

Persian Horse Breeds From Ancient Time to Present and Their Rules in Development of World Horse Breeds

A. Fotovati

Fac. of Agri., Kyushu Univ, Fukuoka, Japan & Anim. Health & Breed. Dept. Fac. of Vet. Med., Teheran, Iran

According to archaeological and historical evidence, Aryans, the ancestors of modern Iranians, are believed to be the first people who began domestication of the horse. They used horses for several purposes including agricultural works, transportation, e.g. back riding, chariot and cavalry and as food resources e.g. fermented mare milk i.e. *Kumis* and horse meat.

Aryans developed rules in horse selection and breeding and made several pure breeds each with distinct characteristic features. However, only a few of them have remained until the present time. Modern Persian horse breeds are roughly categorized in to 5 groups as follows: **1- Plateau Persian horses:** These include a wide range of native horse populations which hardly could be called pure breed now due to heavy cross-breeding with other native or imported breeds. *Kurdi* or *Jaf.*, (west of Iran), *Darashuri*, *Quashquaii* and *Bakhtiyari* (central part of Iran). Their origin can be traced back to 600 B.C. **2- Turkmen** and related breeds. They are considered as one of the major category of native horse breeds of Iran with more than 2500 years of history. They were originally in the northern part of the ancient Persian Empire (including present Turkmenistan). *Akhal-Teke*, *Tchenaran* and *Yamud (Iomud)* were originally developed from Turkmen. *Tchenaran* was developed by crossing Turkmen mares and Arab stallions during 17-18th. Centuries A.D. There are only a very few of this breed remaining pure at present. *Akhal-Teke* is the other world-wide well known breed which is believed to be developed in Turkmenistan. Its conformation can be favorably compared to the Persian Arab. The *Iomud* breed originates from ancient Turkmen horses and was developed by the Iomud tribe in southern Turkmenia and was influenced by steppe breeds (Dmitriez *et al.*, 1989). **3- Karabgh** and **Karadagh:** These two ancient breeds of the mountainous area of the Azerbaijan province of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan are believed to have similar origin and can be traced back to 400 A.D. Turkmen and Arab are the suggested origins of these breeds. **4- Persian Arab.** This breed is believed to have been developed as early as the pure-bred Arab. There are several varieties of this breed such as Hamdani, Khersani and Koheilan. **5- Caspian Pony:** This ancient miniature horse of Persia was used by the Mesopotamian 3000 B.C It was thought to be extinct about 1000 years ago until a few of them were found by Lady Firouz on the shores of the Caspian Sea in 1965.

Modern horse breeds are believed to be derived from four original types, migrated from North America to Asia. They include 1). Pony Type 1 or Celtic pony, 2) pony type 2 or Tundra pony, 3). Horse type 1 or Plain horse and Horse type 2. The two pony types osteologically and conformationally resemble the modern pony breeds, i.e. Type 1 resembles the modern Exmoor and Icelandic pony and Type 2 the *Fjord*, *Highland* and *Noriker* and could be considered as origins of ponies. Therefore, the origin of the modern light horse must be either Horse type 1 or 2 or both of them. Among the modern world horse breeds, the Turkmen group (and somehow *Karabagh*) and *Caspian pony* most closely resemble the horse type 1 and 2, respectively, both osteologically and conformationally. There is another hypothesis indicating that Caspian pony is the ancestor of a proto-type of Arab. Therefore, according to this hypothesis, the origin of most modern light horses can be traced back to this horse (Hendricks, 1995).

Additionally, since many historical documents indicating the major role of some imported oriental horses from Persia in establishment of the *Thoroughbred*, the effect of Persian breeds in development of many modern breeds may be reconfirmed. *Orlov trotter*, *Tersk*, *Don (Persian Arab & Karabakh)* are famous horse breeds which are believed to have strong relationship with Persian native horse breeds.

Hendricks, Bonnie L., International Encyclopedia of Horse Breeds, Univ of Oklahoma Press, 1995

Email: fotovati@agr.kyushu-u.ac.jp or fotovati@hotmail.com