



## DĀM-DĀRĪ

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**DĀM-DĀRĪ** (animal husbandry). The first known domestication of certain animals took place in various parts of Persia: Kurdistan, where sheep were domesticated ca. 9000 B.C.E., and goats ca. 7000 B.C.E. (see [boz](#)), and the Zagros mountains, where the ox was domesticated ca. 5000 B.C.E. (Flannery, *passim*; Reed, *passim*). In the Neolithic era and antiquity these areas were among the richest agricultural zones in the Near East, giving rise to an early and distinctive agricultural and pastoral way of life based on the exploitation of summer pastures at high elevations; beginning in the 13th century, under the pressure of the Mongol invasion, this way of life in turn served as the point of departure for the development of the Turco-Persian pastoral nomadism that is still current in much of the region (Hesse; Zeder; Briant; de Planhol). Even today, despite failures and difficulties, Persia is one of the most important livestock-raising countries in the Middle East and probably in all of Asia. Owing to the ecological constraints that prevail throughout the region, systems of raising livestock, including local variations, are strongly determined by the geographic environment. They are also fairly vulnerable to the impact of the world market economy and, particularly in Persia, to an absurd and pointless domestic agricultural policy, which has imposed considerable hardship in recent decades. In Tajikistan, on the other hand, animal husbandry is relatively marginal, except for industrial livestock breeding (see below).

*Species and numbers of domestic animals.* In general, livestock raising in the Persian-speaking world is dominated by small animals ([Table 33](#)), with a large proportion of goats, which in certain provinces of Persia itself are even more



numerous than sheep (see [Table 34](#)). Cattle and equines, especially donkeys, are far less important (cf. the almost total absence of mules in Afghanistan). [Camels](#) include both dromedaries and hybrids (*bokt*) of dromedaries and Bactrian camels (Tapper, 1985). As for pigs, which are found only among Christian communities (Armenian in Persia, Russian in Tajikistan), their small numbers are easily explained (see, most recently, Henninger). In addition, there is poultry, primarily chickens, which are available nearly everywhere, including among nomads. For the sake of completeness, several other domestic animals should be mentioned, particularly the [dog](#). Despite the scorn in which they are held (Bousquet), dogs play a considerable role as watchdogs in certain villages and nomadic camps and an even greater one in guarding, though not in herding, flocks (de Planhol, 1969; Digard, 1980).

*Systems of livestock breeding.* In Persia the composition of the population of domestic animals varies considerably with the province or other administrative unit (see [Table 34](#)). Because of their ability to adapt to harsh conditions, goats outnumber sheep in the least hospitable regions (e.g., Zanjān, Yazd, Kermān, Sāhelī and Bandar-e Būšehr on the Persian Gulf coast, Baluchistan wa Sīstān, Īlām, and Boīr-Aḥmad wa Kūhgīlūya) and are substituted for cattle wherever the latter cannot subsist (e.g., along the Persian Gulf coast and in Baluchistan wa Sīstān). These ratios obviously primarily reflect differences in the type of grazing available and the grazing capacity of the pasturelands (see [Table 35](#) and [Table 36](#)). Secondary factors affecting the distribution of livestock include social and cultural differences. The combination of such environmental constraints and communal factors are reflected in several different systems of raising livestock, each with fairly clearly defined characteristics.

In Persia the nomadic pastoral system, based on seasonal grazing at different elevations, is the most important. In fact, the tribes own the greater proportion of Persian livestock; according to recent estimates, in the mid-1980s there were 23,142,580 head (including 13,281,600 sheep, 9,548,830 goats, 252,360 cattle, and 59,780 camels) in the possession of a nomadic population of 1,130,000, located mainly in the Zagros, Fārs, and the region around Kermān (*Iran Yearbook*, p. 25). Furthermore, animals raised by nomads have the reputation of being the best, larger and more productive than those raised by sedentary farmers (Barth, 1962; Tapper, 1974). The nomadic pastoral system of animal husbandry in Persia and Afghanistan has frequently been studied and described (e.g., Barth, 1961; Black-Michaud; Digard, 1981; Rouholamini; Stöber;



Tapper, 1979; Jentsch).

As for other systems of animal husbandry, they are almost all based on the family unit and associated with agriculture. Usually livestock is raised on a small scale for subsistence; herds rarely exceed a few dozen head, which are kept for milk and agricultural labor and are generally pastured on harvested fields or common lands surrounding the villages. Sometimes, however, livestock raising is undertaken on a larger scale and assumes a definite commercial character: Certain large sheepherders in Kermān and East Azarbaijan send flocks of several thousand head, accompanied by numerous shepherds, to summer pastures as far away as the Zagros or Kurdistan. In Khorasan sheep raising is also based on various forms of nomadism the characteristics and scope of which vary, according to the demand for meat (Papoli-Yazdi).

In some regions characteristic local patterns can be observed. For example, in the coastal provinces of the [Caspian](#), which alone account for 20 percent of the bovine population of Persia, specialized groups of cattle raisers (*gāleš*) summer with their herds on the piedmont of the [Alborz](#); they are very clearly distinct from the *čūpāns* who raise small livestock, on one hand, and the rice growers of the plain, on the other (Bazin; Pour-Fickoui and Bazin).

Finally, modern forms of livestock raising are also to be found. In Tajikistan collective farms alone produce annually 399,000 cattle (i.e., 33 percent of the total for the province) and 1,270,000 sheep (44 percent of the total), of which 168,000 cattle (14 percent of the total) and 837,000 sheep (29 percent) are purebreds. These figures are much higher than those in Persia and Afghanistan. In Persia there are several dairy establishments with open stabling, each housing 100-500 milk cows (e.g., in Shiraz, Tehran, Tabrīz, Mašhad), as well as a number of modern feedlots for livestock (e.g., the Marv Dašt complex, with a capacity of 350,000 sheep). But genuine industrial facilities (batteries) for producing laying hens and chickens for meat are the most highly developed (e.g., the Qazvīn complex, with an annual production capacity as high as 7 million chickens and 5,600 tons of packaged meat).

*The exploitation of livestock.* In traditional systems the use of live animals was preferred to slaughtering them for meat. Cattle and equines were used as work animals (for threshing, hauling, pulling agricultural implements); cows, goats, and lambs provided milk; sheep and goats were shorn for their wool and hair; and so on. In the mid-1970s 51 percent of the animal protein



consumed by Persians was furnished by milk, 18 percent by the meat of sheep and goats, 13 percent by beef, 9 percent by eggs, 6 percent by meat from chickens, and 1 percent by fish (Nyrop, p. 354). Since then, with the increase in the urban population from 46.9 percent in 1355 Š./1976 to 54.2 percent in 1365 Š./1986 and a concomitant change in eating habits, the consumption of red meat has risen from 128,000 to 407,000 tons a year. This development has in turn encouraged the formation of an infrastructural network (400 municipal slaughterhouses with a total capacity of 10 million head a year) and a rise in demand that domestic production alone (Table 37) is unable to satisfy. In 1355 Š./1976, when the consumption and supply of meat and poultry were somewhat more in balance (a total of 215,000 tons produced, 245,000 tons consumed), domestic meat production fell 76,000 tons short; in 1365 Š./1986 the gap was 200,000 tons. As a result, despite the formidable zootechnical potential of Persia, massive imports of livestock and frozen meat (Table 38) are required, which puts a severe strain on the agricultural budget (35 million rials in 1360 Š./1981-82).

*Politics and the future of animal husbandry.* The situation just described, which has helped to compromise Persia's self-sufficiency in food supplies (Brun and Dumont; McLachlan), is the result of several decades of errors and incoherence in government policy related to livestock raising: ill-considered sedentarization of the nomads, which has been ruinous in the long run (Stauffer); excessive taxation on livestock, under the 1346 Š./1967 law nationalizing forests and pastures (Digard, 1979); encouragement of showy but often inappropriate projects for purposes of national prestige, at the cost of devaluing small livestock and traditional means and systems of production; excessive concessions to commercial imports, to the detriment of the domestic distribution network, with resulting higher prices. Beginning in the mid-1960s these measures led to demoralization among many livestock breeders and a decline in pastoral production (see Table 39).

After the Islamic Revolution of 1357-58 Š./1978-79 this trend was reversed; nomads in general returned to the "status quo ante" in response to the temporary disruption of the routes by which meat had been imported. The new Persian authorities, although they have not abandoned the modern production sector (e.g., Āstān-e qods in Mašhad; Hourcade), have shown prudence and a remarkable pragmatism in the matter of the rural economy, as demonstrated, for example, in their policy of supporting agricultural prices and the empirical but effective conduct of the "holy war for reconstruction"



(*jehād-e sāzandegī*), which is being extended to the land only gradually, in incremental steps. There is still much to be done, however, before the potential of livestock breeding in Persia can be fully realized. In particular local breeds must be improved, and the technological capacities of the breeders must be raised to a higher level.

As for Afghanistan, because of the recent war animal husbandry is in dire condition; it is no exaggeration to say that livestock raisers must begin again from the beginning.

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