



ASB IV. IN AFGHANISTAN

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The lands in northern Afghanistan and the upper Oxus valley—Čaġānīān, Kottal, and Vaḵš on the right bank, and Toḵārestān and Badaḵšān on the left bank—were well-provided with good pasture lands in the valleys running up into the mountains, and seem to have been famed for their horses from the period when the Arab invaders first penetrated into Central Asia, such horses being in demand both as war-mounts and for the relays of the *barīd* or postal and intelligence service. According to an episode in Mas‘ūdī (*Morūj* V, pp. 478-79; ed. Pellat, sec. 2232), the Toḵārestān horse (*berdawn toḵārī*) was scarce and highly-prized in the caliphate of ‘Abd-al-Malek (65-86/685-705), but a generation later, in Hešām’s time (105-25/724-43), comparatively plentiful and in widespread use. The fame of Čaġānīān for horse-breeding is attested by a well-known anecdote of Neẓāmī ‘Arūzī Samarqandī in the *Čahār maqāla* (ed. M. Qazvīnī and M. Mo‘īn, Tehran, 1333 Š./1944, pp. 58-65, E. G. Browne, *Revised Translation of the Čahār Maqāla*, GMS 11/2, London, 1921, pp. 39-45), in which the poet Farroḵī Sīstānī seeks the patronage of the Amīr of Čaġānīān Abu’l-Mozaffar Moḥammad (fl. early 5th/11th century), going to him at the spring branding grounds (*dāġgāh*) in Čaġānīān, where the ruler reputedly had 18,000 breeding mares. The region of Gūzġān in north-central Afghanistan, to the west of Toḵārestān, is singled out by the *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, together with Toḵārestān, Čaġānīān, and particularly Kottal (whose horses, *katlī*, have often been praised in poetry), for its numerous horses and for the manufacture of



horse accouterments such as saddle-bags and girths (tr. Minorsky, pp. 106, 108, 114, 119).

The pasture lands along the frontiers of eastern Afghanistan and the right bank of the Indus, including those in the Solaymān Mountains (in the northeastern part of modern Baluchistan and in southern Waziristan), were equally famed for horse breeding, and the name of the Afghans, the indigenous people of these borderlands, has been linked with the *Aśvaka* (horse people) of Gandhara mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (see K. de B. Codrington, “A Geographical Introduction to the History of Central Asia,” *Geographical Journal* 55, 1955, p. 39).

Given the importance of the horse in medieval Islamic warfare, it is not surprising that the treatise *Ādāb al-ḥarb wa’l-šajā’a* on the art of war, by the Ghurid author Faḵr-e Modabber, should devote three chapters to them, dealing with such topics as equestrian training and horsemanship, the tactical use of horses in battle, the breeding, care, and doctoring of horses, etc. (India Office ms. 647, fols. 55b-71b; ed. A. Sohayli K̄vānsārī, Tehran, 1346 Š./1967, pp. 174-238). Here again, *inter alia*, the skills in horse breeding and farriery of the men of Ḳottal are stressed, as is importance of the upper Oxus provinces for the production of bridles and saddlery (see also Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 112-13).

The Delhi Sultans of the 7th-9th/13th-15th centuries utilized the breeding grounds of the Panjab and northwestern India as sources for their mounts, but were especially dependent on horses brought from Central Asia and Afghanistan, the region known to them as “the highland region,” *molk-e bālā*, these beasts being usually designated generically as “Tatārī” (see S. M. Digby, *War Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Study of Military Supplies*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 26-28, 34ff.). In Bābor’s time (early 10th/16th century), Kabul was a center for the horse trade, with 7,000 to 10,000 horses brought to its markets every year; as well as riding horses (called by Bābor *tipučaqs*, conveying in Eastern Turkish the idea of “swiftness, agitation”), Bābor mentions the breeding of pack horses in the Indus plains below Bannū (*Bābor-nāma*, tr. A. S. Beveridge, London, 1922, pp. 202-235).

The horse trade centered on Kabul continued over the succeeding centuries, for Mountstuart Elphinstone enlarges on the trade in “Kabul horses,” actually bred in the region of Balk (i.e., the medieval Ṭoḳārestān) and the Turkmen areas further down the Oxus in the emirate of Bukhara. These beasts



comprised “Turki” or “Uzbeki” ones, small and stout, and “Turkomani” ones, larger and more suited to warfare; they were brought to the Kabul district and then fattened on the local pasturelands, mainly for export to India (*An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, London, 1815, repr. Karachi, 1972, I, pp. 386-88).

In modern Afghanistan, the northern and eastern regions of the country (the Oxus lands, the Hindu Kush, Kabul, and Kandahar) remain the chief ones for horse breeding and raising; a total of 195,000 head was recorded by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization in 1957 (see J. Humlum, *La géographie de l’Afghanistan, étude d’un pays aride*, Copenhagen, 1959, pp. 263-64, 272-73).

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See also Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 449; tr. Kramers, p. 434.

Eṣṭakrī, p. 279.

Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 438.

Yāqūt, II, p. 402.