parīzī, loc. cit.; Bournoutian, p. 140, n. 164). The čerīk was more than simply an impost, however; fighting men were also needed, and a given territory was thus supposed to supply able-bodied men (*čerīk-e ān welāyat*; Šokrī, pp. 492, 901). In late Safavid times levies were also called *čerīk o yasaq[ha]* (Mong. *yasaq* “law,” “order,” or “tribute”). It is clear from the context that the term referred to both cash payments and irregular soldiers (*Taḍkerat al-molūk*, ed. Minorsky, pp. 34, 76; Röhrborn, p. 51). Other terms for levies were *mardom-jārī o čerīk* and *čerīk o il-jārī*. It is clear that in all these instances both tribal and village levies were included (Sotūda, p. 328; Fragner, pp. 186, 187, 189, 222). A document written in 1215/1800 mentions inter alia



the military organization of Iran under Shah Sultan Ḥosayn Ṣafawī; it includes a detailed list of the tribes that were required to supply *čerik*, or irregular levies (both mounted and foot), for *il-jārī*. The anonymous author notes that such troops, *laškar-e il-jārī*, had to bring their own arms and food but received additional supplies as soon as the army supply masters (*sūrsātčīān*) arrived (Dānešpazūh, pp. 397-98, 400).

The terms *čerik* and *il-jārī* continued to be used in the sense of “irregular levies” during the Zand period Šūštārī, pp. 97, 158; Nāmī, p. 142; Kalāntar, p. 16), but apparently payments were no longer collected in cash. Karīm Khan Zand claimed that he could raise 20,000 *čerik* in forty days’ time (Nāmī, p. 272; Kalāntar, p. 43).

The Qajar period. In the Qajar period the term *čerik* referred especially to irregular tribal levies, who supplied their own clothes, arms, and other equipment, in contrast to regulār army units. Mostawff states that the new *bonīca* System replaced the old *čerik* system in about 1266/1850 by *Amīr-e Kabīr* (*Šarḥ-e zendagāni* I, p. 69). Despite this apparent change in the manner of mustering irregular troops, the term *čerik* continued to be used. In 1325/1906 the governor of Ṭalāt (i.e., Malāyer, Nehāvand, and Tūyserkān, also called Welāyat-e Segāna) informed the prime minister (*sadr-e a’zam*) that he was “busy mustering the soldiers (*sarbāz*), the cavalry (*savār*), and the irregular levies (*čerik*) of the province” (Qā’emmaqāmī, p. 296). The term *čerik-e ilat*, referring to irregular mounted tribal levies, was used as late as 1302 Š./1923 in the Kalkāl area (Afšār, pp. 165, 166, 168), and the term *il-jārī* remained in use until the end of the 19th Century (Yağmā’ī, p. 17). That in the 13th/19th century payments in cash were also accepted in lieu of *čerik* duty is clear from a report from Mīnāb on the Persian Gulf coast; in that area *čerik* was also called *tofangčī* (Sadīd-al-Salṭana, pp. 3, 68).

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