

Bakhtiari Territory :

The entire area is split into three major divisions

- a) The winter pastures - Garmsir- meaning warm area. T
- b) the Sarhad - this is a border area between winter and summer pastures and refers to the very high mountain areas and valleys above 7000ft. through which most migrating Bakhtiari pass.
- c) Summer pastures - Sardsir - meaning cold country. Thi

The Bakhtiari year is divided between these two areas. Moving in spring from the drying winter pastures migrating through the mountains to their summer pastures. May through September is spent in the summer area and then before the snows make the mountains impassable, and the drying up of the summer grass, the Bakhtiari return along the same routes in the autumn, roughly the month of October to their winter pastures. They spend roughly 5 or six months in the winter pastures.

These people then, follow the seasons moving backwards and forwards in a rhythmic cycle between summer and winter quarters, following the grass. Thus utilising pastures in the spring in progressively higher valleys and mountains, pasture which comes into season later than in the winter area.

It is through this movement that the Bakhtiari maintain a constant supply of grass and grazing for their flocks. In the early autumn, as the pastures dry up on the upper slopes of the mountains the nomads gradually move their camps down the slopes to the valley floors in Isfhan province. These valleys are very fertile agricultural areas, and after the harvests are taken in by the peasants living in large villages in the region, many Bakhtiari graze their animals on the stubble of the wheat fields.

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For many Bakhtiari tribes, the summer pastures are better than their winter pastures, and can sustain settlement to a greater degree. Many of the Babadi groups are settling in the summer area which provides far better agricultural land than do their winter territories. There are now very many Babdi settlements - sometimes single households; sometimes

replicating the settlement pattern of the winter pastures of hamlets varying between single households to 30 or 40 families. (see census figures).

This region is known as Chahr Mahal, and Bakhtiari territory here runs into settled peasant village areas. These vilālagas exhibit a different settlement pattern; they are large, some of them many thousands of people.

asnāt Most of these villages are non- Bakhtiari, non- tribal, though there is the case of Ali Kuh village, settled for three hundred years in the midst of non Bakhtiari villages. This village of Alikuh was settled by a seccion of the Osiwands. Other villages have a mixed Bakhtiari and peasa t populatio

These villages are the market centres for the Bakhtiari, with Shahr Kurd the major market town and administrative centre of the region. Here the Bakhtiari trade, sell thier animals and animal products, and buy their many necessities - food, clothes , equipment etc. The bkahtiari have stable trading relationships with particular merchants often sustained over many years. Most buying and selling is done on a credit basis. The young male lambs for example are sold to repay the revious years debts/

By the time the summer is over and the Bakhtiari are preparing again to move many of them run up debts buyinh the supplies they need for the return migration. If the year has been good and their are many lambs, then debt can be avoided. But if for the variety of ecological reason the year has been bad then the Bakhtiari have nothing to buy their essential supplies with and fall into debt. high rates of interest are often charged and one in debt it is difficult to climb out into solvency. In this way many Bakhtiari gradually find that they have mortgaged thier entire flock and are effectively acting for shepherd looking after a flock owned by the merchnats.

The Bakhtiari are enmeshed economically with the surrounding larger more extensive economy of the region, both in winter and summer pastures. Traditionally the relationship between the Bakhtiari and their non tribal peasant neighbours has been one of tension, open hostility and mutual dislike and distrust. The Bakhtiari affect to despise the peasants and the peasants contemptuously call the Bakhtiaris ; "Lur yeni Khar" To be a Lur, a Bakhtiari is to be a donkey (mule). The peasants, with good reason fear the Bakhtiari, and the latter laugh at the "Tarsu" the cowardly villagers afraid of the mountains, afraid to be seen outside their villages.

This reflects the past lawlessness of the Bakhtiari who are infamous in this part of Persia for their looting and raiding, fighting and pillaging. From about 1880 -1928 the Bakhtiari ruled this region directly, forcing out peasant owners and taking over whole villages, taking as much as 80% of the crops for themselves. As long as the central government did not directly control the area, which did not happen till Reza Shah rule between 1930-1940 when he effectively cut back the power of the tribes and their leaders the Khans, stopping the migrations, the Bakhtiaris dominated at will the whole of Chahr Mahal.

Now that the central government controls and administers the region rather than the traditional tribal leaders, such looting and raiding is no longer possible, the tribes have been effectively disarmed and in disputes between tribesman and peasant, the law tends to be on the side of the peasant almost as a matter of principle.

With the increasing pressure to settle down, though not necessarily permanently, a pattern of tribesmen who have houses in both summer and winter pastures between which they move in their tents is increasingly common. Or to have a house in either summer or winter pastures, which will be the area in which the agricultural land is better is common. This means that six or seven months of the year is spent in the tents and the remainder in a settled house.

the great economic variation within the Bakhtair is expressed in the types of settlement, with the wealthiest of the Kalantars having several houses, including houses in the market towns, and they spent the year moving between these various properties spread between summer and winter areas. Often wives will be situated in each community, and the wealthy husband moving between his business interests, his agriculture his animals and his town houses, in each of which he will have a wife and his children by that wife. The most elaborate domestic arrangements are required in such situations. Most Bahari can only afford to have one wife, and as such can not operate in the diverse modern situation they now find themselves as effectively nor as comfortably as the wealthier members of the tribe.

Ja'far

A Kalantar such as Ja'far Qoli of the Babadi, who has had four wives of different status, a town house in Lali, a village house in the summer quarters and a tent for migrating, can operate in a differentiated economy in a very effective way. He has built up a network of social relations, cemented by judicious marriages in classic tribal way, always hedging his bets and broadening the basis of his wealth and power/