



DĀĠ

DĀĠ (Av. *daxša-*, Bal. *daḵta*), brand, a mark made by touching the body of an animal or human being with a heated iron implement or, by extension, a lasting mark of any kind (e.g., Hedāyat, s.v.; Nafīsī, s.v.; cf. Jorfādaqānī, p. 9). As an adjective *dāġ* means very hot, particularly with reference to water and metal. The abundance of compounds like *dāġ zadan* (to brand), *dāġī* (branding iron), *dāġsāz* (brand maker), *dāġneh* or *dāġgar* (brander), *dāġgāh* (site where branding takes place) indicates that branding was a widespread practice for various purposes, notably identifying ownership of animals, punishing criminals, and medical and veterinary purposes.

Branding of animals for identification. Although definite information about the origin of the practice of identifying animals by means of brands is lacking, it may be surmised that, as tribes of a pastoral nation became independent, each chose an emblem to distinguish its flocks and beasts from those of other tribes. According to Rašīd-al-Dīn Fażl-Allāh, “The *tamġā* was a special emblem or mark that the Turkish and Mongol peoples stamped on decrees and also branded on their flocks” (I, p. 37). It is probable that the *tamġā* had originated as a brand mark (Spuler, *Mongolen*⁴, p. 244). Each of the twenty-four tribes of the Oġuz Turkmen had its own *tamġā*, with which it branded its flocks (Rašīd-al-Dīn, I, p. 37). Maḥmūd Kāšġarī (p. 56) reported that the brand marks with which the Oġuz identified their flocks were really the emblems of each tribe. Five of those brand marks were recorded by both Kāšġarī and Rašīd-al-Dīn (Table 32). According to Abu’l-Fażl Bayhaqī (ed. Fayyāz, pp. 504-05), the pre-Islamic kings of Persia had their animals branded with their names or



emblems (for references in the *Šāh-nāma*, see Wolff, *Glossar*, p. 360), and Sultan Maḥmūd of Ġazna (388-421/998-1030) resumed the custom, ordering his name branded on wild beasts caught during his hunting expeditions. The prince of Čaġānīān in Transoxania held a great branding festival every year, during which colts were branded with his name; the scene was described in an ode by Farroḳī Sīstānī (*Čahār maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, pp. 59-60). The term *dāġ* seems to have been current in medieval Egypt as well. Abū Bakr b. Monḍer, chief veterinary surgeon at the court of the Mamluk sultan Moḥammad b. Qalāwūn (678-89/1280-90), devoted an entire chapter of his book *Kāmel al-šenā'atayn al-bayṭara wa'l-zarṭafa* to the subject, describing various types of branding according to region (Syrian, Šuštarī, Indian, Greek, and Maġrebī; Flügel, II, pp. 550-51).

Branding is still customary among nomadic tribes in Persia (Hourcade, p. 142). Baḳtīārī tribesmen usually brand mares, riding horses, pack horses, and mules on the rump or haunch, cattle and donkeys on the neck, and ewes on the head, and they have a special name for the brand mark in each instance (Karīmī, p. 221); a flock owner does not brand all his animals with the same mark, however. Some brand marks are made with a red-hot iron bent at the top (*halcken-dāġ*; Figure 27) or fitted with a projection in the shape of a number (e.g. 2, 4); other marks, each consisting of one or a few simple lines, are made with a simple skewer. Examples of Baḳtīārī brand marks are shown in Figure 28. Some Baḳtīārī khans also have their names or emblems branded on large animals, particularly on their mounts (Digard, pp. 65-66).

Camels are branded in some parts of Persia, mainly districts on the edge of the great desert (Dašt-e Kavīr), where camels are still in common use. They are sent on such long journeys that a camel owner often may not see his beasts for months; he therefore brands them in order to distinguish them from those of other owners. Branding is performed when the yearling camel (*deylāq*) is separated from its mother and identification becomes necessary. The mark is usually placed on the animal's neck, forehead, or haunch. Every camel owner has his private mark. When a camel is sold the previous mark is burned off (*bāṭel-dāġ*) and the new owner's mark branded elsewhere on the animal's body. Among brand marks to be seen on camels are letters of the alphabet, words, numbers, and combinations of two or more single marks (M. Honarī, p. 63; Salmānī, pp. 158-60). Some examples are shown in Figure 29. As it can happen that several camel owners adopt the same brand mark, it is common for one owner to have his imprinted at a particular angle, another upside



down, and so on. See, for example, the *dāḡ-e 'Abbās*, in Figure 29.

Branding as punishment. In order to make convicted criminals conspicuous or to disable them, they were marked on the shoulder (cf. *dāḡ al-modneb* in Dozy, I, p. 476). The marks were apparently similar in shape to the types used in branding animals. The blinding of an offender with a red-hot metal rod was another long-standing practice, mainly among kings and governors wishing to disable political rivals (e.g., Jorfāqadānī, pp. 173, 306).

Branding for medical and veterinary purposes. Cauterization (*dāḡ kardan*, Ar. *kayy*) was widely used in medieval medicine for relief of chronic pains, treatment of certain types of diseases, and prevention of the spread of gangrene and loss of limbs. It was commonly supposed to be the remedy of last resort when other treatments had failed, and this notion is reflected in Persian literature (e.g., Ṣahīr Fāryābī, p. 224; Ḥāfeẓ, p. 329). The 10th-century writer Moḥammad Rāzī considered cauterization of the upper part of the head the ultimate and most satisfactory remedy for headache (1955, I, p. 244) and found cauterization of teeth effective against toothache (1334 S./1955, p. 24). Ebn Sīnā (see [avicenna](#)) discussed the value of cauterization in preventing spread of morbidity and pain and wrote in detail about methods and different sites; he declared that cauterizing instruments should be of gold if possible and that, for the mouth, nose, anus, and other specific parts of the body, the instrument should be used with a shield to protect adjacent areas, particularly nerves and ligaments, from damage. In order to stop hemorrhaging, a “strong” cauterization instrument was to be used. To remove gangrene or purulent sores, it might sometimes be necessary to use an instrument strong enough and long enough to penetrate through muscle to the underlying bone (I, pp. 219-20). In the 14th century Abu'l-Qāsem 'Abd-Allāh Kāšānī (p. 217) also believed that using a gold cauterizing instrument would prevent the site from becoming inflamed, so that it could heal quickly. The eminent 12th-century physician Esmā'īl Jorjānī devoted an entire section of his *Daḡira-ye k'vārazmšāhī* to cauterization; it contains twelve chapters on different methods and suitable sites. In his opinion, the essential advantage of cauterization was that it removed moisture from parts of the body suffering from diseases not curable by drugs. Such disorders as chronic eye inflammation, asthma, leprosy, spleen disease, dropsy, sciatica, and hernia could be treated by appropriate cauterization. The instruments used were supposed to have two or three prongs. Depending on the site and the intensity of the pain or disease, application might be repeated up to six times (pp. 603-04). Bahā'-al-Dawla, the



leading physician and medical writer of the Safavid period, used cauterization to treat toothache (fols. 191-92).

Cauterization remained in general use in Persia until the introduction of European medical science in the modern period and is still practiced in remote parts of the country. Mīrzā Aḥmad Tonokābonī, a physician during the reign of Fath-ʿAlī Shah Qājār (1212-50/1797-1834), used it in the treatment of several sorts of disease (p. 356). Dr. Jakob Polak, who worked in Persia in the middle of the Qajar period, found it still in use (II, pp. 241-42). It was recognized, however, that for some diseases cauterization was useless and even harmful. According to Abū Bakr Rabīʿ Aḳawaynī (q.v.; 10th century), amputation of a cancerous part of the body might yield hope of recovery, but if only the cancerous tissue was excised or cauterized there would be no cure, and death might result (p. 606).

Branding or cauterization for veterinary purposes was evidently also a long-standing practice in Persia. Even today it is customary among some tribes. In the Sanskrit hippology (*Śālihotra*) branding was recommended to cure various diseases of horses, including swollen lips, sore throat, stiffness of limbs, excessive flow of tears, cataracts, and lack of appetite (pp. 64, 68, 69, 74). In one Persian hippology branding was prescribed for the same diseases and also for coughs and such other respiratory disorders as dry throat, swollen nose, and shortage of breath; they were to be treated by application of hot irons to the horse's ears and underbelly (*Faras-nāma*, pp. 86, 89, 91). Ṣadr-al-Dīn (fl. late 17th century, pp. 37-45) thought that the only way to cure foot lesions and hoof inflammation, spasms, rheumatism, difficulty in walking, sore eyes, swollen knees and shoulders, and foul nose was to make a linear, triangular, cruciform, or circular brand above the animal's hoof, leg, flank, shoulder, or navel. Today, when Boir Aḥmadī tribesmen find a cow yielding milk mixed with blood, they try to cure the trouble by making X-shaped brands on each side of the back of the cow's udder (Ḥosaynī, p. 73). Branding a camel's chest is the supposed remedy for the disease called *delzanak* or *deḷčāh*, the symptoms of which are loss of appetite and stopping before any hole in the ground; it is thought to result from sudden cooling and heating of the body (Ġolām-Rezā'ī, p. 77). Other examples are cauterization of the camel's nose to cure *ostokvānak* or *menšūk* (difficulty in breathing or walking owing to catarrh-induced edema of the septum, through which the halter is passed; M. Honarī, p. 66); branding on the edge of a camel's lip for *bāš-e lab* or *low* (drooping of the lower lip with resulting inability to eat and drink; Ġolām-



Rezā'ī, p. 77); branding a camel's lips and below its nose for *nahāz* (cough and bronchial hemorrhage); and branding the root of a camel's tail for *ġarab* (hair loss and purulent sores on the neck; Salmānī, p. 183).

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Table 32. Examples of Oğuz Brand Marks

Figure 27. Baḳtīārī branding iron. After Digard, p. 65 fig. 29.

Figure 28. Some typical Baḳtīārī brands. After Digard, p. 66 fig. 30.

Figure 29. Examples of Persian camel brands. After M. Honarī, pp. 62-63; Salmānī, pp. 159-60.