



BOZ

BOZ, the domestic goat. The earliest evidence for the domestication of the goat has been found in Iran (ca. 10,000 b.c.), as have the largest number of prehistoric sites (ca. 7000 b.c.) showing traces of the systematic breeding of this animal (Tétry, IV, pp. 1158-59; Epstein, II, pp. 224-25). The parent species is *Capra hircus aegagrus*, which is still extant in the wild (*boz-e kūhī*) from Turkey to Baluchistan (Missonne, p. 38; Hassinger, *passim*).

The goat is mentioned in the Avesta (*būza-*) in *Yašt* 14.25 as one of the shapes assumed by *Vərəθraϥna* (see [bahrām i](#)); in *Vīdēvdād* 5.52 goat's milk is listed among the foods that can be consumed by a woman who has delivered a dead child. Two further Avestan terms, *aza* "he-goat" and *sčani-* "kid," are quoted in *Nirangistan* and in the Pahlavi text *Dādestān īg dēnīg* (in Avestan script; see Hoffmann; Gershevitch) in a list of animals to be used in sacrifice and in the *Bundahišn* (TD₂, p. 95.2; tr. Anklesaria, 13.10, pp. 118f.; in Pahlavi script in corrupted spelling: 'z sc'n'ks; P. O. Skjærvø, private communication), where it is said to be the smallest of the newborn of small cattle (*gōspand*). In the *Bundahišn* five kinds (*sardag*) of *buz* are listed: *xarbuz* "oryx," *gōspand* "sheep," *pāzen* "ibex," *warrag* "lamb or ram," and *buz* "goat" (TD₂, p. 94.12; tr. Anklesaria, 13.12, pp. 120f.); the chief (*rad*) of goats and the first of these five to be created was "the white oryx, which holds its head down" (TD₂, p. 120.7; tr. Anklesaria, 17.3, pp. 152f.). The most famous goat in Pahlavi literature is the one in the *Draxt āsōrīg* (The Babylonian tree), a poem about a contest over precedence between a date palm and a goat (see, e.g., Boyce, "Middle Persian Literature," p. 55).



The breeds of domestic goat in the Iranian world have not yet been studied systematically as a whole, nor has there been any effort at genetic improvement. All seem to belong to the same type, with homonymous or scimitar-like horns. It is oblong or slightly convex in profile, with a long black or, more rarely, white or light-brown fleece (Epstein, pp. 263ff.). The main regional variations, reflecting the environment (steppes or mountains), are in length of hair, tail, and—according to the breeder's whim—the coloring of the head and hooves, the shape and length of the ears, and so on. The existence in Iran and Afghanistan of Angora-type goats (with fine, wooly hair) is possible but has not been documented; isolated examples may have been found resulting from mutations but not produced by selective breeding, as occurred in Turkey (cf. Planhol, pp. 175-96).

The caprid population has been estimated at around 3.2 million head in Afghanistan (Ministry of Agriculture, Kabul, 1967, unpublished) and at between 12.5 (Food and Agricultural Organization/FAO, Rome, 1961, unpublished) and 22 million (Veterinary Center, Tehran, 1962, and Plan Organization, Tehran, 1966, unpublished) head in Iran. These figures, though unreliable, are large and show clearly the importance of the goat in the Iranian world. In fact, though it is less prized in the marketplace than the sheep, this animal is very much appreciated in all areas of subsistence herding because of the range of its products (see below) and because it is easy to care for. Goats can find something to eat where sheep cannot, even on the undefined terrain on the outskirts of cities, playing a by no means negligible role in making paths. Thus for the poor in Iran and Afghanistan, as in many other dry regions, the goat plays the role of both the cow and the sheep.

The raising of goats is still almost always of the traditional familial type associated with small-scale agriculture. It reaches its greatest dimension and its most developed form among nomads (Digard, 1981, *passim*). The nomads of Afghanistan are said to possess herds totaling 72,000 goats, those of Iran 12 million (Ministry of Agriculture, Kabul, 1967; Afshar Naderi, p. 11). The raising of goats thus does not involve a marginal investment for nomads: Although some tents (the tent is the unit of domestic production) do not have sheep, there are hardly any that do not have some goats. Whether tended by children or specialized shepherds accompanied by guard dogs, the goats are grouped into sometimes quite considerable flocks (of several hundred head), which may or may not belong jointly to several owners, separate from the flocks of sheep. They are led to different pastures from those of sheep and are brought



back to the camps each evening to be milked. During the lactation period the kids are kept separate from the mothers or are furnished with weaning muzzles (each female drops one kid a year). Excess young males are sold to the butcher after being fattened in summer pastures; only females are kept, along with those males necessary for breeding and for leading flocks of sheep and of goats (these males are castrated and adorned with bells and tassels especially for this purpose). This husbandry has generated in the majority of Iranian languages a very extensive descriptive vocabulary related to age, sex, pelt, and conformation of the animals (a vocabulary that frequently reflects abundant borrowings from Turkish; Digard et al., pp. 5-11).

Nomads rarely consume the meat from their flocks; as with lambs, they prefer to sell the kids on the hoof for butchering, though the price is lower. When a deformed or injured kid cannot be sold, it is killed, and its meat is entirely consumed, either grilled (*kaḅāb*) or stewed (*ḱvorešt*, *kalla-pāča*, etc.). Its skin, tanned and stitched, provides a waterskin (*mašk*), its horns coils for milking; its entrails are sold to the “gypsies” (*kowlī*), who make sieves from them, and its hooves to the sandal makers (*gīvakaš*), who use it to reinforce the toe and heel of *gīvas* (a kind of espadrilles; Digard, 1981, passim; Feilberg, pp. 76-86).

The preferred uses for the goat, however, are those that permit extraction of products from the living animal. Always milked from behind, goats give a relatively abundant milk (among nomads about 40 kg a year, during a lactation period generally lasting from the end of January to the end of August), which is mixed and processed with that of cows and sheep (Balland, pp. 13-26). The goats are shorn in the same way and at the same season as sheep (generally around Ordibehešt/May or Ḳordād/June, when the nomads arrive in summer pastures), but in much greater numbers: The male leaders of the flocks, whose imposing appearance must in fact be enhanced by supplemental fleeces, are never shorn; pregnant or aged females, which are more vulnerable to the cold, are also not shorn. One goat yields an average of 0.5 to 1 kg of hair (*pašm*, *mū*) in the annual shearing, which is washed, carded, then braided or woven to make ropes, bags, and especially panels for the black nomad tents (manufacture of a small panel 4 by 6.5 m requires no fewer than fifty fleeces). Before the shearing, the fine winter mohair (*kork*, *kolk*) is combed from the goat and sold to the felt maker (*namadmāl*). Total Iranian production of fleeces (both top hair and mohair) reached 7-8,000 tons in the 1960s (E'ta, p. 205) and fell to 3-4,000 tons in the 1970s (*Iran Almanach 1977*, p. 217).



Before the onset of Western demand for carpets in the 13th/19th century, cities like Kermān and Yazd were celebrated for their production of shawls of fine quality, comparable to that of cashmere shawls (Madjd-Zadeh, pp. 23-29). This production, as well as that of other warm clothing (*terma*), was much more likely based on mohair from the common domestic goat (Wulff, p. 177) than on wool from goats related to the Angora type (the Turkish name for which, *tiftik*, seems, however, to have come from Persian; Planhol, p. 183).

There is also much to be said about administrative measures relative to goats in the last years of the Pahlavi regime, with the application of the law nationalizing pastures and forests—particularly the imposition of a tax sometimes ten times higher than that imposed on sheep and even, in some places, outright banning (Digard, 1979; Hourcade, pp. 567-72). The injustice of these laws, like the injustice of the attitude that holds goats responsible for all kinds of misdeeds, is to be emphasized. (For arguments for and against the goat, see Campbell et al., pp. 273-75; Lundholm, pp. 29-32; French, pp. 41-61.) It has now been established that it is not the goat itself that is harmful to vegetation but rather the uses often made of it. Indeed, in some mountainous regions of Iran and Afghanistan, its presence is, under certain conditions, a guarantee of rational use of space: It alone can reach certain steep pastures, which would otherwise be left entirely to wild herbivores. It is permissible to inquire then whether it was not in fact the nomads themselves who, through the goat, were the targets of the legislation. For these animals play, as has been shown, a role of the first importance in the technical-economic system of those who raise them: because of their hair, from which the nomads build their tents, and because of their milk, the essential element in human nutrition (that of the ewes being left for the most part to suckling lambs intended for butchering). In the present state of development of Iran and Afghanistan, the elimination of the goats would inevitably lead to the more or less permanent eradication of nomadic pastoralism as it is practiced in these countries, as well as of all pastoral production that depends on it.



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Figure 1. Goats being tended, near Bāmiān, Afghanistan (1974).