



ECONOMY V. FROM THE ARAB CONQUEST TO THE END OF THE IL-KHANIDS (PART 3)

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As the needs of the state grew, there was a constant shortage of specie to meet its expenses. As a result of the devastation and demographic decline brought about by the invasions, there was less land under cultivation and fewer people engaged in agriculture. Harvests were smaller and agricultural production probably lower. The attempt to squeeze more revenue from smaller areas and fewer people was unsuccessful, and increasingly the government had recourse to tax-farming, by which means it was able to transfer the claims of its creditors to the tax-farmers. Apart from the shortage of liquid funds, because the Mongols had no officials capable of running the fiscal administration at the local level, it was convenient to place the responsibility for the provincial tax administration on the tax-farmers; and so the tax farm or *moqāṭaʿa* became the dominant fiscal institution of the Il-khanate.

The system itself led to extortion and oppression, and this was compounded by the fact that drafts for all manner of purposes were drawn on the revenues of the districts given on a *moqāṭaʿa* tenure and deducted from the final sum due



from the tax-farmer. Those drawn in favor of the ruler, Mongol princesses, princes and, amirs had priority in that order on the available funds (Falak ‘Alā’, p. 108). In practice, *force majeure* was probably the deciding factor. Military expeditions to collect money and goods were common practice, and those who arrived first would seize whatever they could.

The contract for a tax-farm was usually for a number of years—three was probably a fairly normal term. The tax-farmer paid part of the final sum due in advance, or he might be required to give as a guarantee a bond (*molčalka*) from a rich merchant or other person of substance. The tax-farmers were mainly local people—merchants, landowners, members of the bureaucracy, and amirs temporarily resident in the district. It was rare for them to be members of the Mongol military classes, perhaps partly because local people could be more easily coerced by the central government. The clearing of the tax-farmer’s accounts was frequently the cause of long and bitter controversy and the occasion for the expenditure of much money by the tax-farmer. Disputed cases were submitted to the *yarğū* (the Mongol court of inquiry or interrogation) and might end in the dismissal and even execution of the tax-farmer, whether innocent or guilty (Lambton, “Mongol Fiscal Administration,” pp. 110 ff.).

Economic conditions deteriorated under Gaykātū (691-94/1292-95). The treasury, which had been depleted during the campaigns between Aḥmad Tegüder and Arğūn, was empty (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, p. 182). In 693/1294 a devastating cattle plague (*yūt*), which decimated the Mongol herds (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 271), further worsened the situation. Šadr-al-Dīn Aḥmad Kāledī Zanjānī, Gaykātū’s *šāheb-e dīvān*, proposed that a paper currency (*čao/čāv*) after the Chinese model should be introduced to solve the financial pressure. The result was disastrous. A paper currency was unfamiliar to the Persians. All commerce ceased and the *čao* had to be withdrawn (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 274; Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* III, pp. 37-39; Jahn, 1970, pp. 101-35).

In 694/1295 Gaykātū was overthrown by Bāydū. Demands were sent to most of the tax districts for the payment of taxes in advance, for extraordinary levies (*nemer, nemerī*), and for a levy of 20 per cent on flocks. Before the year was out Bāydū was overthrown by Ġāzān (694-703/1295-1304). The treasury was still empty and it was clear that the state could not survive unless the finances were put on a sound basis, a policy which presupposed an agricultural revival and control of the Mongol *ordūs* and Mongol officials.



Arġūn's policy towards the *ordūs* had not proved satisfactory and so Ġāzān allocated to each *ordū* a specific province from the royal *injū* lands (*az mawāze'-e injū-ye kāšš*; Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārīkò*, Baku, II, p. 537), gave it into their possession and authorized them to make requisitions on the taxes of the province as laid down by the *dīvān*. This did little to improve the economic situation in the provinces concerned.

In 697/1298 Ġāzān appointed Sa'd-al-Dīn Moḥammad Sāvajī successor to Ṣadr-al-Dīn Zanjānī as vizier and made Rašīd-al-Dīn Fażl-Allāh Hamadānī his associate; and in 699/1299-1300 Rašīd-al-Dīn became *šāḥeb-e dīvān*. He was a keen agronomist, as witness his agricultural treatise, *Āṭār wa aḥyā'* (see Lambton, "The *Āthār wa aḥyā'* of Rashīd al-Dīn"), and his may well have been the initiative not only in Ġāzān's agricultural reforms, but also in his attempts to increase the centralization of the state.

It seems that it was becoming increasingly difficult to provision the army because of the high price of grain. With a view to bringing more land back into cultivation and to increasing supplies, a special *dīvān*, the *dīvān-e kāleša*, was set up to register and classify dead lands (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 351 ff.). In or about 698/1298-9 a decree (*yarlīg*) was issued for the transfer to the *dīvān-e kāleša* of considerable areas of land in different parts of the empire. This land was to be given to peasants, who were to be supplied with seed, draught animals, and implements (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 349). However, the terms on which the land was to be transferred were not particularly favorable to the peasants (Lambton, *Continuity*, pp. 178 ff.). No records remain to show what effect these transfers of land, if in fact they were made, had on the economy of the country.

A number of other reforms designed to prevent the excesses of Mongol *ilčīs* as they traveled through the country, to improve security and public order, to give security of tenure to landowners, to protect the peasants from oppression—flight from the land by the time of Ġāzān had reached major proportions (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-e ġūāzānī*, pp. 247-48)—and to reform the land revenue system were undertaken. The dates of these measures are uncertain, but they probably belong to the years 698/1298-99 onward.

Efforts to reform the payment of allowances (*taġār*) to the army were unsuccessful (*Tārīk-e ġāzān*, pp. 300-01), and finally in 703/1303-04 Ġāzān determined to revive the grant of *eqṭā's* to the military in a modified form, so that the army would consider the land their own and be provided with money



and provisions. Rašīd-al-Dīn alleges that one of the reasons inducing Ġāzān to take this step was that the soldiers themselves wanted to own estates and engage in agriculture (ibid., p. 302, cf. p. 241). Whether this was the case or not, Ġāzān decided to give to the army as *eqtā*'s those provinces through which the army's lines of communication lay, or in which its *yaylāq* or *qešlāq* were situated. The intention was not, however, to transform the soldiers into agriculturalists; they were to remain a military class but were to live on the land from which they drew their pay. The land was to be cultivated by their slaves or by those peasants who were on the land and who were, in effect, to be tied to the land (for the terms of the *yarlīg* granting *eqtā*'s to the soldiers, see Lambton, *Continuity*, pp. 127-28). This decision was not taken until 703/1303-4, the year of Ġāzān's death. It is questionable, therefore, whether it was implemented. However, Mostawfī mentions *eqtā*'s for the army in various places in Azarbaijan, Arrān, Šīrvān, and Khorasan (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, pp. 83, 92-93, 147). These were all in districts through which the Mongol armies frequently passed on their campaigns.

The attempt of Ġāzān Khan and Rašīd-al-Dīn to revive agriculture and to reassert the dominance of the agricultural sector over the nomadic was at best marginal and hindered by renewed turbulence by the nomads after the death of Öljeitü (Ūljāytū) and the emergence of new federations of tribes, notably the *Āq Qoyunlū* and the *Qara Qoyunlū*, toward the end of the Il-khanate. Rašīd-al-Dīn asserts that prosperity returned to the Il-khanate during the reign of Ġāzān Khan, but Mostawfī, while giving due weight to the reforms of Ġāzān Khan, shows that the change was not as dramatic as claimed by Rašīd-al-Dīn, although he alleges further improvement under his own patron, Öljeitü (*Tārīk-e gozīda*, p. 606). Waṣṣāf, on the other hand, makes clear that there was no permanent improvement in Fārs under either Ġāzān or Öljeitü. He does, however, draw attention to the return of prosperity in Arrān during the reign of Öljeitü, a revival which appears to have been based primarily on trade and livestock rather than agriculture (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 51).

Figures given by Mostawfī and Waṣṣāf, incomplete though they are, show a striking fall in revenue compared to the Saljuq period. Prior to the reign of Ġāzān, the *dīvān* received annually, according to Waṣṣāf, 18,000,000 dinars (*Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 271) and according to Mostawfī, 17,000,000. After Ġāzān's reforms the figure rose to 21,000,000 (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, p. 27). What proportion of this was formed by land taxes, herd taxes, taxes on agricultural produce, dues, and additional levies on the population living on



the land, as opposed to commercial taxes, is not known. The rise was only temporary. Mostawfī states that perhaps not half the revenue, which had been collected under Ġāzān, was collected when he was writing in 740/1340 “because most of the provinces had been laid waste by the usurpation of authority and the continual passage of armies” (*Tārīk-e gozīda*, p. 606; Petrushevsky, p. 497; Lambton, *Continuity*, pp. 219-20).

Once the Mongols were established in Persia, long distance trade between Persia, Central Asia, and China, which had been temporarily interrupted, was resumed and appears to have been carried on mainly by Muslim merchants. Initially, internal trade was disrupted by the Mongol invasions, but it was not long before trade between the nomads and the towns became a lucrative source of profit both for merchants and for the government. It was perhaps the importance of mercantile affairs that led Ġāzān to attempt to impose a uniform coinage and to standardize weights and measures. Because the fluctuation in the weight and value of gold and silver coins in different provinces caused losses to merchants and hindered commerce generally, he decided to issue his own coinage and ordered gold and silver coins to be struck throughout the empire on that model (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 282 ff.; Spuler, *Mongolen*4, pp. 251 ff.). The great variation of weights and measures in local usage was another obstacle to commerce; so, Ġāzān also took steps to establish some degree of uniformity (*ibid.*, pp. 288 ff.). However, it seems unlikely that these various measures had permanent results. Writing after the death of Ġāzān, ‘Omarī mentions the variety which existed in the coinage and in weights and measures—a statement which casts doubt on the effectiveness of Ġāzān’s reforms. However, it is possible that the widespread use of the Tabrīzī *man* in Persia in later times may have had its origin in Ġāzān’s reform.

Although the government of the Il-khans suffered from a perennial shortage of funds, large fortunes were accumulated by some of the rulers and their ministers. Rašīd-al-Dīn states that the numerous *awqāf* made by Ġāzān for the charitable foundations, which he had established in the complex around his tomb in the quarter known as Šanb-e Ġāzān in Tabrīz, were out of property consisting of landed estates and real estate (*mostaġallāt*) in towns. These properties he owned absolutely and legally (*šar’an*) in various provinces of the empire (*mamālek*; *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, p. 215). Öljeitü also turned valuable estates (which were presumably his personal property) into *awqāf*, mainly for the foundations which he had made in his capital Solṭānīya.

It was not only rulers who accumulated fortunes. High office also gave



opportunity for the acquisition of wealth. Šams-al-Dīn Jovaynī, Hülegü's *šāheb-e dīvān* acquired numerous landed estates and real property in towns, much of the income of which he spent on charitable foundations. He and his brother 'Aṭā Malek fell from favor during the reign of Abaqā, whom Šams-al-Dīn was suspected of poisoning. He asked for a pardon from Arġūn, whose dislike he had incurred because he had helped Tegüder to establish himself on the throne and offered to ransom himself and his family. Two thousand *tūmāns* were demanded. He was only able to raise 400,000 dirhams and was put to death in 683/1284 (Browne's Introd. to Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, pp. xix ff.). On his death his estates, or some of them, were confiscated and became *injū* lands (Mostawfī, *Tārīk-e gozīda*, p. 593; Mofīd, III, pp. 139-40; *Tārīk-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 56). Rašīd-al-Dīn, like Šams-al-Dīn, had immense sums at his disposal. Some of his wealth he invested in trade, but much of it went to the making of charitable foundations. He built a splendid quarter in Tabrīz, the Rab'-e Rašīdī, for the benefit of which he constituted many estates into *waqf*. He also constituted *awqāf* for foundations he had made in Hamadān, Yazd, Shiraz, Kermān, and elsewhere. Properties in Yazd, Hamadān, Šarrāh, Tabrīz, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Mosul are listed in the *waqf-nama* he drew up in 709/1309-10.

Various instances are recorded of private individuals constituting their property into *awqāf*. A notable case is that of the Sayyed Rokn-al-Dīn Moḥammad b. Qewām-al-Dīn b. Neẓām (d. 732/1331-32) of Yazd and his son Šams-al-Dīn Abū 'Abd-Allāh Moḥammad (d. 733/1332-33). The former disposed of a great deal of property consisting of shares in *qanāts*, real estate in Yazd, and land. His *awqāf* and those of his son are listed in the *Jāme' al-ḵayrāt*.

The proliferation of *awqāf* during the Il-khanate probably reflects the prevailing insecurity. People may have constituted their properties into *awqāf* partly in the hope, often illusory, that it would thereby be safeguarded from confiscation and usurpation. The spread of *awqāf* may have led to new land being developed and some dead land being revived, but, in general, it seems that *waqf* land was not well cultivated. Mostawfī states, "No place which belongs to the *dīvān* or to a *waqf* enjoys the prosperity of land which belongs to private persons" (*Tārīk-e gozīda*, p. 480). 'Omarī (p. 92) records that he had been told that *awqāf* continued to exist in various places and had not been usurped by Hülegü or later rulers, and that so far as they were in bad condition, this was due to the maladministration of the *motawallīs*.

Trade and money-lending transactions were probably the main sources of wealth during the Il-khanate, and contractors, tax-farmers, and merchants



were those who mostly benefited therefrom. The *ordūs* of the Il-khans, which moved from summer to winter quarters, were frequented by a large concourse of merchants, who played an important part in government operations, and craftsmen. Tabrīz, to which Hülegü transferred his capital from Marāḡa, became, according to Mostawfī, “the finest and largest city in all the land of Iran.” Its population greatly increased and there was much building outside the limits of the earlier city. Mostawfī states that over 900 *kārīzes* were made and that both rich and poor were engaged in business (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, pp. 75-77). ‘Omarī also mentions the flourishing condition of Tabrīz and Solṭānīya under the Il-khans. The former, he states, had become the center of Persia and had a brisk trade (pp. 86-88). Conditions, however, fluctuated with the movement of the *ordū*. When the Il-khan was in residence prices would be high, but if he was absent, they would decline sharply. He notes in particular that meat was everywhere abundant and that food and garments were plentiful in the *ordū* but prices were high (‘Omarī, p. 87).

A new feature of commercial life was the appearance of trading and money-lending associations, known as *ortaqs*, in which Mongol princes and princesses, amirs, ministers, and merchants invested part of their wealth. There is little information on their composition and procedures in Persia. It seems that they were not confined to, or even primarily founded by, Muslim merchants as appears to have been the case in China (Rossabi, pp. 275, 282-83). So far as they had Mongol members, they had an advantage over private traders in that they had behind them military force. They lived on the country as they traveled through it. When Sa’d-al-Dawla was placed in charge of the finances of the empire, he forbade the *ortaqs* which belonged to personages at the court (*arbāb-e ḥazarāt*) to impose upon peasants for provisions and beasts (*‘olūfāt wa olāḡāt; Tārīkò-e Waṣṣāf*, p. 237). Their abuses, if checked temporarily, were, however, speedily resumed. Rašīd-al-Dīn states that the *ortaqs* which provided weapons, armor, and horses for the amirs made large profits during the reign of Abaqa. Seeing this, many persons borrowed money to form such associations. The result, he declares, was the emergence of a class of *nouveaux riches* (*Tārīkò-e ḡāzānī*, p. 318). In the reign of Gayḡātū the *ṣāḡeb-e dīvān* Ṣadr-al-Dīn Aḡmad Zanjānī levied a forced loan from the *ortaqs* of Tabrīz to enable an army to be raised to take the field against Bāydū in 694/1294-95 (*ibid.*, p. 277).

Waṣṣāf mentions two rich merchants in Fārs, who held *moḡāṭa’as*. The first



was Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad b. Mālek Tāzīgū, a Yazdī. He had extensive trade connections and was given a *moqāṭaʿa* for the whole of Fārs in 676/1277-78 but came to grief because the local landlords defaulted on the revenue due to him. The second was Jamāl-al-Dīn Malek-al-Eslām Ebrāhīm b. Moḥammad Ṭībī, who was immensely rich and influential. The basis of his wealth was the Persian Gulf trade. He was engaged in pearling and also had a lucrative trade in horses with India. He had *moqāṭaʿas* for Fārs, but for all his wealth and influence he could not escape the abrogation of his *moqāṭaʿas* and interrogation by the *yargū*. His relations with the government and his commercial activities as described by Waṣṣāf reveal the inability of the government to collect the taxes through its own officials, the arbitrary nature of its power, from which none was immune, and the prevalence of intrigue among the official classes (Lambton, *Continuity*, pp. 335 ff.).

With the advent of the Mongols, there was a major change in the position of craftsmen and artisans. Many of them were spared from the general slaughter during the first invasion, taken prisoner, and transported to the Mongol capitals, where they were employed in workshops belonging to individual members of the Chingizid family. Already before the establishment of the Ilkhanate artisans were brought under control, their mobilization for the benefit of the Mongols being facilitated by the census. Čormāgūn, who had been despatched by Ögedei to complete the conquest of Persia, appointed Mengü-Bolad (Monkfülād) *bāsqāq* of the artisans of Tabrīz. Korgüz (Kürküz), who came later to Khorasan and Māzandarān, also on behalf of Ögedei, founded workshops (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, II, 229-30, 247). This seems likely to have been in connection with the census and new tax assessment, which he had made, and with Möngke's policy designed to exploit the resources of the empire. Sayf Heravī mentions (p. 285) that an excellent workshop (*kār-ḳāna*) was built in Herat on the orders of Abaqa in 663/1264-65, but he does not say for what purpose.

The crafts concerned with the manufacture of weapons were of special interest to the Mongols. Artisans who made bows, arrows, swords, and other weapons were given wages (*mawājeb*) paid by drafts on the provinces in return for which they contracted to provide a certain number of weapons annually. Because of the general corruption, the system did not work (Lambton, *Continuity* p. 344). Ġāzān, accordingly, ordered the artisans of each craft to be collected together in each town and laid down the number of weapons to be provided by them for the royal establishment (*az bābat-e ḳāṣṣ*)



and their price. The allowances (*‘alafa wa jāmagī*) formerly paid to the artisans were abolished, and they were ordered to make weapons with capital provided by the *dīvān* and to account for this in the same way that others in the *bāzār* made weapons with their own capital and sold them. Rašīd-al-Dīn alleges that this plan was successful (*Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 344-45). The *yarlīg* refers to “artisans and our captives.” The precise significance of these words is not clear. It may be that these men were the descendants of artisans who had been taken captive at the time of the Mongol invasions, or it may be that all artisans were regarded as “unfree.”

The manufacture of textiles continued to be important under the Il-khans, and the rulers and their wives held large stocks of precious garments. Rašīd-al-Dīn states that on one occasion Ġāzān gave away 20,000 garments (*jāma*). He does not refer to *ṭerāz* workshops as such, but he mentions the manufacture of garments for the court (*jāmahā-ye kāṣṣ*) without stating how this was organized (*Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 185, 333). That there were royal workshops in some cities is, however, evident from the fact that Tāj-al-Dīn ‘Alīšāh, before he was appointed joint vizier with Rašīd-al-Dīn to Öljeitü, was sent to Baghdad to take charge of a workshop which made precious garments (*Qāšānī*, pp. 121-22).

Whether artisans were held to belong to the government or not, they and workers generally were often subjected to corvées and forced labor. There was probably some increase of slave labor in agriculture. Slaves were, for example, employed in the *eqṭā*’s given to the military by Ġāzān. There was, however, a great deal of variety both in time and place. [Ebn Baṭṭūṭa](#), who passed through Isfahan in the reign of Abū Sa’īd states that the members of each craft in that city appointed one of their own number as headman (tr. Gibb, II, p. 295).

An attempt has been made in the above pages to describe the foundations and basic patterns of economic order in Persia. Economic change (which is not the same as economic development) probably depended largely on population changes; monetary factors were also, no doubt, important, but, like population movements, they are badly documented. The expansion of the economy in the early centuries after the Arab conquest was not sustained over the country as a whole. By the 3rd/9th century financial stringency had resulted in changes in taxation, and the economy came to be based not on gold but on land. Under the Saljuqs a certain stability and uniformity were achieved, but with the break-up of the Saljuq empire provincial particularism became more marked. The Mongol invasions were accompanied both by depopulation and a change



in the balance between the settled and the nomadic or semi-nomadic sectors of the population. Although there was a revival in long-distance trade, and possibly also in local trade, there was no development of large towns as there had been after the Arab conquest, or large-scale industry. Moreover, the striking increase in the arbitrary behavior of the government, together with the increasing demands made on the population by the government to meet their rising costs, led to a depression of those living on the land, especially the peasants, and probably to a reluctance to undertake agricultural development, upon which prosperity had formerly largely depended.

See also [COINS AND COINAGE](#); [EQṬĀ'](#).

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