

The Political Leadership of the Bakhtiari, a
migratory tribe in S.W Iran.

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Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the British Institute for the support they gave me in carrying out my research, for what turned out to be a much longer period than either they or I expected. I would also like to express appreciation to the Iranian government who gave me permission to live and travel in a rather isolated part of the country. I owe a very great debt to my wife who accompanied me on many of my field trips and without whose continual help and support my research could not have continued.

One of the problems any anthropologist has to face in the field is that everyone he talks to has his own point of view on any given topic and this viewpoint differs from everyone else's. In the Bakhtiari, who are well known for never being able to agree with anyone on anything at all, the number of markedly different points of view on the subject of my topic this evening was somewhat alarming, and were on the whole vehemently expressed. I became rather well known for starting even more arguments than was normal, in the course of acquiring information on leadership.

Tonight I shall first describe the political organisation of the Bakhtiari and then go on to talk about the leaders of the sub-tribe divisions as I found them, finishing with a brief discussion of the historical development of the former paramount leaders or Khans, who now no longer play an active political role within the tribe.

Over the past four years I have spent a total of about 12 months with the Bakhtiari, making 6 field trips, visiting areas in the summer and winter quarters of the tribe and twice made the spring migration with one of the sub-tribes. The slides I shall be showing at the end of the lecture are mainly a visual record of these migrations.

The Bakhtiari number somewhat more than 500,000 people, though estimates vary widely. They live in that region of the Zagros mountain system in south-western Iran; bounded on the west by the plains of Khuzestan; on the east by the districts of Chahar Mahall and Feridan about 100 miles west of Isfahan; on the north by the Shuturun Kuh; and in the south by the district of Behbahan and the river Khersun. The area is magnificently mountainous, consisting of a series of mountain ranges running from N.W to S.E varying in height from about 8-13,000ft with intervening valleys of 6-8,000ft. The backbone of this system is the Zardeh Kuh range of which the Zardeh Kuh itself is the highest point, 14,920 ft. This range terminates in the Shuturun Kuh peak, about 14,000ft, in the N.W. and in peaks of 11-12,000ft in the S.E.

Crossing eastwards the ranges become progressively lower, running finally into the Chahar Mahal valleys, roughly 6,500ft high. This area forms the summer quarters of the tribe.

Moving westwards now from Zardeh Kuh are several progressively lower ranges culminating in the series of plateaux and mountain valleys of the Khuzestan foothills, between 2 and 6,000ft, which form the winter quarters of the tribe.

Two of Iran's main rivers have their sources in the Zardeh Kuh range- the Karun, and its many tributaries, which drain the western area of Bakhtiari country, and the Zayandeh Rud, which drains a smaller area to the east flowing eventually towards Isfahan. As will be seen later, the Karun river system presents a real hazard to the Bakhtiari on their migrations. The entire central area is wild and spectacular, consisting of gorges and ravines, rushing streams, of snow-capped mountains which afford relatively few routes on which the Bakhtiari have to migrate.

The climate varies considerably as might be expected from the great variations in height. On a migration one has to cope with intense heat, dust storms, lack of water, blinding snowstorms, bitter cold, driving rain, gales and occasionally violent electrical storms. The winter quarters of the tribe, the Khuzestan foothills in the west, have mild winters and extremely hot dry summers. Rain falls in the spring and late autumn, although the spring rains in particular are not dependable.

The central region and the eastern side of the main ranges have severe winters with snow lying in the valleys for 4 months, from November to March. In the summer, the valley floors are hot and dry, but not uncomfortably so, as in Khuzestan. Evenings are pleasantly cool. Here, too, rain falls in spring and late autumn.

The Bakhtiari practice a mixed economy, combining herding flocks of sheep and goats, with some agriculture, growing wheat and barley as their main crop. They move, with their flocks, in response to the changing climatic conditions of each area. After the spring rains, if they occur, the grass in Khuzestan dries up. The tribes generally start migrating about 14 days after the onset of spring- following the grass- climbing over the ranges of mountain valleys as they move. This spring migration lasts about 4-5 weeks, depending on the prevalent weather conditions.

The tribes stay in the cooler summer pastures from the end of May until the first of autumn, roughly four months. Before the snows close the higher mountain passes they then migrate back to the Khuzestan foothills, where they spend about six months. In the autumn, migrations are made faster than in the spring, since there is less water and grass, for grazing, after the dry summer months. Each of the many sub-tribes of the Bakhtiari has their own territory in both summer and winter areas and have the traditional right to graze their animals on the fixed routes they travel.

Wheat and barley are the main crops and are cultivated in both summer and winter quarters, by most of the sub-tribes. The crop in the winter area, being harvested in the spring. In the summer

quarters, harvesting is in the late summer. These crops are unirrigated and depend on the appearance of spring rains. Bread is the staple diet so crop failure has immediate and severe effects on the tribe.

This brief picture hides the great multiplicity of ecological circumstances in the total area. The extent of agriculture practiced varies a lot. Quality of soil is better in some areas. One area may get rain and the neighbouring one get none. Some valleys can maintain a denser population than others, with resulting variation in settlement pattern. Some sections settle in summer quarters, some in winter quarters. Those tribal groups living in the higher regions have few settlements.

Scattered throughout the foothills of Khuzestan, and the valleys of Chahar Mahal, are dozens of small villages and hamlets, some of which are permanently settled, others vacated for part of the year while migrating. A few sections have their summer and winter quarters only a few days distant from each other, some have long and difficult treks to make every year.

One common feature of most of the population is the almost complete lack of control over the environment. There is little or no irrigated farming, and as happened in 1964, both the spring and autumn crops failed due to drought. By the winter the Bakhtiari were faced with starvation, and without the timely help of the central government in providing wheat, the population would have been decimated. The following year proved extremely bad for the flocks. Fodder crops are not grown by the nomadic population. Due to some rather freakish weather conditions an estimated 70% of the animal population died, in a matter of a few days. This was a crushing blow to their mainly pastoral economy and it will take about 6 years before the animals regain their numbers. So, as well as being open to the natural hazards of a very rough region they are at the mercy of considerable climatic undependability.

Bakhtiari political organisation is characterised by a collection of segmented political groups based on descent and kinship affiliation, combined with a hierarchical system of leadership over these groups.

The kin groups are organised on the principle of patrilineal descent forming what anthropologists describe as a political segmentary lineage structure. All members of the group ideally can trace descent through the male line to a common ancestor. The upper limit of this type of kin group is the sub-tribe or 'taifeh'. All members of a taifeh are, then, related to each other patrilineally. This unit is largely endogamous, with members marrying within the group. Expressed differently, a Bakhtiari marries a woman to whom he is already related through the male line. There is a strong preference for marrying cousins, e.g. one's father's brother's daughter (F.B.D). For the ordinary tribesman, marriage to a member of a different taifeh, is uncommon.

These taifeh or sub-tribes, are segmented into progressively smaller and closer kin groups called 'tireh' or clans, and 'tash' or lineages. These smaller units trace descent over fewer generations to their common ancestor. Working in the opposite direction, any particular individual is primarily a member of a family, then a member of a lineage, that is several families closely related by descent, then a member of a clan, comprising a number of lineages, the founders of which are brothers; and finally a member of the largest kin unit, the sub-tribe or taifeh. He is, then, a member of each of these groups by virtue of birth. The founding ancestor of a taifeh may be as many as twelve generations back. One large taifeh, currently consists of over 25,000 people and, technically at least, they think of themselves as all descending from one eponymous founder.

The taifeh is also a residential unit; each taifeh having territorial rights to land in both summer and winter quarters. Each other smaller kin groups, the clan and lineage have their own distinct land within the larger taifeh land. Any particular Bakhtiari owns land both for grazing and agriculture. The neighbouring land is owned by close relatives. Therefore, within the taifeh land the further apart two individuals live, the more distant is their kinship link.

Within this system of territorially based kin groups, one finds lineages whose founding ancestor belonged to a different taifeh. This ancestor came into the area, decided to settle there, acquired land and married into the taifeh. A sort of adoption. These lineages descended from an immigrant founder, now think of themselves as being members of the adopted taifeh, by virtue of the rights to their land and the marriages they will have contracted over the descending generations within the taifeh. Where marriage takes place outside the taifeh unit, which as already stated is not usual, it is done by people from these adopted lineages, marrying into the original taifeh of their founder.

Each of these segmentary kin groups, the sub tribe, clan and lineage, have a hierarchically arranged system of leaders. The head of a lineage is called Rish Sefid or white beard, and is usually the most senior respected member of the group. All the people under his authority are close relatives of himself and of each other. His position depends largely on his personal prestige and on the consent of his group. He is expected to maintain order, and solve disputes within the lineage. He represents the lineage to outsiders and to people in higher authority, to whom he is subject, that is the clan leader or Katkhoda. In turn the clan leaders, Katkhodas owe allegiance to the chief of the whole kin group or taifeh, the Kalantar.

These positions of authority are traditionally held by the dominant lineage or family of the group concerned. They are hereditary roles, passing from the senior member of this dominant lineage to his elder son. The hereditary principle is strong, but

qualified by the necessity of obtaining the consent of the leading members of the group concerned. A Katkhoda must have the consent of the Rish Sefids, and the Kalantar must have the consent of the Katkhodas.

On the death of a leader it does not always happen that the most immediate hereditary heir is available, or considered suitable by the members of the group. There may be no sons at all, or the son may be too young to take over. He may not be regarded with respect, possibly being a thief, possibly not having a dominant enough personality. Several people may aspire to the position and frequently, internal power struggles on the death of a leader occur.

Usually, the potential successor must fulfil the hereditary requirements. If there is no son, the next nearest male relative will succeed- the deceased's brother, or brother's son. The descendants of this man will follow him. If the son is too young, then the deceased's brother will take over the position temporarily, in trust for the son. His own sons will not be in the line of succession.

In all cases, when the succession is in some doubt, the senior male members of the group must come to some common agreement, with a majority point of view prevailing. Where the role concerned is that of the clan leader, the consent of the Kalantar must also be obtained. He, and the clan members, have to decide on a mutually acceptable candidate.

If a Katkhoda turns out to be a poor leader, unable to resolve the internal conflicts brought to him, the clan members can appeal to the Kalantar to have him removed and someone else put in his place. In one example, I witnessed of this, the Kalantar refused to consent to such a change, and pressures were applied, such as the attempted murder of the Katkhoda and reprisals from the Katkhoda's family. Eventually, the clan rebelled against their own Kalantar, and when I left the area, were in the process of transferring their allegiances to a neighbouring Kalantar; being adopted, as a whole, into the structure of the neighbouring taifeh.

Another particular example, concerned with the succession to the position of Kalantar, will further elucidate the principles involved in succession to leadership. This example concerns the taifeh with which I migrated. Dissatisfaction with the Kalantar came to a crisis about 10 years ago. His family had steadily declined economically and with this economic decline his prestige decreased. He was unable to entertain guests and litigants with the hospitality usually required by the tribesmen from their leaders. Another lineage within the group, had, at that time, as their most senior member, an individual of remarkable personal qualities, and remarkable wealth called Heidar. He was greatly respected by all the members of the taifeh. With the increase in dissatisfaction with the Kalantar Heidar was approached by other senior members of the other taifeh and it was agreed that he would be made Kalantar and the

other Kalantar evicted from the area. This was then done. People had simply stopped going to the previous Kalantar with their disputes and had been coming to Heidar. Since the differences in economic status between the two individuals concerned was so great this transfer of power occurred without much trouble. However, several years later the new Kalantar was murdered by someone outside the taifeh. His son was too young and his brother succeeded, but only temporarily until the son grew up. When I was living with this group, they had been completely disaffected by the brother who is not respected or trusted as Heidar was. He is still economically dominant in this area however, and in some cases is in a position to enforce his authority over the taifeh. The group are continually quarrelling and many disputes are not now taken to the Kalantar. The deceased Kalantar's son is now of an age when he could take over the position but the taifeh are not willing to have this happen as he is considered to be too wild and uncontrollable.

Succession then is hereditary, qualified by the necessity of the mutual consent of all the constituent members of the group and the leaders immediately higher on the hierarchical scale of leadership.

The function of the leaders is to resolve internal disputes usually concerned with rights to land, to keep law and order within the group, and to represent the groups in their relations with other groups, and increasingly to represent their group to the central government authorities. This latter is mainly the concern of the Kalantar and is concerned with getting the services wanted by his sub-tribe, such as schools, bridges, roads, medical assistance, veterinary, agricultural assistance, and loans from the agricultural bank.

The Kalantar rules through his Katkhodas who in turn deal with their lineage leaders, the Rish Sefids, in cases of internal disputes. Disputes concerned outside the taifeh units are more difficult to resolve and involve council meetings of the two sets of Kalantars and Katkhodas involved. If the dispute concerns murder then a blood feud is instigated, about which I shall say more at the end of the lecture.

The authority of each leader depends on how well he fulfils these various functions plus migration control.

The marriage pattern of the leaders is less dominated by considerations of kinship, involving more political features than the ordinary tribesman. They tend to marry into the families of other leaders. A one cynical tribesmen expressed it, "Donkeys with donkeys, goats with goats, Kalantars with Kalantars, it's the same thing". Katkhodas take women from the Kalantar's family, this reinforcing their own authority. From the other direction Kalantars give women to the Katkhodas which reinforces their authority within the group. The Kalantar reinforced his authority outside the group by marrying with other Kalantar families. They represent the only

consistent cases of marriage outside the taifeh. One can trace a network of affinal alliances linking leaders within these two levels of the leadership hierarchy, and also between the levels of the hierarchy. The former reinforcing their authority within the group, the latter extending their influence outside the group.

One particular Kalantar I know has made no less than 14 such marriage alliances to women from 14 different taifeh. He is regarded by the Bakhtiari with a combination of admiration for his political acumen and horror at his domestic predicament.

So far I have discussed only the kin based groups up to the level of sub-tribe and have described these groups as having hereditary leaders. I now would like to mention, that each taifeh has a minimum of two Kalantars and sometimes 4. In cases where there are 4 Kalantars this is a reflection of the size of the group. One is faced with a system of dual leadership. To find the explanation of this, I have to turn now, to the larger political groupings of the Bakhtiari as a whole and to their paramount leaders- the Duraki Khans. At the end of last century there was a factional split within these paramount leaders and this division ramified through the tribe effectively splitting the taifeh groups into two. Thus, necessitating the introduction of double leadership at the level of the Kalantar.

The Bakhtiari, as a whole, are divided into two main sections- the Haft Lang and the Chahar Lang. The Haft Lang are divided into 4 tribes or "Il", the Chahar Lang into 3 tribes. In turn these "Il" are divided into the sub-tribe (taifeh) groups I have been discussing. Each "Il" or tribe was ruled by a noble lineage called Khans, the most senior member of which was called the Ilkhan, or paramount chief.

I have left discussing these larger groupings to this point, because the Khans no longer exercise much political authority over the tribes. With the removal of the Khans, the Il or tribe as a political group no longer has much political reality, since it owed its unity to the common allegiance of its constituent parts, the taifehs, to the Khans.

The history of these various groups of Khans is exceedingly bloody, both internally, in the constant power struggles for the position of Ilkhan, and in the bitter fighting between these groups for supremacy over all the tribes of the Bakhtiari.

In the early part of the 19th century the Ilkhan of the Kiursi tribe of the Chahar Lang, Mohamad Taqi Khan, had extended his rule outside his own tribe. At the time, he was the most important single Ilkhan of the Bakhtiari. His increasing power in the Bakhtiari alarmed the central government and after much fighting the Ilkhan was captured and eventually died in prison in Tehran. His tribe, which had already been terribly weakened by Mohamad Taqi Khan's internecine fighting to obtain the leading position, never played

any important political role in the Bakhtiari again. The succeeding khans slowly fell under the new domination of first one and then another of the Haft Lang tribes.

The four Haft Lang tribes are the Duraki, the Bakhtiarwand, the Babadi Bab, and one other unimportant one.

The Babadi Bab Khans have been of little political importance and have tended to follow the fortunes of the other two more powerful groups of Khans, the Duraki and Bakhtiarwand, switching allegiances from one to the other. This tribe forms a tighter territorial unit than the other two. The Bakhtiarwand taifehs are the most territorially scattered.

The Bakhtiarwand tribe claim they come from Syria in the 13th century, the Khans being the descendants of the leaders of this group. Until the 19th century the Bakhtiarwand seem to have been a more closely knit political group than the Duraki and the Khans say their lineage is of more ancient and more noble origin than that of the Duraki Khans.

The Duraki tribe are a loosely knit collection of taifeh that only since the time of Nadir Shah in the 18th century began to emerge as a political unit. The Duraki Khans claim descent from a fugitive member of the leading lineage of the Papi Lurs, a tribe to the north of the Bakhtiari. This fugitive called Heidar the Blind settled in the area of the Zarraswand taifeh and eventually married the chief's daughter. His descendants became chiefs of the taifeh. Here we have the case of a lineage descended from an 'adopted' member of the group rising to a position of dominance over their adopted taifeh.

This taifeh along with several others lived in an area called Durak and they form the original members of what later emerged as the Duraki tribe, being joined later by other taifeh who came to recognise, or were forced to accept the authority of the Khans. During the time of Nadir Shah, Ali Saleh, one of the descendants of Heidar the Blind and hence chief of the Zarraswand taifeh, was one of the leaders of the Bakhtiari troops who fought in Nadir's army at Kandahar. The Bakhtiari were in fact responsible for the taking of Kandahar. As a reward Ali Saleh was given the title Khan, or chief, and made leader of the Duraki by royal decree. He was also given title deeds to land in both winter and summer quarters. It is from this time that the word Khan began to be used to denote a tribal chief. It is now used to describe any man born into the Khan family. By the early 19th century, largely due to the original Farman or decree from Nadir Shah, and subsequently confirmed by succeeding shahs, the Duraki Khans extended their power, becoming dominant over a group comparable in size to the Bakhtiarwand, with whom they were then in competition. Unlike the Bakhtiarwand the Duraki did not have the bond of a common origin, their political unity being entirely based on allegiance to the Khans, an allegiance that was not always voluntary.

Up till the middle of the 19th century the Duraki Khans, and their tribe, fought all the other families of Khans for supremacy. One of their Ilkhans was murdered by the Ilkhan of the Bakhtiarwand, which started the protracted series of ferocious battles that saw the gradual emergence of the Duraki as supreme leaders of the whole Bakhtiari confederation. The Bakhtiarwands were crushed and the Duraki exacted terrible revenge on their khans, almost exterminating them. They took most of the Bakhtiarwands lands away and moved in themselves. This accounts for today's scattered aspect of the Bakhtiarwand taifehs.

Very quickly the Duraki subjected the Babadi Bab and all the Chahar Lang tribal Khans to their control. With this rise to political power came economic power, constantly acquiring land. The remaining paramount chiefs of the Bakhtiari exercised absolute authority until the reign of Reza Shah, who by 1936 largely removed the Khans from effective political control.

It is not the purpose of this lecture to discuss how during this period of dominance the Khans rose to political prominence in the government of Iran, playing an important part in the constitutional movement. Between 1910 and 1920 there were, on several occasions, Bakhtiari Prime Ministers, Ministers of War and Provincial governors. I am primarily concerned here with the role they played within the tribe.

Government of the Bakhtiari by the Khans took the form of a ruling triumvirate; the Ilkhan, or paramount chief, the Ilbegi, his second in command, and the Governor of Chahar Mahall. This latter position was concerned with the peasant farming villages in Chahar Mahall that were now owned by the Khans.

They were confirmed in these positions of authority by Royal decree of the reigning Shah. The Ilkhan and Ilbegi were responsible for administering the area, maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, used to offset their own considerable expenses in running the administration and to pay the taxes due to the government. In return for these services they acquired huge tracts of land on the fringes of tribal territory. In these areas, which in the summer quarters stretched almost to Isfahan, they were powerful and wealthy landowners with the fact that they were also tribal leaders being largely irrelevant.

These lands and villages in non-tribal territory were individually owned by single members of the Khan family, and were shared out between sons on the death of the father.

Land in tribal territory consisted of three large areas owned jointly by the Khans, in their capacity as supreme leaders. Two of these areas were settled by the Zarraswand taifeh from whom the Khans originally stemmed and the produce of these areas were used to pay for the running expenses of the two administrative courts of the Ilkhan and Ilbegi government. One in the summer quarters and one in

the winter quarters. The third area was rented to several taifeh who moved there after the Bakhtiarwand had been evicted.

The Ilkhan was the most senior member of the Khan family, and was a hereditary position, technically passing from father to son, but subject to many internal quarrels and jockeying for power. Junior members of the family were delegated minor positions of authority in the administration, usually representing the Khan in the more isolated sections of the Bakhtiari. Within the Duraki tribe, administering was done directly through the Kalantars and Katkhodas. The other tribes were administered through their own Khans who in turn administered inside their tribe through their own Kalantars and Katkhodas, under the name of the Duraki Khans. The Ilkhan then was the highest court of appeal for the Bakhtiari.

Ultimately the authority of any leader at all levels of the hierarchy was backed by the Ilkhan's power. As said he ruled with absolute authority and could if he wished remove from office any leader lower in the hierarchy. This occasionally happened. If a Kalantar displeased the Ilkhan in any way, he would be forcibly replaced with someone of the Ilkhan's choice. Such autocratic changes however were usually temporary and the original Kalantar would be reinstated by his sub-tribe on the death of the Ilkhan who removed him. The reinstated Kalantar would have to obtain the consent of the succeeding Ilkhan. Kalantars all had written decrees from the Ilkhan, without which he could not effectively function, unless he had the overwhelming consent of his own sub-tribe.

Within the family of Khans themselves, jealousies ran very high with constant struggles for power. In 1882 after the death of the Ilkhan, Husain Quli Khan, who had been in power for about 25 years, the internal dissensions within the family broke out and resulted in a factional split between the descendants of the deceased Ilkhan and the descendants of his brother. From then on these two factions were in constant opposition to each other.

To govern the area, the only working solution arrived at that was acceptable to both factions, was to continually alternate the two positions of Ilkhan and Ilbegi between members of each faction. The Ilkhan being a member of one faction, the Ilbegi a member of the other. Every year or so the positions would be reversed.

The legendary inability of the Khans to agree with each other, combined with this frequently and irregularly alternating of leadership position between the two factions, ultimately played a major part in the fall from power of the whole family. The central government encouraged this internal dissention setting one side against the other. Moreover as the Khans more and more turned their political aspirations outside of the tribal situation this inability to unify, was a factor in preventing them from continuing to play a dominating role in the politics of Persia.

It also weakened their position considerably within the tribe in the long run. The factional division ramified all the way down into the hierarchy of chiefs splitting the groups at each level into two. The two Kalantars found it expedient to establish closer ties with each other and usually exchanged women.

The Khans as a whole form an almost endogamous unit marrying amongst themselves. The amount of 1st cousin marriage was extremely high. Marriages outside their family took the form of political alignments, some outside the tribe altogether, into prominent Persian families or other tribal groups. They also exchanged women with the Kalantars reinforcing their authority within the tribes. A Kalantar who has a marriage alliance with a member of the Khans thereby also increased his authority and prestige considerably within his group. Establishing marriage links was also a method used to enhance control by the two factions within the Khans, inside the tribe. Prior to the factional split, an already existing marriage link between a Kalantar and a Khan meant that after the division took place that Kalantar was more likely to follow the faction he was related to. The alignment of the clans was partly a reflection of this, partly imposed on the Khans by the Kalantar and partly a matter of personal choice on the part of the particular clan.

Although the Khans now no longer exercise political authority in the tribe, and no longer live in tribal territory, preferring the large towns and cities, this factional split still exists within the hierarchy. The dual system of Kalantars is still strong.

I would like to conclude by discussing feuding, which is such a characteristic feature of tribal life. What I shall say, I hope, illustrates the persistence of both the system of descent group and the hierarchical leadership structure, I have described as being the main principles of political organisation in the tribe, despite the removal of the top of this hierarchy of leaders and despite being drawn increasingly under the control of the central government whose methods of government and legal procedures are in opposition to tribal ones.

The feuding unit is the largest of the kin groups, the taifeh, which is also the most meaningful political unit in the Bakhtiari. If a member of one taifeh kills a member of another taifeh, this essentially involves every member of both groups. Vengeance killing is the customary result. All members of the taifeh of the murdered man have the right to attack and exact vengeance on any member of the murderer's group. Unless stopped, this quickly spirals into large fights that may last for years. In the past the Khans called a council of the Kalantars and Katkhodas of the two groups and a solution was reached under their adjudication. Blood money had to be payed and a woman had to be given by the family of the murderer to the family of the murdered man. This giving of a woman in marriage is necessary to seal the agreement and the feud then comes to a halt. Murder is punished by execution or imprisonment, and is carried out

by central authorities. This to the tribe is unacceptable. Here we have two methods of coping with murder that are utterly different.

A few years ago a serious blood feud broke out between two taifeh and several people on either side were killed. Their territory was sufficiently accessible and well settled so some of the culprits were caught by the central authorities and jailed. The feuding did not stop but continued at a more cautious and less bloody pace. Jailing some of the leaders of the two taifeh did not conform with tribal law. In despair the surviving leaders of the group not in jail appealed to the Khans living in Tehran to help. Two senior members of the Khans came down to the mountains from Tehran and adjudicated. In accordance with tribal practice blood money was paid, several women were given, and the authorities released those jailed in return for promises of peace within the two groups. The feud was only then successfully concluded.

It is interesting to note that the two khans who came down to settle the feud were the senior members of the two factions.