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ČĀY

ČĀY "tea" (< Chi. *ch'a*; *Mathews' Chinese English Dictionary*, no. 101), shrub of the genus *Camellia* and beverage made from its leaves, probably the most popular drink throughout the Iranian world.

The spread of tea in the Persian world. Berthold Laufer's remark that "It would be very desirable to have more exact data as to when and how the consumption of Chinese tea (*Camellia theifera*) spread among Mohammedan peoples" (*Sino-Iranica*, p. 553) is still valid. It is not known when Persians first became acquainted with the beverage. Bīrūnī, in his *Ketāb al-ṣaydana*, written in the first half of the 5th/11th century, gave some details about the plant (*čāy*ʾ) and its use as a beverage in China and Tibet. He identifies five varieties by color (white, green, violet, gray, and black), singling out white tea as the best of all (*afḵar al-anwāʿ*), as being very rare (*nāder al-wojūd*), and as having most effect on the body (p. 128, tr. p. 105). The habit of drinking tea apparently did not spread to western Asia before the 7th/13th century, and the Mongols may have been involved in propagating it (Laufer, p. 553). Tea (*čāy-e ḵatāʾī*) is mentioned by the 11th/17th-century author Ḥakīm Moʾmen Tonokābonī as a pharmaceutical herb from which an ointment (*żemād*) was made that was effective in the treatment of acute swellings and soothing of hemorrhoid pain (Tonokābonī, p. 234). Consumption of tea continued, but all sources seem to indicate that coffee was the main beverage in Persia until the first half of the 13th/19th century, when a sudden and complete conversion to tea seems to have occurred (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, p. 139); a comparable shift took place earlier in Afghanistan, where Alexander Burnes (I, p. 221) commented about

Qaṭaḡan in 1247/1831 that “nothing is done in this country without tea, which is handed round at all times and hours, and gives a social character to conversation.” Nevertheless, in the mid-14th Š./20th century the inhabitants of the most remote mountain areas still considered tea a luxury, to be served mainly to honored guests (Sharani, p. 199).

Amīr(-e) Kabīr (q.v.; 1222-68/1807-52), chief minister to Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, may have played a role in the conversion to tea in Persia; he received two tea sets, including silver samovars, as gifts from the French government and another set from a Russian merchant in 1266/1850; Amīr Kabīr granted the monopoly of making samovars with government subsidy to a master craftsman in Isfahan. Shortly afterwards, however, when Amīr Kabīr fell from favor, the craftsman was brutally forced to return the government’s funds and close out his business (Forūḡī, pp. 477-79; Ādamīyat, pp. 394-95). Tea soon became the common beverage, and the *qahva-ḵāna* (lit. “coffeehouse,” the common designation, rather than *čay-kana*, for a tea house in Persia; in Afghanistan *samāvār* < Russ. *samovar* is used) became the most conspicuous fixture along the roads (Elwell-Sutton, p. 169). Imports of tea to both Persia and Afghanistan increased sharply. Until India began to export tea Afghanistan relied primarily on imports from China to Kabul via Bukhara (Burnes, II, pp. 436ff.). Persia, on the other hand, imported mainly black tea from India, up to 2 million pounds in 1313/1895, according to a British consular report on the trade of Isfahan and Yazd (Foreign Office, Annual Series, 1896, no. 1662). There are insufficient data to document the spread of tea consumption in Persia in detail; nevertheless, at a very early date demand must have reached a level high enough to support the introduction of tea cultivation.

Production and marketing. The first attempt to introduce tea plantation in Persia was made in 1292/1875 by a British (?) entrepreneur who was planning to establish a plantation in Gīlān but had to leave the country because of poor health (Issawi, ed., p. 211). Ḥājj Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Eṣfahānī also attempted to grow tea, in 1302/1884-85 (Komīsīūn, II, p. 1647; for other early attempts see Bahrāmī, p. 92). At the turn of this century Ḥājī Moḥammad Mīrzā Kāšef-al-Salṭana, then Persian consul in India, smuggled back to his country some 3,000 seedlings of Assamese tea (*Camellia assamica*), together with several containers of seeds. He planted them in an experimental plot near Lāhījān in 1320/1902 and was soon able to send Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (r. 1313-24/1896-1907) about a kilogram of Persian tea (Ehlers, pp. 230, 233). He also tried to persuade the first Majles (1324-26/1906-08) to establish a

corporation of Persian financiers to fund the expansion of the tea plantations in Gīlān (Ašraf, p. 102). Despite this early success, cultivation of the plant spread rather slowly in the area between Lāhījān and Langarūd and in Fūmanāt southwest of Rašt (where it was introduced in Lākān in 1342/1923-24; cf. Ḵᵛānsārī); the total area under cultivation increased only from 100 ha in 1338/1920 to about 800 ha in 1350 = 1310 Š./1931. Establishment of the first tea-processing factory in Persia in 1311 Š./1932 and of a research station in Lāhījān in 1313 Š./1934 gave new impetus to the cultivation of the plant, part of an effort by the government to lessen reliance on imported tea, which at that time accounted for about 5 percent of total Persian imports (Bobek, p. 23). The resulting expansion of tea cultivation in Persia has been considered one of the main successes of Reżā Shah's modernization policy (McLachlan, p. 44). A few Chinese experts were hired to train Persian farmers, and later students were sent by the government to India, Ceylon, and Java to study methods of growing tea (Komīsīūn, II, p. 1647). The area planted in tea (1,220 ha in 1311 Š./1932) subsequently increased, to 7,000 ha by 1320 Š./1941; to 15,000 by 1337 Š./1958, the year in which the publicly owned Iran Tea Organization (Sāzmān-e Čāy-e Īrān, changed to Šerkat-e Sahāmi-e Čāy-e Īrān, Iran Tea Company, in 1347 Š./1968) was founded; and to 24,000 in 1347 Š./1968 (Ehlers, p. 234). In 1352 Š./1973 the total producing area was 26,800 ha; two years earlier the total area actually planted to tea, as measured by means of aerial photographs taken for the Iran Tea Company, was 31,100 ha.

Tea cultivation is confined to the Caspian provinces, the only region of Persia that enjoys the necessary climatic conditions (Ehlers, pp. 230-33): abundant precipitation (1,000-1,500 mm annually), despite a slight shortage during the summer; good drainage; and slightly acidic soils. Most of the plantations (*bāḡ-e čāy*, lit. "tea orchard") are located in the Alborz foothills or on old alluvial terraces unfit for rice cultivation in eastern Gīlān, in the three *šahrestāns* of Lāhījān, Langarūd, and Rūdsar, which account for 75 percent of the total cultivated area. They have spread from the Alborz piedmont over the ʿAṭākūh massif south of Lāhījān and the formerly wooded lower hills once used as winter quarters by Gāleš herdsmen. Tea plantations are often found on very steep hillsides above valleys planted in rice. In the east they are interspersed among the citrus orchards of the Raḥīmābād, Rāmsar, and Tonokābon (Šahsavār) districts. In the Fūmanāt, where the plantations extend farther onto the plain than they do nearer Lāhījān (Bazin, I, pp. 157-58), lower rainfall makes irrigation desirable, but it is practiced only on some large estates and on an experimental plantation in Fašālam that belongs to the Iran Tea

Company. A few very small and isolated tea plantations are found in Ṭāleš-Dūlāb and Āstārā to the northwest (Figure 7).

The techniques of tea cultivation are identical in all these regions (for a detailed description, see Van Dijk). The varieties grown in Persia are hybrids of the delicately flavored Assam tea introduced by Kāšef-al-Salṭana and the more frost-resistant Chinese tea (*Camellia sinensis*). The plants are propagated either by seedlings or by cuttings and can produce leaves for as long as forty or fifty years. They are pruned every year during the winter and never grow above 40 cm. The fields are cleared, manured, and weeded by men, whereas the leaves are picked by women, usually between early Ordībehešt/late April and Šahrīvar/September or Mehr/October. The buds at the end of each stem are picked, along with two or three of the leaves, and gathered in large baskets, which must be taken at once to be processed, at home or in a factory. The average yield is about four tons of green leaves per hectare, but yields up to fourteen tons have been recorded in experimental plantations in Lāhījān.

There are two distinct methods of processing tea, each yielding about a ton of black tea from four tons of green leaves. Traditional processing is still carried out at home, both in areas remote from factories and for home consumption. The planter allows the leaves to dry in a shady place; the partly dried tea (*čāy-e nīma ḵošk*) is then rolled and kneaded by hand and cut into thin strips. This green tea is never consumed in Persia; rather, it is allowed to ferment in a cool place until it turns black. It is then dried by means of heating on a metal tray. Most tea in Persia, however, is processed in 127 factories scattered throughout the cultivation area; the highest concentration is between Lāhījān and Langarūd. The Iran Tea Company owns only eight of them, but every year it leases sixty or sixty-five of the best-equipped private factories in order to secure its production. Each leased factory is controlled by a government supervisor, and the government-controlled factories set the prices for purchase of green leaves (Van Puymbroeck and Farhadi, pp. 16-17). Factory processing involves the same steps as traditional processing, but machines permit the handling of much greater quantities. The tea is dried either naturally or by heating. The leaves are then passed through rolling and cutting machines, and the resulting strips are sorted according to size in a series of strainers. The tea is then left to ferment in a room where a constant temperature of 20-22°C and a relative humidity of 95-100 percent are maintained. Final drying takes place in high-temperature ovens. Seasonal requirements for female tea harvesters and male factory workers are partly

satisfied by temporary migrations from the surrounding mountain districts, especially Deylamān and Eškevarāt (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 38 and map 20).

All the tea produced in the government-controlled factories is shipped to the Iran Tea Company warehouses in Ray, south of Tehran, where it is sorted and either packaged and sold under the company's trademark or sold to importers, who are obliged, under the "mixing regulations" (see Van Puymbroeck and Farhadi, pp. 22-24), to purchase a specified amount of Persian tea from the company for every kilogram of tea they import. Some tea processed in the private sector is sent to packaging factories in Tehran; the rest is bought by wholesalers who distribute it in loose form to retailers and consumers all over the country.

Although tea cultivation has been relatively successful in the Caspian provinces, it has not brought prosperity comparable to that on the eastern Black Sea coast in Turkey, where conversion to monoculture of tea has resulted in a noticeable elevation of the standard of living (Özyurt, pp. 69-92). This difference reflects the agrarian structure: In Persia tea is usually only one of several small crops grown on very small farms, where between one and five *qafīz* (0.1 to 0.5 ha) may be planted with tea and the remainder of the land devoted to rice fields and citrus or mulberry orchards. In 1968 24,000 ha of tea plantations were in the hands of 27,000 planters (Ehlers, p. 239); as this figure included "large" plantations of 5-10 ha and a few "very large" ones of up to 60 ha (Sahami, p. 64; Bazin, I, p. 159), the others could not have averaged more than 0.5 ha. Most tea growers already owned their small plots before Moḥammad Reżā Shah's Land Reform Law of 1341 Š./1962, which therefore did not improve their economic situation. Larger plantations were also not affected by the reform, as they belonged to categories of land exempted from the provisions of the law (Lambton, p. 68); although this exemption was withdrawn by the Additional Articles of 27 Āḏar 1342 Š./17 January 1963 (McLachlan, pp. 112-13), most tea plantations were still smaller than the maximum limit allowed for individual holdings and were thus retained by their owners.

The cultivation of tea in Persia did not put an end to importing, for national demand continued to grow long after most of the suitable land had already been converted to tea. Furthermore, consumers became attached to the taste and reputation of the foreign products. In 1349 Š./1970 52 percent of Persians drank only Persian tea and 29 percent both Persian and foreign teas; 19 percent actually drank more foreign tea, but 36 percent claimed that they

preferred it (Report, p. 9), a disparity suggesting the potential for increasing imports. In the early 1350s Š./1970s, when recorded national production of black tea was between 15,000 and 19,000 tons annually, imports of about 6,000 tons a year were reported, and "unrecorded imports" were estimated in various sources at 10,000-15,000 tons (Van Puymbroeck and Farhadi, pp. 19-28). About two thirds of the recorded imports came from Ceylon and one third from India. Tea was smuggled both from Ceylon, through the Persian Gulf or across the Iraqi border, and from India, through Pakistan or Afghanistan. Efforts to increase the yields of the Caspian tea plantations seem to have been successful, as more recent figures (Markaz-e Āmār) show an annual production of 32,000-37,000 tons between 1359 Š./1980 and 1363 Š./1984. Official imports have, however, increased at almost the same rate, varying between 15,000 and 30,000 tons a year. Smuggling may possibly have declined somewhat during the war between Persia and Iraq and the conflict in Afghanistan, but it is impossible to form even a crude estimate.

Afghanistan does not produce tea; an attempt in the early 1340s Š./1960s to introduce the crop in the Konār valley around ʿAsadābād (q.v.), an area with a distinctive pattern of rainfall of the monsoon type, failed because the total amount of precipitation was nevertheless insufficient (Ministry of Planning, p. 70). All tea drunk in Afghanistan must therefore be imported, and imports increased steadily from 3,216 tons in 1335 Š./1956-57 to 11,023 tons in 1345 Š./1966-67 and 19,536 tons in 1357 Š./1978-79, before declining to about 10,000 tons in the 1360s Š./1980s (9,097 tons in 1365 Š./1986-87). This apparent decline does not mean that less tea is being consumed but rather that a large proportion of the Afghan population is now living across the frontiers and that the government has little control over imports. India remains the principal supplier of both green and black teas to Afghanistan, but its share has decreased from 77.2 percent in 1355 Š./1976-77 to 41.4 percent in 1365 Š./1986-87, while imports from China, primarily of green tea, have increased from 10 to 26.2 percent.

There are a number of indications of the importance of tea as a modern trade commodity. In the first half of the 14th/20th century, for instance, the Hazārboz, a nomadic subtribe of the Mohmand, actually specialized in importing Indian tea on large caravans that plied as far as northern Afghanistan (Frederiksen, pp. 17-18, 26-27). Furthermore, before the spread of general grocery shops, specialized tea shops flourished in every major urban *bāzār*; some also carried sugar or *qorūt* (a kind of dry cheese) as well. In Āqča

(q.v.) the number of such tea shops dwindled from seventy in 1323 Š./1944 to sixteen 1356 Š./1977 (Stuckert, p. 89; cf. Centlivres, table facing p. 133; Wiebe, 1981, p. 159). In Gerešk in southern Afghanistan the two last tea shops seem to have closed between 1351 Š./1972 and 1356 Š./1977 (Wiebe, 1981, p. 159). In the late 1350s Š./1970s there were still 182 tea merchants in Kabul and 89 in the old *bāzār* of Qandahār but only one in Laškargāh in southern Afghanistan and four in Gardēz in eastern Afghanistan (*Rāhnemā*, p.83; Wiebe, 1978, pp. 280, 284; idem, 1979, p. 209).

Consumption of tea. Nowadays every Persian and Afghan, regardless of age, social standing, or ethnic origin, drinks lea several times a day. According to a 1339 Š./1970 sample survey (*Report*), the average per capita daily consumption of tea in Persia is eight or nine glasses. For Afghanistan it has been estimated that adults in nomadic communities consume 1.9 grams of tea per day (0.7 kg/year); among well-off city dwellers, however, tea consumption may reach 5 grams a day (1.8 kg/year) (Casimir, p. 349; Fischer, p. 55). In the Persian countryside this habit begins during the child's second year, and consumption increases gradually until adulthood. At breakfast tea is drunk with bread and cheese. Persians have traditionally drunk water or buttermilk (*dūḡ*) and more recently soft drinks with lunch and dinner, whereas Afghans seldom take beverages with meals; both Persians and Afghans relish tea after meals, however. Many opportunities for drinking tea arise between meals as well: at home, on a visit, at work, or traveling. In every administrative office there is at least one attendant responsible for bringing tea to clerks and visitors, and bargaining can scarcely proceed in the *bāzār* without the accompaniment of tea.

There are, however, noticeable national and regional differences in the varieties preferred and the methods of preparation. Persians drink only black tea (*čāy-e sīāh*), which is generally brewed with a little water in a small teapot (*qūrī*) placed on top of a kettle (*ketrī*) or on a samovar (*samāvar*); the latter is more widely used in the northern provinces, where Russian influence has been strong. The beverage is served in a tulip-shaped glass (*estakān* < Russ. *stakan*) on a saucer (*naʾlbekī*); this glass is different from the larger *līvān*, from which water and other cold liquids are drunk. The concentrated beverage is poured from the teapot into the glass; then enough hot water is added to make either strong (*por-rang* "with much color") or weaker (*kam-rang* "with little color") tea. The tea is usually heavily sweetened, normally through the addition of sugar lumps (*qand*) to the glass; alternatively the lumps are placed

in the mouth and the tea sipped through them. The 1349 Š./1970 survey showed that 82 percent of Persians favored the latter method, called *qand-pahlū* "sugar on the side" (*dešlema* in Fārs), and consequently preferred hard lumps chipped from a sugarloaf by means of a small adze (*qand-šekan*) to factory-produced lumps, which melt too quickly in the mouth. Sweets or sugarcoated nuts can be substituted for sugar. The only regions where people preferred sugar added directly to their tea were the Caspian provinces and Kurdistan. In Gīlān and Māzandarān bits of dried lemon (*līmū torš*) are crushed in the glass before the tea is poured, and in Fārs fresh lime juice is often added to the tea after it is poured. Only the westernized urban upper classes drink tea from china cups and use granulated sugar. In the southeastern part of the country, among the Daštīārī Baluch on the border of Pakistan (Pozdena, p. 110), tea is drunk mixed with milk.

In contrast to the Persians, the Afghans drink both black and green tea (*čāy-e sabz*). Green tea is classified as a "cold" drink and is normally consumed only in summer. Black tea, which is slightly more expensive, is a "hot" drink and is consumed in greater quantities in winter, though many Afghans drink it all year long. Both are generally drunk plain or with a touch of cardamom. Tea is served from an individual teapot (*čāy-nak*) or, more rarely, a collective one, and is drunk from small bowls without handles. The most beautiful teapots are made of fine old Russian china, the common ones of modern Chinese or Japanese pottery or metal. The traditional pottery drinking bowls are now often replaced by Duralex glasses, which were imported in great quantities from France in the 1340-50s Š./1960-70s; among the urban bourgeoisie Western cups with saucers are sometimes found. The drinking bowl is first rinsed with a small amount of tea, which is then poured away into a larger bowl; then a fair quantity of granulated sugar (*būra*) is put into the bowl, and the tea is poured. As the sugar is not replenished, the tea is very sweet (*čāy-e šīrīn*) at first but becomes progressively more bitter as liquid is added (*čāy-e talḵ*). The *qand-pahlū* method is used only with sweets (*šīrīnī*) or with sugar-coated almonds (*noql-e bādāmī*), chick-peas (*noql-e noḵodī*), or apricot pits (*noql-e ḵastaʾī*). Poorer people drink plain, unsugared, tea. In unusual circumstances Afghans may drink tea mixed with cream (*qaymāq-čāy*) or steeped in pure or watered milk (*sīr-čāy*). The only region where *šīr-čāy* is commonly drunk in Afghanistan is the Afghan Pamirs, where it is also salted, following Tibetan tradition. In this region it is considered a "hot" beverage, whereas black tea is considered "cold" and pure green tea "very cold" (Dor, pp. 265f.).

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