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TOBACCO
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MODES OF USE, CULTIVATION AND CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS

Tobacco reached Persia around 1600 (see Floor 2002). Persian sources imply that the use of tobacco was already known in Persia before its introduction into Europe in the 1550s. The water pipe (*qalyān*) and tobacco, for instance, are mentioned in a poem of the Persian poet Ahli Širāzi (d. 1535; see also ĞALYĀN, p. 263). Because there is no evidence that the water pipe existed prior to the 1560s, it is most likely that a substance was 'smoked' instead. Most probably, this substance were the seeds of the plant known as *tabḡ* (pl. *tobuḡ*), now the common Arabic word for tobacco. Prior to 1500, the word *tabḡ* referred to a eupatorium, used as a sleeping and vomiting draught. The use of this drug as well as the term for it were also known in Europe and led to an early 15th-century use of the word *tabacco* (or *tabauco*) in Italian. The use of the word *tanbāku* (vulg. *tumbek*) in Turkish, Persian and Arabic clearly indicates that it is a European loanword.

Shah Abbās I (r. 1588-1629) was opposed to smoking and banned the use of tobacco on pain of death and loss of property (see Olearius, p. 645; Bastiansen, pp. 102-05; Falsafi, II, pp. 278-79). Despite the ban, tobacco was available allover Persia. ʿAbbās therefore gave in and allowed the drug to be cultivated in Persia. He and his successors also heavily taxed the trade in tobacco. Physicians and ulama differed whether tobacco was addictive and poisonous. Those ulama who considered smoking unlawful put forward a number of

circular and repetitive arguments, stating that it was a wasteful activity and hence religiously unlawful (*ḥarām*). However, no religious leader wanted to issue a fatwa to that effect. After the 1850s, only the Bābis, and Zoroastrians proscribed smoking to their followers.

Soon, pipe (*čopoq*) and water-pipe (*qalyān*, see ĠALYĀN) became inseparable items in every Persian's life, male and female. Smoking was done at home, in coffeehouses and in other public places. Important personages, when out riding, had a special servant variously referred to as *čopoqdār*, *qalyāndār*, or *ābdār*, who carried all smoking implements in special leather boxes (*qobol-e manqal*). There were also itinerant "water-pipe sellers" (*qalyānforuš-e dowragerd*), who offered a smoke to those without a pipe. Despite their smoking habit, most Persians (including the women in the royal harem) stopped smoking voluntarily between 3 December 1890 and 26 January 1891 when the leading Shiʿite scholar of the time, Ḥājj Mirzā Moḥammad Ḥasan Širāzi, banned the sale of tobacco and smoking as a means to force the shah to revoke the Tobacco Concession (see DOḴĀNIYĀT).

Cultivation. Although initially tobacco was imported from Surat in India and from Indonesia by the Dutch and English, respectively, tobacco was soon later also cultivated in Persia. In 1617, Shah ʿAbbās already referred to Hamadan tobacco. In 1637, Olearius (1599-1671), noted its cultivation in Baghdad, Kurdistan and Gilān. Only thirty years later, Chardin (1643-1713) wrote that tobacco grew everywhere in Persia, but tobacco from Šuštar, Behbahān, Hamadan, and southern Fārs was particularly well-known (III, p. 301; see also Olearius, p. 597).

By the end of the 19th century, three main types of tobacco were grown in Persia: (i) *Tambāku* (*Nicotiana persica Lindl.*), or pounded tobacco, smoked in the water pipe and grown allover the country, but more particularly in the south; (ii) *Tutun-e čopoq* (*Nicotiana rustica*) pipe tobacco, smoked in a *čopoq* and *sebilu* (short one-piece earthenware pipe), cultivated in the northwest of Persia, and sold as a clear yellow coarse powder. (iii) *Tutun-e sigār* (*Nicotiana rustica*) or cigarette tobacco, introduced in 1876 and cultivated in Gilān and Māzandarān. Cigarette paper was called *kāḡaḏ-e sigār* or *papirus*, a term borrowed from the Russian. Sometimes, this tobacco was also smoked in the *sebilu* (TABLE 1).

For example, per capita consumption was only slightly more than 3 *batman*s or 1.19 kg, which was in harmony with the consumption in Turkey and Egypt

at that time (For the 20th century see also DOḴĀNIYĀT).

Smoking implements. The pipe (*čopoq*) consisted of a simple wooden stem, ranging from 25 cm to one meter or more, at the end of which was the usually red clay pipe-head (*sar-e čopoq*), made of earthenware or china. There was a "bore some half-inch in diameter through it; there is no mouth-piece, and it is held to the lips, and not to in the teeth." (Wills, p. 32, underlining in the original). The pipe used by the lower classes was one with a short stem, which was easier to carry around. Like the water pipe the pipe was also shared between smokers. Apart from socio-economic differentiation in the use of a pipe, there also was a geographical one. For example, Floyer (p. 427) reported in 1880, that at Saḥna, a small town in the western Persian Zagros mountains, "the reign of the kalian was at an end". Rich people spent large amounts of money on their pipes and had them made of wrought gold and silver, often studded with jewels, especially turquoise. The most widely used wood was *čub-e čopoq*, the agriot or the wild cherry-tree called Beroline (*Cerasis orientalis*). This tree grew in particular in Fārs, Kuhgiluya, Lorestān and the Baḵtiāri mountains. From its wood the cherry-wood pipe-sticks (*čopoq*) for the Turkish markets, were produced, which formed a considerable article of commerce in the 19th century.

In Persian, the water-pipe was referred to mostly as *qalyān* (and less so also as *ḡalyān*, or *ḥoqqa,* an Arabic loanword, meaning "small box" or "vessel" [through which the smoke is drawn], extended in Urdu to the whole apparatus). It was also known in Afghanistan as *čelam* or *čelim* (the bottle gourd) and in Turkish and Persian as *nārgil(a)*. Although both *čelam* and *qalyān* properly speaking referred to the water reservoir, both terms were also used to refer to the pipe itself.

The water pipe is said to have been invented by Abu 'l-Fatḥ Gilāni (d. 1588; see ḠALYĀN, p. 263), a Persian physician at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar I (r. 1556–1605). There were two kinds of water-pipes: (i) a hand-held one (*dasti*) with a thin reddish wooden stem, which stuck out from the water-reservoir at an angle; (ii) a standing one (*karnā'i.*) with a flexible air-tight tube some four yards long (*neypič*) formed by a spiral of copper wire covered with colored leather. This was the more old-fashioned way, and required good lungs. Most Safavid courtiers used the *qalyān-e karnā'i* (see Āṣef, p. 100). By the 19th century, the latter was also called the "Turkish pipe," because, whereas in Persia it was hardly used anymore. The water-pipe was made and bought in sections.

The water-reservoir was generally known as *šiša* or "glass," either plain crystal, or cut Bohemian. When the water pipe was made of glass, the Persians, depending on the season, often put cherries, roseleaves, or jasmine into it, which danced about in the hubble-bubble. In summer, a porous clay bottle (*kuza*) was generally used as cooler by all classes. The poor used an earthenware bowl throughout the year. Painted porcelain bowls were also used. The water-reservoirs already were embellished with enameled or painted figures or faces in the late 17th century.

Another kind of reservoir, called *nārḡil*, had the shape of a coconut (*nārjil* or *nārḡil*), with a spike or small knob at the sharp end. It rested on the ground and was meant for traveling. In the case of the well-to-do, it was made of brass, silver, or gold, and often (in the two latter cases) enameled. The poor used very simple wood or pottery versions. The *miāna* or middle tube of this kind of pipe was often about 80 cm long, and the stem about 60 cm. There also was the gourd-shaped water pipe, whose water vessel was made from a gourd (*Cucurbita lagenaria L.*). It was known as *qalyān-e kuʾi*, *nārḡila,* or as *čalem* (gourd) in Afghanistan.

The part between the pipe-head and the water-holder is a wooden tube called *tana*, "body," of which the upper part was called *miāna* (middle-part). The latter term was also used to refer to the entire wooden tube. The smoking reed (*ney*) was inserted at the top of the *tana*. The *tana* was a wooden tube extending between ca. 35 and 80 cm height with numerous indentations and carvings. The lath ends in a point that fits every pipe-head. From the end of this an inner tube (*milāb*) of 4-6 cm went via a stopper to within 2-3 cm of the bottom of the water, so that one-third was stuck into the water. This tube was entirely hollow and had a second hole at the bottom for the snake-like tube, or the hollow cane that serves to draw the washed smoke out and communicates with the empty space in the bowl. Sometimes, this tube was ornamented externally by lavish carving, made of ebony, or at other times covered with silver, and rarely with gold. The ordinary water-pipe was about two feet high.

Among the poor, that is, the majority of the population, the pipe-head (*sar-e qalyān* or *sarpuš*; about the size of a goblet), consisted of a clay reservoir for the tobacco. Many (though only those of the lower middle class) managed to have a silver pipe-head, whilst most others, who were not poor, were satisfied with brass, or copper; this consisted of three pieces, the handle or *čup* (wood), a carved and turned piece of wood pierced with a conical hole which fits the *miāna* (or stem) this may be represented by the lower two-thirds of an old-

fashioned wine-glass, with a small foot; the fire-holder, which is of gold, silver, or stone, is fitted to this, and represents the upper third of the wine-glass. From its under edge hang four or six little chains made of silver, gold, or some cheaper metal. They are about 10 cm long and end in flattened bells. To enable the smoker to handle the pipe-head without burning his or her fingers, it was covered by a kind of insulating crown, called *čalvāra*, which was made of silk or wool.

Lastly, the wind-guard (*bādgir*), which prevents the fire from falling or being blown up into an excessive state of incandescence, is made of brass, copper, steel, or silver, etc. It is an inverted cone of the same size as the fire-holder, fitted to it with accuracy, and provided with two holes to give the requisite amount of draught. At the side, two pairs of china depend from the upper edge of this and are made to reach as far as the lower set. The fire-holder is lined with a mixture of clay and plaster of Paris.

The preparation of the water-pipe was a very important activity and not at all easy. It needed a special servant who understood how to do it well and properly. The procedure started with the purchase of the right tobacco, its storage and processing for use. This entire preparation process, in particular the stacking of the tobacco into the pipe-head, was referred to as *čāq kardan*. Charcoal was the preferred fuel to light the tobacco. Chacoal made from vine roots was preferred, but dried dung also sufficed.

The English diplomat and writer James Justinian Morier (ca. 1780-1849) noticed in the 19th century that there “[…] is as much etiquette in smoking as in sitting. No inferior calls for his *kaleoon*, until the superior has given the lead. No one can smoke before the King; and only particular persons before the Princes” (p. 286). Likewise, family members were not allowed to smoke either in the presence of the head of the family, unless they had been specially invited to do so [see also ḠALYĀN, p. 264]. If no pipe (or no excuse for its absence) was offered (this indicated that the visitor was not welcome, or that business was bad, requiring his return at a more appropriate moment. When a visitor was welcome, the host offered a water-pipe at least two, usually three times, the last time being the signal that it was time to end the meeting. It was a sign of high favor when the first water-pipe was accompanied by coffee or tea (later in the century, after the Persians had become tea-drinkers). At the second time, the water pipe would be accompanied by ‘sweet coffee’, a composition of rosewater and sugar, or tea. At the third time, only the water-pipe was offered. Later in the century tea might also be offered the third time.

Highly placed persons usually had the third water-pipe served to themselves only, as a signal to the guests and servants that it was time to break up the meeting. “The chief guest then inhales the smoke three times. This is the correct number” (Baker, p. 187). He then handed it back to the servant, who lifted off the head and drew out the smoke left in the tube before replacing the head, because to “[…] pass it without […] clearing out the smoke would be as unpardonable a breach of etiquette as if in Europe one was to put a spoon in his mouth and then offer it his neighbour at table” (O’Donovan, II, p. 20). The same thing was repeated as it was offered to each guest in succession. Muslim clerics or devout religious persons did not, as a rule, like to smoke the pipe belonging a European, or to smoke from the same pipe, since non-Muslims were considered as ritually impure *(najas).*

Often a Persian would inhale deeply only once and would then slowly exhale through the nose. He also would almost always cough strongly thereafter, even those who were long-time smokers. According to Polak (II, pp. 258-59), many smokers of the water-pipe wanted to get “stoned” (*kayf*), a side-effect of the high nicotine content of the so-called Shiraz tobacco. The smoker would reach a slight degree of intoxication, if he or she did not exhale the smoke for some length of time and repeated this for about five to six whiffs. In that state, the smoker was still conscious, but he or she became wonderfully inebriated. The next phase was to achieve a state of total intoxication (*gaš*), in which state the smoker to the onlooker appeared to be epileptic. For those who wanted to achieve even higher levels of intoxication, opium (see AFYUN), and its various derivates, as well as hashish, mixed with tobacco were smoked.

“*Ex tempore*” *pipes.* People also used the *sebilu*. “A third kind of pipe is used by the Arabs of the Gulf and many South Persians; it consists simply of a tube of clay, an inch in diameter, bent at a right or acute angle, and constricted in the middle; from end to end it measures four to seven inches; one side is crammed with tobacco, ‘Tootoon i Koordi;’ a coal is placed on it, and it passed from hand to hand till the contents are burnt out. It is a very primitive pipe” (Wills, p. 33).

“*Down-to-earth*” *pipes*. People also smoked tobacco without having any kind of pipe. When people had no pipe or water-pipe, their method of smoking was as follows: “They wet the ground to the consistency of clay, and cut a small trench, in which they lay a string: then beating down the earth upon this, they draw it gently out, and a channel is left, on one end of which they put a pinch of tobacco, and to the other their mouths, and inhale, what my friends described as-‘a draught cool as the breath of Paradise’” (Conolly, I, p. 74).

According to Mitford (II, p. 42), this was a universal phenomenon in Persia, when people pipe had no pipe.

Cigarettes.Cigarettes are of recent date (probably the late 1870s) and entered Persia under influence of the neighboring Ottoman empire and Russia. Around 1880, Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana noted that the craft of cigarette making (*sanʿat-e sigārsāzi*) was in existence allover Persia, which was an exaggeration, but not for long. In the 1890s, the cigarette had replaced the pipe and water pipe in the northern provinces, except for the older generation and clerics. Rather than importing cigarettes these were manufactured in Rasht, Mashad, Tabriz, and Tehran, and made of tobacco from Gilān

A slightly different cigarette was the "Kurdish cigarette," whose use remained limited to Kurdistan and the neighboring areas. The "Kurdish cigarette" consisted of coarse powdered tobacco, poured into a paper rolled into a small paper funnel. "A long slip of thick paper 1 inch [about 2-3 cm] broad is taken, and rolled into a plug which is inserted in the narrow end, its natural spring retaining it in place. Tobacco is then poured in from the top, and after sufficient coaxing and shaking down, the edges of the paper are turned in to retain the contents" (Soane, pp. 52-53).

In November 1907, a visitor to the shah was not offered a water pipe, but cigarettes instead while waiting in the antechamber (Grothe, p. 215). Another sign that conditions were changing was the fact that, by the 1930s, there were cigarette sellers (*sigārforuš*) and cigarette rollers (*sigārpič*) at almost every street corner in Tehran. In many cases, the cigarette was still offered or shared as if it is was a water pipe. The host, putting them one by one in his mouth, set them alight and offered them to his guests. Although cigars (*sigār-e barg*) were known to Persians, they never became popular.

Tobacco was also much used either as a substance to be snuffed by the nostrils (*nešvār* or *anfiya*), or was applied to the gum under the upper lip, above the incisor teeth, where the morsel laid like a plug of tobacco, acting much in the same way on the constitution as chewing (*jāvidan*). Snuff was mixed with the powdered stems or ashes of *Ephedra pachyclada* to make it more pungent. In Isfahan, Armenians prepared snuff from *tanbāku* leaves' residues mixed with Chinese tealeaves. Most of this product was exported to the Caucasus. In parts of Baluchistan, tobacco was also used for the cleaning of the teeth.

The smoking of the water pipe, according to Polak (II, pp. 259-60), caused

emphysema and bronchial catarrh. Despite these and other known or perceived dangers, tobacco was also used for medicinal purposes. Tobacco smoke was used to blow mercury vapors into the nostrils and throat; volatized galbanum was also mixed was tobacco against asthma and chronic catarrh of the lungs. Quacks also used the water pipe for a fumigation treatment against syphilis. The filthy-tasting water of the water pipe, which had very high nicotine content, was a very popular medicinal draught against asthmatic ailments and as an emetic. Snuff was only used as a medicine against head and eye aches (see Šahri, III, p. 585 ff.; Ḵorasāni, pp. 275-76).

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For further references see also ḠALYĀN.