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Pastoralism: The Bakhtiari

Pastoralism:

* Pastoralists live in societies that view animal husbandry as the proper way to make a living
* They consider movement of all or part of the society as a normal and natural way of life
* Some pastoral nomads, but not all, are dependent on nearby farmers for some of their supplies
* May earn more from non-pastoral sources than from their own herds
* The concept of nomadic pastoralism remains central to their ideas
* These societies are built around a pastoral economic specialization but imbued with values far beyond just doing a job. This distinguishes them various social groups such as food forager, migrant farm workers, North American ranchers etc.
* It is an effective way of living in places with extreme living conditions such as the arid grasslands that stretch eastward from North Africa through the Arabian Desert, into Turkestan and Mongolia

Bakhtiari Overview:

* A fiercely independent people who live in the south Zagros Mountains of western Iran
* They tend herds of goats and fat-tailed sheep
  + Although the Bakhtiari own horses and most own donkeys, they use these only for transport
  + The lives of the Bakhtiari revolve around sheep and goat
* The harsh environment dominates the lives of the Bakhtiari
  + It determines when and where they move, their clothes, and foods
* In the Zargos there are many high mountains reaching altitudes of 3600-4200 making living and traveling hazardous

Bakhtiari Migration:

* The life of the Bakhtiari revolves around two seasonal migrations to find better ands for their flock
  + In the fall: from their summer quarters in the mountains
  + In the spring: from their winter quarters in the lowlands
  + For this trek, they split into five groups each containing about 5000 individuals and 50 000 animals
  + The return trip north is dangerous because the mountain snow is melting and the gorges are full of turbulent, ice-cold water
* The trek is further impeded by kids and lambs born in the spring just before the migration
  + The stronger men often carry their children and newborn animals down to the lush valley mountains
* During each migration the people cover as much as 300 kilometers and can take weeks due to the flocks travelling slowly

Additional info on the Bakhtiari:

* Sheep and goat are central to Bakhtiari subsistence
  + They provide milk, cheese, butter, meat, hides, and wool which are used to make other necessary materials
* They also engage in very limited in very limited horticulture
  + They own lands that contain orchards
* The division of labour is according to sex
  + Men tend to flock
  + Women do house chores
* The Bakhtiari have their own system of justice, including laws and a penal code
  + They are governed by tribal leaders or ‘Khans’
  + Women lack control of economy as men own and control livestock