

## An Anthropological Study of Animals and Their Connections with the Iranian Tribes

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**ABSTRACT** The main purpose of the present paper is to recognize the anthropological elements, in relation with the presence of tamed animals among the Iranian tribes, in particular the *Lor* tribe,<sup>2</sup> that is, one of the oldest tribes in Iran, dwelling in the mountainous area of *Zagros*, and who have been using tamed animals as the main source of their subsistence and livelihood. The presence of tamed animals has been considered as an important factor for man's development, as it would have been impossible for men to develop their lives without the help of such animals like horses, cows and cattle. It has been a custom for men to tame and use animals for their own success. The management and maintenance of these animals requires a quest for new knowledge and scientific methods of maintaining them in order to establish connections between people from different cultures.

### INTRODUCTION

The life among the Iranian tribes is based on stockbreeding. It is because of this close affinity between men and cattle and other tamed animals that these men are forced to change places and settlements during different seasons. The use of tamed animals has improved lifestyle, for instance, horses are used as a means of transportation. It also made plantation easier. It has been useful in "the production of hay in different parts of Iran to the extent that the hay products have been exported to other parts" (Majidi Khameneh 2009).

It was in 1312 that a law was passed making the members of different tribes send their cattle to countryside, and have their family members, women and children in particular, settle there, build houses and begin living as villagers. As years passed, the number of cattle reduced and those who were in the possession of cattle were limited. Whoever possessed more than forty animals was considered as a main famous stockbreeder in the tribe. There is a proverb among members of the *Lor* tribe that signifies this subject.

*It was in 1941 when the Bakhtyari tribe decided to move, and in the process, many villages that already appeared, were left isolated and had turned into storehouses. With this collective movement, all the members of a family would be inclined to participate in the stockbreeding. It is here that the annual calendar and the*

*season of the movement of the tribes were established* (Karimi 1973).

Pastures have been very important in the lives of *Bakhtyari*<sup>1</sup> stockbreeders, and this is the reason for their immigration from one part to another part where they could provide their stocks with food and pasturage. The written documents indicating the ownership of lands in the hands of the elders of the tribe show that each *Tash*<sup>22</sup> One of the smallest sections of the tribe is in the possession of land and pasture. All of the members of the *Tash* can have access to these lands, but they have no right to sell them to people who do not belong to the *Tash*. Each *Tash* owns two different parts of land in both warm and cold areas where they can have their cattle graze. It is important to notice that among the tribes in Iran, in particular the *Bakhtyari* tribe, the horse is used in ceremonies glorifying the memory of the elders and the famous members of the tribe, and they consider a horse as the symbol of innocence.

Animals are also referred to as totems among the *Bakhtyari* tribes, to the extent that these totems are identified with the ancestors of the people in the tribe. These animals are considered sacred, and they represent courage (Shahmoradi 2015).

Much before the nationalization of natural resources, every *Tash* was expected to graze its cattle in these lands without paying attention to

the size of the land, even if the land owned by the *Tash* was large enough to be used by other people for grazing their cattle, the latter were not allowed to use the land for grazing. But at present, the grazer can take his cattle for pasturage is to the extent that he would own only with the land he is given by the authorities. These lands are assayed based on their capacities for pasturage, and they are classified into three, that is, first degree pastures, each acre of which is capable of feeding two pairs of sheep, second degree pastures, each acre of which is capable of feeding one pair of sheep, and third degree pastures, two acres of which is capable of feeding one pair of sheep (Karimi 1973).

### METHODOLOGY

The method used in this article is a field-based research and for this purpose the researcher has raised questions and interviewed people. The researcher has also made use of library data and documented theories of relevant and reliable critics.

#### Bakhtyari Geographical Location

The Bakhtyari land is located in the central plateau of Iran and surrounded by the high mountains. It includes such provinces like *Khozestan*, *Chahar Mahal-e-Bakhtyari*, *Isfahan* and *Lorestan*. It is located at the foot of *Zagros* Mountains. It is named after the people residing there (Khosravi 2007). The people living in this area have many things in common although they are located in different provinces.

*There are mountains and rivers in this area the most important of which are the mountains of Asmari, Mangasht, Zardkooh, Koohrang, Ashtarankooh, Haftanan, Sabzkooh and Koohsfid, which are at a height of eight to twelve thousand meters and are the sources of long rivers like Zayandeh Rood, which originates from Chahar Mahal Bakhtyari* (Ahmadi Oorak Bakhtyari 1998).

#### Animals and Stockbreeders

Stockbreeding has been an important economic source among the *Bakhtyari* migrating tribe. Agriculture and natural resources have also been of great importance in the economic pros-

perity, and these last two resources are useful in making people fulfill their needs. But it is stockbreeding that has played a major role in meeting the needs of the people of the tribes. It provides them with such commodities like sugar cubes, tea, clothing and other necessary commodities. Among the middle class families belonging to the *Bakhtyari* tribe, the goat is more important than an ewe, and that is the reason that most of the families keep goats. It is easier to keep goats, because it is easier to take care of and provide these animals with soilage. Goats can use the leaves of the trees, and thus do not cost the stockbreeders much expense.

#### The Expenses of Stocks

Ewes and goats need salt, and therefore use more salt during the seasons when they eat more grass. They eat salt during the last month of spring and the three-month period of summer, and they eat it twice a week. They do not consume salt during the winter season and the first month of spring (Karimi 1973).

#### Impregnation Periods

Once the members of the tribe spend their times in the warm areas, they let the male stocks wander in the cattle so that they can have the cattle of the ewes and goats impregnated. For every 100 ewes, five rams, and for every 100 goats, five male goats are necessary.

These male stocks are considered the best to be used for impregnation of the stock. The stockbreeders do not use the male ram and goat for more than 7 years, and these latter animals are castrated and being sold to graziers. If they make use of the male animals more than the required time, the latter will turn fatter and thus will be harmful for the female stocks. The large ranchers use one male stock for every 30 female stocks. The male stocks are lead out at the beginning of June, and it takes a period of six months for the pregnancy of the stock, and the stocks deliver in the warm areas in the middle of February. Approximately 10 out of every 100 stocks give birth to twins, and another 10 stocks might be sterilized, thus, out of every 100 male stocks are sold in the market and the remaining 50 stocks are added to the possessions of the stockbreeder (Karimi 1973).

### Different Methods of Ablactation

1. In order to prevent the kids from feeding on the milk of the mother goat, a piece of wood is tied with two cotton strings from both ends, and is placed between the newborn goat's mouth, and the two ends of the string are tightened to the goat's horns. This tool is named rein. The newborn goat can eat grass in this state, but it cannot feed on its mother's breast.
2. Since the sheep do not have any horns, thus the reins cannot be used. Therefore, the sheep are kept away from the cattle, and if there are few ewes left, their breasts are tied with bags, the strings of which are further tied to the ewe's back. They call this as brassieres.
3. In order to prevent calves from feeding on the cow's milk, the stock keepers rub the cow's own cowpat on its breast, so that the calf cannot be fed.
4. In order to prevent the colt from taking milk, an iron stock is tied to the nose of the colt, so that its sharp edge prevents the colt from taking milk comfortably. If they do not intend to use this tool, they keep the colt away from its mother for a period of one month.

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### The Earmarking of the Stocks

The Bakhtyaris earmark their stocks, so that in case one of them is lost, they would search for the lost one in the cattle of the neighbors, or send messages for the other shepherds to trace the animal for them. These marks differ from animal to animal. The marks used for animals that are used for riding (horses, mules and mares), is placed on the backside of these animals, so that it does not change the beauty of their faces. As far as such animals like ewes and goats are concerned, the marks are placed on their ears or the part of their face with less hair. The marks on those animals used for transportation, are placed on their necks.

### The Marks Used for Cows

The shepherds cut a part of leather placed on the frontlet of a calf, when the latter is very

young, and tie it with a little piece of cord. When the calf grows older, a meaty apophysis is made on its frontlet, which is known by a mark named as "*Sare Naf Borideh*" in Bakhtyari language. Some shepherds place the marks on the apophysis present on the animal's neck. In this way, they cut a part of it. This mark is called "*Telom Borideh*".

If the mark is expected to be in the form of a cauter, an iron rod is used with a mark on one end. They immerse the rod in fire, and place it on the animal's body. Some of these shepherds use the first letter of their own names as a mark.

### Castrating Animals

The Bakhtyaris castrate those male animals that are not young enough for the act of homogenesis. The age used for castration for a mule would be when it is three years old, horse, when it is 5 years old, donkey, when it is 5 years old, and male goat, 7 years old. The horses and bulls are castrated so that they can become stronger.

### The Bakhtyari People's Beliefs About Stocks

The Bakhtyari stock keepers believe that with the appearance of the North Star in the beginning of summer and autumn, once the cattle exposed to the light of this star, it dies. In order to avoid such a disaster, they paint the backside of the animal so that it can survive.

### Animal Fighting

The Bakhtyaris used to have bulls, rams, horses, and cocks fight each other in the past. They used to train these animals for the particular day of fighting, and they also made bets on the winners. Since it was problematic for the shepherds, and caused hatred among them, it gradually disappeared. Among the Iranian tribes, loin is considered as the symbol of courage and bravery, and that is why once the brave members of the tribe die, in order to remind the generations of their bravery, people of the tribe have a lion made of stone erected on the former's tombs (Madadi 2013).

### The Names of the Animals

The Bakhtyaris used different names for their cattle and animals. Those animals that were

graminivorous, were named as “Heyvoon”, the wild and carnivorous animals were named as “Jonvar”, and those animals like birds were named “Balandeh”.

Some of these animals have different names depending upon their ages. For instance, a one-year-old sheep is named “Bareh”, and once it gets older, it is named “Kaveh”. The female sheep, before it gives birth, is named “Shishak”, and after giving birth, it is named “Pestak”. Mares or red horses are called “Boor”, white horses are named “Nileh”, a brown horse is a “Kamit”, black horses, “Kahar”, white and blonde horses, “Boorchal”, and finally, proud and defiant horses, “Sherak” (Pooreh 1994).

### CONCLUSION

Animals started playing important roles in the culture of the ancient people when the latter sacrificed the former in order to worship their gods. Once these animals were tamed, they were used for transportation. These animals have also played important roles in the lives of the Iranian people, and these can be displayed through the tools made with the shapes of the animals on them. In the past, the animals played such important roles in the lives of people that they were sometimes buried along with their dead owners. During the Assyrian era, many battles took place, because of ownership of pastures and horse herds. This even changed the history of a nation. Even the kind of dresses and techniques used for the battles were influenced by the way the animals were used.

The roles played by such animals like horses in important inventions like chariots and wheels is also important in the history of man’s life, and these tools were used for large migrations of people from one place to another. They even played important roles in agricultural progress and exportation of the products to different places. These animals were used as a means of ex-

change. If it happened that a king decided to offer a gift to another king, he would offer fast running horses as gifts. Animals were even important possessions for some rich owners, and the more number of horses the latter owned, the richer he became.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of the lifestyle of the ancient Iranian people shows that their economy was based on agriculture and stock keeping. This method of life has been persistent for years, and it has influenced a major part of the life in the tribes, as most of the rituals dealing with social communications are performed with the presence of such animals like horses. Therefore, the identification of the importance and functions of these animals in the lives of tribes in Iran has been essential.

### NOTES

1. An Old Iranian Tribe
2. An Iranian tribe dwelling at the Zagros Mountain area
3. One of the smallest sections of the tribe

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