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Edward Perchaluk, *Independent Film Journal*

PEOPLE OF THE WIND

GOLDEN GLOBE
NOMINATION
BEST DOCUMENTARY



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ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE - BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE
GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD NOMINEE - BEST DOCUMENTARY
AWARD OF EXCELLENCE - FILM ADVISORY BOARD

This story of the Babadi, one of
the Bakhtiari tribes of western
Iran, was filmed entirely on
location in the Zagros Mountains,
just north of the Persian Gulf.

No scene was acted or re-enacted.

A film by Anthony Howarth

Written by David Koff

Consultant Anthropologist- David H.M. Brooks

People of the wind

Featuring the voice

of

JAMES MASON

"PEOPLE OF THE WIND"

BAKHTIARI NOMADS OF SOUTH WEST IRAN

TEXT

by

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PEOPLE OF THE WIND

The spring migration of a Bakhtiari tribal leader.

Featuring the voice of JAMES MASON
as the voice of Jafar Qoli, a 'Kalantar'
or local leader of the Babadi sub-tribe of
the Bakhtiari.

Produced by Anthony Howarth and David Koff

Directed by Anthony Howarth
Written by David Koff
Script Advisor, sub-titles and
Consultant Anthropologist - David H.M. Brooks
Photographed by Mike Dodds
Location sound by Ivan Sharrock
Edited by Carolyn Hicks
Music by G.T. Moore and Shusha

Production services by AKA Film
Services, London
Music Recorded at the Music Centre, London
Stereo/Mono sound by Todd-AO
Colour by Deluxe

35mm widescreen 1.85/1.66
Running time : 108 minutes

Table of contents

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|----|
| People of the Wind | 1 |
| Migration routes : tribal territory..... | 4 |
| Bakhtiari leaders : Khans and Kalantars..... | 8 |
| Jafar Qoli : 'Kalantar' of the Babadi..... | 11 |
| Principle Characters of the film..... | 14 |
| Synopsis of the film..... | 16 |
| James Mason..... | 20 |

PEOPLE OF THE WIND

The making of a documentary feature film is a complex enterprise, involving the cooperation and collaboration of many different people with many different skills. The making of "People of the Wind" was no exception. The uniting vision, bringing together anthropologist, photographer, television producer, Persian folk singer and the many others involved, was a commitment to bring to the screen the quality of nomadic Bakhtiari life, seen through their own experience, moving through the Zagros mountains between summer and winter pastures.

The biannual migrations of the Bakhtiari tribes have had a profound impact on all those who have witnessed this mass movement of thousands of Bakhtiari nomads and their animals across the rugged Zagros mountain ranges. Once before, this spectacular migration had been the subject of a film. "Grass", filmed by M.C.Cooper and E.B.Schoedsack in 1924, is one of the earliest silent documentaries of its type. "Grass" was shot on a hand cranked camera, in black and white; by 1972, when "People of the Wind" was shot, motor driven cameras and sophisticated sound equipment were used by a carefully chosen, experienced film crew using up 100,000 ft. of colour film and many hours of sound track. Together, these films, shot almost 50 years apart, and moving over virtually the same migration route, provide us with a unique record of nomadic Bakhtiari life this century.

Since 1924, Iran has undergone radical political, economic and social transformations initiated by the modernisation and latterly,westernization policies of both Pahlavi monarchs. These transformations have affected the tribal populations of Iran, in particular the ill conceived settlement enforcement in the 1930s by Reza Shah, and later inducements by the Iranian State in the 1960s to contain and control the tribes of the Zagros. These policies were primarily political in orientation and have been resisted in most cases by the tribesmen. In spite of increased settlement

by many Bakhtiari as a result of these political and economic pressures, the traditional tribal migrations continued throughout the 1960s. The long range nomadism practiced by the Bakhtiari tribes utilises the grass on the higher slopes of the Zagros as they move between winter and summer pastures. The grass dries up in the spring in the increasing heat of the lower slopes and valleys of Khuzistan, the winter quarters. Temperatures soar during the summer in this region. The nomads slowly move over the several ranges of mountains which make up the Zagros chain, grazing their sheep and goats on the progressively higher pastures, moving over the snow bound Zardeh Kuh (15,000ft.) and down the eastern slopes in Isfahan province to their summer pastures, 250 miles distant from Khuzistan. This cooler highland area provides grazing until these pastures also dry up, in the early autumn, when the Bakhtiari then retrace their migration routes over the mountains to spend the winter months again in Khuzistan. This cycle of movement, of people and animals is central to the pastoral economy of the Bakhtiari.

This centuries old adaptation to their mountainous environment however came under severe threat during the 1970s, by the accelerating industrial development in Iran, the so called White Revolution of Mohammad Pahlavi and the land reform programme, as its effects began to take hold. The nationalisation of all forest land and grazing land transformed the traditional tribal grazing pattern, the confiscation by the State of non cultivated land, the opening up of communally grazed tribal territory to non tribal herders had the net effect of reducing the total area of grazing land while increasing the numbers of sheep utilising this decreased area, resulting in overgrazing. Moreover, with the overwhelming political control by the Pahlavi administration during this period, even over the once virtually independent tribal areas, permits for grazing issued by the State authorities were instituted, with a tax for grazing on nationalised lands for every sheep and goat levied. The tax on goats, wrongly blamed for overgrazing was set at roughly ten times that levied on sheep thus greatly discriminating against goats, on which the Bakhtiari are dependent - their wool is used for weaving their tents and

their milk used primarily for human consumption. Goats milk, in the form of yoghurt and cheese is an essential part of the nomads' diet. Sheep milk is consumed by the lambs, which, when fattened, are sold for town and city consumption. This attack on the tribal herds of goats constituted a major threat to the nomads. State policies thus have had a disastrous effect on the pastoral economy of all the tribes of the Zagros. During the 1950s and 1960s Iran was an exporter of meat. By the mid 1970s, as a result of its own anti-tribal policies coupled with a rising demand for meat among the burgeoning city populations of Iran, Iran was forced to import frozen meat in vast quantities. This frozen imported foreign meat was declared "haram" or inedible, for religious reasons, by Ayatullah Khomeini in 1979.

As a direct result of the Pahlavi programme of 'reform' many Bakhtiari have been impoverished and have been forced out of their mountains to search for employment in the industrial labour force, particularly in the oil industry in Khuzistan and in the Russian built steel mill near Isfahan. With the fall of Mohammad Pahlavi and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, many of these developments have been arrested. Although no detailed information is as yet available, there has been a reported return to their nomadic migrations among the Bakhtiari, just as there was in 1941 with the removal of Reza Pahlavi. The resilience of the nomadic tribal system in the face of extreme economic and political pressure by the State has been a feature of the tribal populations of the Zagros mountains for hundreds of years. While the extreme political and economic instability prevailing in Iran continues, nomadic movement provides a viable response by the Bakhtiari, particularly since for the Bakhtiari this movement takes them deep into most inaccessible territory, far from the now weakened State authorities.

The demise of the nomads of Iran has been predicted on many occasions this century. They persist. For Bakhtiari, their sense of individual and cultural identity, their independence and their freedom is forged through their experience of moving

through the mountains on their annual cycle of migrations. They come to know their world through movement. Many Bakhtiari are born on these migrations, as babies are carried on their mothers' backs, are tied to the backs of the pack animals until they are old enough to walk and clamber over the very steep and dangerous mountains which have to be negotiated every year. Movement is a fact of life instilled from birth. It is not surprising that the world is perceived, structured and imaged by Bakhtiari in idiom of movement and mobility. Many central values of Bakhtiari life find expression in vibrant energetic metaphors, while their rich oral culture has many songs which extoll the delights as well as dangers of life in the mountains, the bravery of their men and of their women, songs of tribal fights, of fights against the State and of events on their migrations. The film attempts to show the quality of this nomadic life, to show, however imperfectly, what it is to be Bakhtiari, what it is to belong to the "People Of The Wind".

Migration Routes : Tribal Territory

Bakhtiari territory comprises approximately 25,000 square miles of entirely mountainous land in which roughly 300,000 Bakhtiari live. Of this number something less than half, around 150,000 perhaps are partially nomadic. Hundreds of settled hamlets and small villages are found within both summer and winter quarters of the 180 or so tribes which make up the "Bakhtiari". Few Bakhtiari now live exclusively in their black goat hair tents all the year round. Some, as mentioned are now permanently settled in either summer or winter quarters, others live in hamlets in their winter quarters and move with their tents, living in the tent for the summer months only, yet others have settled houses in both summer and winter quarters and use their tents only for their spring and autumn periods of movement. Circumstances vary enormously within the Bakhtiari, and moreover vary through time. Not everyone migrates every year, and some, the wealthier Bakhtiari, send their shepherds and hired helpers with the herds,

under the supervision of one capable member of the family, while his family travel by road, north of Bakhtiari territory round the Zagros to Isfahan and then again by road as close to their summer village as is possible. Others fly their families from Ahwaz to Isfahan and then by road to the summer villages or hamlets. For the wealthy such a summer 'trip' is known as 'taking the air', away from the stifling heat of Khuzistan's summer.

Each of the 180 or so tribes - Taifeh - have their own winter and summer territories and it is possible to draw a map of the entire Bakhtiari region showing these clearly delimited territories. Thus each 'taifeh' moves between its own winter and summer pastures, and the settlements found in the region all belong to the 'taifeh' which owns the territory. Neighbours are on the whole close agnatic kin, and migrating camp groups are always composed of close kinsmen, with whom intermarriage has also taken place. The Bakhtiari marry within the agnatic group, and have a preference, expressed in varying degrees, of marrying close cousins, often first cousins.

For some 'Taifehs' their summer and winter pastures are as much as 250 miles apart, others are much less, and for those 'taifehs' whose territory lies in the central portion of Bakhtiari territory their winter and summer pastures may be contiguous. The length of time migrating thus varies from a matter of three or four days for those in the centre, to as much as six or seven weeks for others. The Babadi 'taifeh', the subject of the film, have a migration route of approximately 200 miles, passing through the territory of the Mowri 'taifeh' in the central Zagros, who move only very short distances.

There are only four main migration routes - "rah" - which cross the Bakhtiari mountains, which vary in length and difficulty. The Rah-i Munar, the route taken by the Babadi and many other taifehs is one of the most difficult and is the longest of all the routes. While numbers using this route are impossible to estimate accurately, perhaps as many as 90,000 nomads travel this route, spread out for several months the length of the route.

The migration routes lie along cliff faces, across fast flowing and freezing cold rivers, through gorges and ravines and over snow bound mountain passes with whistling gales. Dust storms with temperatures of up to 120 degrees in the Khuzistan foothills, rain storms, electric storms, sub-zero temperatures and sudden blizzards all can occur while the nomads migrate. Old men and women crippled with rheumatism and arthritis, the newly born, pregnant women, as well as the young and the healthy all face, what on occasion can be an extremely hazardous journey. Accidents happen, animals and sometimes people fall down cliff faces, drown in the rivers, break legs, freeze to death; tribal fights break out and people get maimed and killed; sheep stealing and raiding are endemic.

A pre-requisite for successful nomadism and often for survival itself is an intimate knowledge of the mountains, an understanding of changeable weather conditions and the ability to 'read' the weather one is likely to come up against many miles distant. Nomads in this context require a watchful and vigilant orientation to the natural world as they move through it. Daily decisions have to be made, about when to move, calculating how far to move every day, assessing whether the weather will change suddenly. To be caught on a cliff face in a sudden rain or snow storm in the high mountains can lead to disaster. Whole herds of sheep have been lost in one night, caught on an exposed cliff face, unable to move into a more sheltered spot. The mountains are dangerous and movement becomes impossible in rain, snow or dust storms all of which reduce visibility to zero. Every migration presents its own unique conditions, and on every migration, even under the best conditions animals get lost.

The constant draining of animals through accident, careless herding, bad decisions or mismanagement can quickly set a nomad on the path to ruin. The loss of a pack animal can spell disaster for a family, particularly if that pack animal was carrying the supplies of wheat flour. One infamous path is so narrow, running along a cliff face for more than a kilometer, with overhanging rocks, that the animals have to be led single file nose to tail, and not infrequently an overly laden and tired animal

will slip, its bulky pack bumping against the cliff face, sending the pack animal over the cliff to a valley floor several hundred metres below. Another pathway too difficult for the riding and pack animals is used by nomads on foot. This is known as the 'Path of the Women' and involves scrambling with considerable difficulty down a jagged rocky cliff, a feat particularly difficult for pregnant women. Over the years many women have fallen to their death from this cliff.

In spite of, and at least in part, because of the undoubted natural hazards and uncertainties of the migrations, these periods of movement are also a time of adventure, a time when the nomads meet others they normally would not. The young men and women in particular enjoy this chance to meet, look at, and with casual circumspection flirt with one another while on the move. It is a time of excitement, continual movement and activity, in marked contrast to the quieter times in the summer and winter pastures. Migrations are looked forward to with mixed emotions by older Bakhtiari. The women with wary and often weary anticipation of a period of hard and constant work, the elder men with worries about grazing and weather conditions and how their flocks, their capital, will be affected. With the increased settlement in the past few decades it is also a time of separation from at least some members of one's family, and a time when the conflicting values of settlement and an increasing orientation to the modernisation taking place in Iran and the traditional values of the nomadic life make themselves keenly felt. The younger generation, involved in modern education, necessary to be competitive in the labour market of the towns and cities, are loathe to involve themselves in nomadic life, with its discomforts and its tribal ethos, conflict often with their parents who increasingly feel their own children are becoming 'Shahri' soft city folk, and are losing their Bakhtiari identity. The younger generation in turn effect to despise the 'old fashioned' values of their tribal parents. Every spring, with the onset of the nomadic migrations small family tensions and quarrels break out, highlighting the centrality of nomadic movement for Bakhtiari culture and for their self identity as Bakhtiari.

Bakhtiari Leaders : Khans and Kalantars

Since the mid 19th century the Bakhtiari developed a centralised polity with increasingly autocratic paramount leaders and have had a volatile and variable history within Iran, playing a significant role in national political life, a role which brought great wealth to some of these paramount leaders - Khans - particularly since the discovery of oil in Bakhtiari territory in 1905, as well as bringing grief to many of these Khans. This family of chiefs, collectively called Khawanin, provided Iran with many Provincial Governors, as well as Prime Ministers and Members of the Cabinet in the second decade of this century under the Qajar dynasty. They provided a Minister of War under Reza Shah, who later had this Khan imprisoned and murdered along with many of the Bakhtiari Khans in his drive to crush tribal power in 1934. The second wife of his son, Mohammad Pahlavi Shah, Soraya, also came from this family of Bakhtiari Khans, as did the first head of S.A.V.A.K., the infamous secret police, General Teimur Bakhtiar, later murdered in exile. Dr. Shapur Bakhtiar, the son of one of the murdered Bakhtiari Khans killed by Reza Shah in 1934, was Prime Minister during the period when Mohammad Pahlavi Shah left Iran in 1979, and now in exile in Paris, under sentence of death by the Islamic Republic of Iran, has been the victim of an unsuccessful attempt on his life.

Relations between the Bakhtiari and the Iranian State throughout this century, just as in previous centuries can be seen as highly ambiguous and downright dangerous. The political aspirations of the dominating Khans inevitably embroiled the Bakhtiari tribesmen in affairs far outside tribal territory proper. Rarely did the tribesmen benefit from this embroilment, suffering the animosity of successive Iranian regimes instead. The most recent example of such 'animosity' has been the arrest and reported murder by the Islamic Republic of Iran, of several local level leaders - Kalantars, in Isfahan province in 1981 as a result of Dr. Shapur Bakhtiar's activities, and the repeated harrassment of nomadic Bakhtiari in this province, by the Revolutionary guard, with reports of the burning of tents.

"People of the Wind" is not concerned with the Khans of the Bakhtiari, who no longer have anything to do with the life of ordinary nomadic Bakhtiari, and whose affairs are not known by the Bakhtiari, but with the continuing life of nomadic Bakhtiari tribesmen as they cope with the conditions of their life in the Zagros mountains. However, the particularities of each 'taifeh' or tribe, and in particular of their leaders - the Kalantars of the 'taifehs' has been markedly affected by their relations with the dominating paramount leaders, this century - the Khans. With the increasingly powerful centralisation of power within the Bakhtiari under these Khans since the 19th century, the Kalantars of the many 'taifeh' which make up the Bakhtiari became virtually clients of the Khans. Some cooperated directly with these Khans, others opposed them and yet others attempted to remain neutral. The subsequent fortunes of the respective 'taifeh' reflects their relations with the dominant Khans, and the political control of pastures and territory over the past 120 years. In this turbulent and bloody internal history, the Babadi, one of whose Kalantars, Jafar Qoli, is the hero of the film, played an ambivalent middle-of-the-road role which earned the Babadi a highly ambiguous reputation. In order to explicate this, and the position of our central character, Jafar Qoli, a brief summary of the realities of tribal politics is essential.

The Bakhtiari as a whole are divided politically and territorially into two groupings, The Haft Lang dominant since the mid 19th century, and the Chahar Lang who were dominant prior to this period, and do not concern us here. In turn the Haft Lang are divided into the Duraki, a collection of 'taifeh', from one of which the dominant Khans spring; the Bakhtiarwand, a numerous collection of 'taifeh', who were ruled by their own Khans, but were soundly defeated by the Duraki Khans in the mid 19th century and have remained dominated ever since; and the Babadi Bab group of 'taifehs' who equivocated between supporting the Duraki and the Bakhtiarwand during the internal wars of the 19th century. With the emergence of the Duraki as winners, the Babadi Bab paid dearly for this equivocation, with the decimation of their leaders and killing of hundreds of their tribesmen. They were forcibly removed from their better pastures, and deprived by the dominating Duraki Khans of close participation in their emergence to positions

of provincial and then national dominance, with the financial benefits which this entailed.

One strategy of the dominating Duraki Khans, in maintaining their authority over the diverse Bakhtiari was to intermarry with selected Kalantars establishing a network of marriage links within the Bakhtiari. From the perspective of the Kalantars, such marriage links served to enhance their own authority and power within the 'taifeh' and provided them with powerful patrons in the wider political and economic sphere controlled by the Khans. To be without such a patron was to be disadvantaged, particularly in the first two decades of this century when the Bakhtiari Khans virtually ruled most of southern Iran. Considerable variation in power and in economic circumstances was thus introduced within the Bakhtiari. Some Kalantars, working closely with the Khans became very wealthy, those who interacted less with the Khans remained more rooted in the nomadic economy, being kept out of lucrative local administrative positions under the Khans. Access to the wider political and economic arena of Iran was monopolised by the Khans, who, as mentioned above emerged this century to positions of national political importance. Those Kalantars who worked as part of the Khans' administrative personell within the Bakhtiari area and in the Provincial level, inevitably were affected by the variable political fortunes of the Bakhtiari Khans under the Pahlavi dynasty. With the dismantling of the centralised Bakhtiari polity, the crushing of the power of the Khans accomplished by the 1950s, and the Bakhtiari brought under the control of the State with its increasing beaurocratic penetration of tribal territory, the Kalantars are the only effective leaders now found within the Bakhtiari. The personal circumstances, prestige and political power of these Kalantars varies, from those with virtually no power at all, to others like Jafar Qoli, one of five Kalantars of the large Babadi 'taifeh', who have emerged during the modern period since 1960 as wealthy, powerful and effective local tribal leaders.

The sphere of influence of these tribal leaders is essentially local and much more circumscribed than that of the tribal Khans of the past. The tribal political system, at this local level continues, albeit in a weakened and variable state.

Jafar Qoli : a 'Kalantar' of the Babadi 'taifeh'

Jafar Qoli, born the son of a 'kalantar' of the Babadi, in 1917/18, grew up at a time when the Bakhtiari tribes suffered great hardship, imposed by the severely hostile anti-tribal policies of Reza Shah Pahlavi, and has lived through the period of major political, economic and social transformations which has been sketched in previous sections. He was a child of six or seven when the documentary Grass was filmed in 1924. Cooper and Schoedsack migrated with the Baba Ahmadi 'taifeh' along the Rah-i Munar. Several of the Duraki 'taifehs' including the Baba Ahmadi use this route, as well as the Babadi Bab 'taifehs', including the Babadi. Cooper, in his book relating the story of the film, mentions a major confrontation between the Baba Ahmadi and the Babadi which threatened that year to break out again into a full scale feud. As a consequence of the location of their winter and summer pastures, the Babadi have to pass through Duraki owned territory on their migrations. When they are on the move, facing the natural hazards of the mountains, the political circumstances which the Babadi face every year are equally hazardous. This hostile political environment for the Babadi requires them to maintain careful defences when migrating, coordinating the mass movement of the 20,000 Babadi with care. It is part of the role of the Babadi Kalantars to ensure this coordination for mutual defense. Tribal fights are in fact a common occurrence for the Babadi on their migrations.

Jafar Qoli was a young man when Reza Shah moved against the tribes with punitive ruthlessness, determined as he was to finally crush tribal power and remove the tribal leaders from the politics of the State. In an attempt to destroy the economic basis of the tribes, pastoral nomadism, migrations were forbidden, tents were destroyed and a programme of enforced settlement was instituted, resulting in the deaths of thousands of nomads and countless animals. Life for the Bakhtiari nomads during the 1930s was harsh. Reza Shah's attempt to crush the tribes failed, and on his abdication in 1941, the Bakhtiari literally destroyed the settlements and took to their nomadic migrations again.

It was during this period of tribal rebellion, which lasted until the late 1940s, when the central government was weak under the young and inexperienced Shah, Mohammad Pahlavi, and with Iran 'invaded' by Allied forces during the second world war, that Jafar Qoli became a young kalantar on the death of his father.

It was an exciting time for young tribesmen. Becoming "yaghi"- a rebel, an outlaw, as Jafar Qoli and thousands of other Bakhtiari did, was a way of retaliating against the humiliations and wrongs inflicted on the nomads by the soldiers of the Pahlavis. Many took sweet revenge on their oppressors. Bakhtiari Khans, under long prison sentences imposed by the deposed Reza Shah were released and fled into the mountains to lead armed Bakhtiari in fights against regiments of the Persian army. Jafar readily took the opportunities presented at this time and laid the foundations of his reputation, on which he has steadily built ever since, establishing a position of respect as an effective leader, knowledgeable in nomadic politics and pastoralism and able to control and mediate within his own 'taifeh'. Above all Jafar Qoli exhibited that most necessary of qualities for leadership in the Bakhtiari, that of adaptability and manoeuvrability and success.

The success of Jafar Qoli in consolidating his early reputation as a fighter came through his close association with one of the other Babadi kalantars, already a mature leader of experience in the 1930 decade. This kalantar was married to the daughter of the then paramount leader, Ilkhan, of the Bakhtiari, a man of national stature for several decades. Jafar Qoli married first the sister and much later the daughter of this influential kalantar, ensuring the patronage therefore of the most powerful of the Babadi kalantars. He also married two other women from different sections of the Babadi. Jafar, through his own marriages thus established a network of relatives within the Babadi as well as the two critical political marriages connecting him with the most powerful of the Babadi Kalantars, in turn a close client of the powerful Ilkhan. These links allowed Jafar to spread his economic and political interests into the provinces of Isfahan and Khuzistan, and were the basis of his emergence by the 1970s,

from the position of local tribal leader to that of a wealthy individual with diverse and widespread economic interests, participating in the modern economic 'opportunities' afforded by the policies of the regime. Jafar Qoli now has several herds of sheep, numbering over 1000 animals in all, he owns tracts of land, has construction interests in Khuzistan, has houses in both winter and summer quarters and early in the 1970s was responsible for supplying Babadi manpower for the Russian built steel mill in Isfahan province, a deal from which he is reputed to have made a considerable profit. His interests thus span the entire spectrum from traditional pastoralism to active participation in the industrial developments of the modern State. Moreover, being an excellent example of Bakhtiari expediency, he obtained a great deal of money for acting as host to the film crew, and was left the film crew's generator. Jafar Qoli is nothing if not an enterprising Bakhtiari.

Now in his mature years, with four wives, several adult children, grand children, as well as seven children by his younger and more recent wives, still in their teens, Jafar Qoli is a man with many and varied responsibilities. He looks at the past with an amused sort of nostalgia, knowing that the times he experienced in his own youth are probably gone for good, times which he does not regret. The dangers, hardships and political uncertainties of his youth were an education in becoming Bakhtiari which now no longer exists. His own children do not have his knowledge of the mountains, and nor will they ever acquire it. The steady erosion of Bakhtiari identity among the generation grown up during Iran's period of apparent affluence continues. For those Bakhtiari who continue their nomadic life, tribal culture will remain relatively intact.

"People of the Wind" testifies vividly to this way of life. While being the story of one man's migration, the film attempts to convey the quality of Bakhtiari experience, aspects of nomadic life and their dynamic interaction with the natural world, by following this single camp group on the annual journey to the summer pastures.

"PEOPLE OF THE WIND"
THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

- JAFAR QOLI : Kalantar of the Babadi who number approximately 20,000 people.
- NESSA : Jafar's second wife, the only one of his wives to travel with Jafar. She is a low status wife, coming from one of the Babadi sections. Her life has been difficult, since all her children died in infancy. She looks after any of Jafar's children by his other wives if they migrate. Jafar has a great deal of respect for Nessa, she embodies the traditional values and skills of Bakhtiari women.
- JALALI : Jafar's right hand man on the move. Reliable and very strong. He collapses however in the icy waters of the Bazuft river.
- BAHMAN : Chief shepherd who on this migration proves to be unreliable, ignoring Jafar's express instructions causes disaster when swimming the sheep across the Bazuft river.
- MENDENI : also a shepherd, now 'retired'. He is old and very experienced.
- GOLBAHAR : Mendeni's young daughter and the beauty of the family. Like all young children she has many and continuous duties on the migration.
- ZAINAB : a widow and rather forceful character who competes for attention with her attractive and independent minded daughter, IRAN.
- NEZAM : an impoverished relative of Jafar, burdened with too many children and not enough pack animals.

- RASHIDI : a sheep trader travelling for convenience with Jafar and under his protection.
- FAIZULLAH : a Kalantar of the Mowri 'taifeh', through whose territory the Babadi pass. He is married to one of Jafar Qoli's sisters, a politically significant marriage link for Jafar. Jafar visits Faizullah's camp every migration. His sister is a woman of status and some power, and is known as 'Shirzan' or 'lion woman', a term of prestige and respect.

The Bakhtiari migrate in camp groups - 'mal' of between five and fifteen tents . The size of these 'mal' varies from year to year, depending on such factors as the size of flocks, prevailing grazing conditions and political factors. The composition of the camps again is variable but most commonly consists of close kin, brothers and cousins. Camps can fragment while moving, if the numbers of animals proves to be problematic or if differences of opinion arise about the constant decisions about when and how long to move. The numbers of personell in a camp can be as much as one hundred, with perhaps thirty to forty pack and riding animals, horses, donkeys and mules, as well as cows, while flocks of sheep of up to a maximum of 1000, perhaps 100 goats, sundry chickens and camp dogs. The movement of all these people and animals, tents and equipment as well as food supplies for up to six weeks requires cooperation and constant work. All the animals require constant care, have different grazing needs and have to be protected from thieves.

The camps of wealthy leaders tend to be atypical, having shepherds and servants to cope with large flocks, and the weak travelling for protection. Jafar's 'Mal' normally consists of many more families of Babadi than is depicted in the film. The five foreign film crew, and the 23 mules required to carry the two tons of film equipment made Jafar's camp on this occasion somewhat unusual. Rashidi, the trader, took advantage of this situation to travel with his flock grazing the higher slopes under the protection of Jafar's presence. None of the others in the camp had many sheep of their own.

SYNOPSIS OF THE FILM

Towards the end of March, shortly after the onset of spring Jafar Qoli rides to the camp of Ali Agha, another Kalantar of a neighbouring section of the Babadi. Over a meal of kebabed lamb the two leaders discuss the critical question of when to set out on the spring migration.

The grass in the winter quarters is beginning to dry up. Ali Agha thinks however, it is too early to leave. The snows on the highest mountain range are very deep this year and the pass over Zardeh Kuh, the highest peak of the Zagros will be snow bound for several more weeks. Jafar disagrees. He has heard that the snows are melting and he does not want to risk remaining for too long in the diminishing winter pastures.

As the meal continues Jafar turns his mind to the people who will migrate in his 'mal' this year ; Nessa, one of his wives and his various shepherds including Bahman, who still broods over the death of his brother, killed by a wild boar the previous year.

Having decided on departure, Jafar's first task is to stock up with the provisions necessary for the migration. He rides to the nearby market centre of Lali, where he also has a house. With him go Jalali and several helpers. Flour, rice, sugar, salt, dates, cigarettes are bought. Jafar orders a new chugha, the long striped coat worn by Bakhtiari men, from the local weaver.

Lali is the market centre not only for the Babadi but for many other 'taifeh', principally the Osiwand 'taifeh', who are part of the Duraki and who have a long standing blood feud with the Babadi. Lali town is in the heart of Osiwand territory. It was once a small oil town, but the wells are now dried up and the buildings erected by the Oil Company are decaying. Jafar spreads the word of his decision : it is time to begin the migration

The morning of departure arrives. The specific day of departure is chosen with care, consulting the Quran to choose an auspicious day. Not to do so is to invite bad luck.

There are the usual delays of packing up, loading the animals, ~~re~~ setting loads, getting the pack animals used to their loads. Leavetakings add to the confusion and noise.

The start of the migration is always taken slowly to break in people as well as animals. Animals stray, flocks are vulnerable to thieves, and the first week or so of the migration is often sleepless with the flocks to be guarded at night. Gradually everyone settles in to the rhythms of daily movement. Jafar brands his young sheep, not wishing them to become mixed up with Rashidis flocks. Rashidi has a reputation for unscrupulousness.

The journey becomes more difficult within a few days. At the Astan Pabde, a dry river bed, there are massive boulders to be negotiated. Then the Cholbar river, fast flowing and bitterly cold. Everyone helps get the flocks across.

Jafar is asked to be guest of honour at a wedding. After the feast, the bride is led away from her father's camp by her brother to join her husband's nearby camp. According to tradition, she is veiled in white, the only time she will be veiled, and when put on horseback to leave commences to keen and wail, expressing her regret at leaving her parents and in so doing honouring her parents.

The lanscape grows more mountainous. The first of the many mountain ranges, the Munar, a sheer rockface rising to 8000 feet has to be crossed by a narrow path. Golbahar carries a baby calf, while Jafar reminisces about tribal fights on this cliff face many years before. The important kalantar, whose sister and daughter Jafar married was shot and badly wounded on the Munar. The weather suddenly changes and Jafar moves his 'mal' on as fast as possible down into the valley of Shimbar. A thunder storm hits the valley.

Shimbar, the name means sweet spring, is a lush valley in which the migrating nomads have the traditional right to rest their animals for several days. This is Mowri territory, and Jafar pays a visit to his sister, married to one of the several Mowri Kalantars, Feizullah Zalaqi. Jafar is shown the hospitality consonant with his position. He is also called upon to mediate in a dispute over a marriage contract between a Mowri and a Babadi. Mowri women are thought to be especially beautiful. After the meal, Rashidi

the sheep trader haggles with Feizullah over the price of some sheep and both enlist Jafar Qoli's help in reaching the 'best' price.

Feizullah is a very different type of Kalantar from Jafar Qoli. While the latter has many enemies, Feizullah is hated by many Bakhtiari who pass through this territory. In the early '1960s, when the consultant anthropologist on the film, David Brooks, carried out his research among the Bakhtiari, a severe drought had afflicted the southern Zagros region, affecting the Turkish speaking Qashqa'i tribes to the south. In search of grazing, groups of armed Qashqa'i tribesmen moved north into Bakhtiari territory as far as Shimbar, where they 'rented' the grazing from Feizullah Zalaqi, paying him a large sum of money in compensation. The Qashqa'i having totally grazed this valley, then retreated south to their own territory before the migrating Bakhtiari arrived from their winter pastures. Shimbar, that year, 1964, provided no grazing at all for the passing Bakhtiari who had to push on without resting their animals. These Bakhtiari received no compensation from Feizullah, who kept all the money for himself. The 'taifeh' with whom Brooks lived, the Osiwand, took revenge during the 1966 migration by setting fire to Feizullah Zalaqi's wheat fields in Shimbar and a neighbouring valley totally destroying his crop.

The journey is continued with the difficult Path of the Women to be surmounted. There are some difficult moments when several baby goats stray dangerously on this cliff face, and are chased by one of the young girls of the camp.

At the 'Pass of a Thousand Hazards' the Babadi have to construct a stone and log ramp to help the animals up the first hundred feet of this mountain, just next to a waterfall. This bridge is supposed to be maintained by Feizullah Zalaqi, who rarely does so. This pass is also known as the pass of thieves, the thieves being the notorious Mowri.

Beyond the 9,000 ft. summit above the waterfall, lies the valley of the Bazuft, the most difficult river on the journey. The Bazuft represents one of the most difficult hazards the nomads must face. The Bazuft swells with the melting snow and the current is very swift. The pack animals and people make it across without incident, although over the years many Bakhtiari have been swept to their death crossing this river. The flocks are nervous of the water. Bahman, the chief shepherd disobeys Jafar's order to keep the sheep out of the river until the following day and he urges the animals into the river. Several are swept away, others are killed in the rapids. The men have to spend a lot of time in the freezing water getting the flock across and Jalali, Jafar's most able worker collapses with exhaustion and cold.

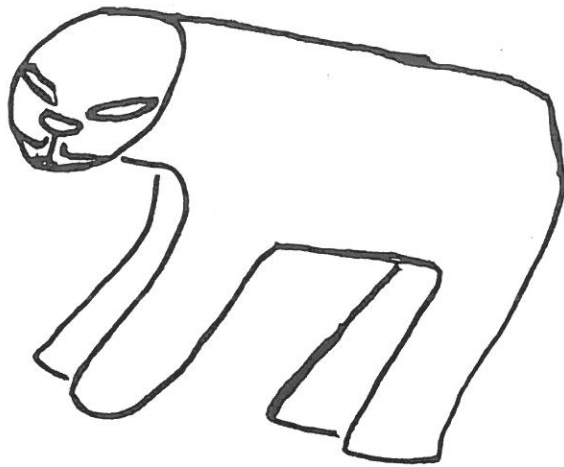
By now four weeks have passed and everyone is increasingly tired. The loss of the animals is dispiriting. Now the final and highest mountain range has to be faced, the snow bound Zardeh Kuh, 15,000 feet high at its summit. Zardeh Kuh is the scene of many disasters and makes the nomads nervous. With a pre dawn start the camp is high on the mountain range by daybreak. The altitude saps everyone's strength and an icy wind whips at the nomads. Mules lose their footing in the snow and tumble down the steep slopes.

With the crossing of Zardeh Kuh, the migration is virtually over for the Babadi, whose summer quarters lie on the other side of this range. For other 'taifeh' there is another ten days travel before they reach their summer pastures.

With the migration behind them, and the summer months ahead, the nomads can anticipate the less hectic activities of the summer months, the sheering of the sheep, marketing of their male animals, weddings and visits to relatives.

Only later, towards the end of summer, three or four months away will it be time to start the autumn journey back to the winter pastures.

David H.M. Brooks
Department of Anthropology
University of Durham
Durham
England
June 1981.

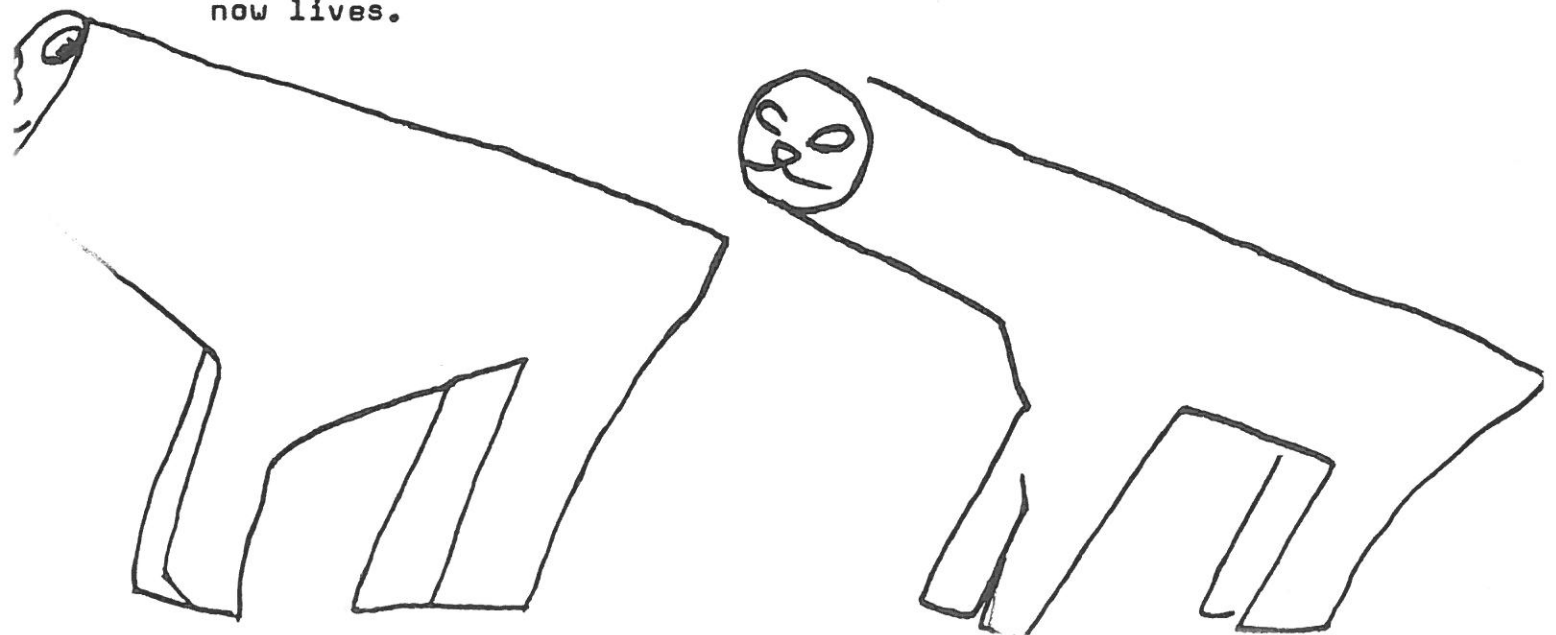


JAMES MASON

The decision to use James Mason's voice was not difficult. The voice had to resemble the voice of Jafar Qoli in timbre and had to have a distinctive accent. The actor would have to use his voice to insinuate, to be sarcastic and ironical, and to be able to convey Jafar Qoli's reminiscences of his own past, his thoughts on the changing circumstances of Bakhtiari life and his attitudes to the other members of the camp. The closer he could come to the way Jafar himself talked, the more insight he could give into Jafar's character and the other members of the camp group.

James Mason is an artist as well as actor. The illustrations on this page are doodles he made on the working script. They are his interpretation of the stone lions which the Bakhtiari carve and place on the graves of their heroes and respected tribal men and women.

The script was recorded in Switzerland where James Mason now lives.



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“A sprawling, stunning saga of survival . . . keen adventure . . . vast and visually elegant.”

—Los Angeles Times

“Compelling . . . Every step of the journey is a fascinating glimpse into another world.”

—San Francisco Chronicle

PEOPLE OF THE WIND

Featuring the voice of
JAMES MASON

“THE FILM FILLS AND STUNS THE EYE!”
—Pacific Sun



Directed by **ANTHONY HOWARTH** Written by **DAVID KOFF**
Music by **G. T. MOORE** and **SHUSHUA** Sound by **TODD-AO®**
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**THE BAKHTIARI MIGRATION — THE MOST HAZARDOUS
TEST OF HUMAN ENDURANCE STILL UNDERTAKEN,
YEAR AFTER YEAR, BY AN ENTIRE PEOPLE.**

THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, THE BAKHTIARI TRIBES
migrated south from the Caucasus Mountains of Russia.
They found their “promised land” in Western Persia (Iran).
There was one problem — the massive Zagros Mountain
range, as high as the Alps and as broad as Switzerland,
stood between the winter and the summer pastures.

The 500,000 Bakhtiari are one of the last of the
great nomadic tribes. To survive, they must set out,
every Spring, with all their possessions and their millions
of sheep on a 200 mile journey

“...A SPRAWLING, STUNNING SAGA OF
SURVIVAL.”
—Los Angeles Times

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