

## **The Migration. Notes from my [David Brooks'] personal diary**

The style of our own particular migration was distinctly atypical. We travelled with the “Mal” of Jangi Hajjipur at the head of all the Osiwands. Jangi is the son of the previous Kalantar of the Osiwands and the brother’s son of the present Kalantar, Mash Barat Hajjipur. The Osiwands live in Lali plain, each Tireh having its own territory. The Bardin are largely settled in Lali itself and in several small villages scattered on the plain. The size of these villages varied from a settlement of 2 or 3 houses upwards. The smaller settlements consist entirely of close relatives and their families. Jomeh’s village consists of about 20-25 families only and is within a mile from Lali. There is another very small settlement of 5 houses on the other side of the plain, and to the north east of that another slightly larger. These settlements are possibly Gavdush rather than Bardin. A more accurate census of these settlement populations in Lali plain is necessary. The Bardin tents are further north on the road to Sardasht, and these are inhabited by the shepherds and younger members, male with a mother. For example Jangi’s mother stayed all winter, 1964-65 in her tent, otherwise she would have had to live with her brother-in-law and his wife and her late husband’s junior wife. She periodically made appearances in the house in Lali, but as other than Jangi she has no grown sons capable of looking after the flocks and the shepherd was in poor health, she seemed to carry the burden of looking after the tent. Part of the “Mal” we migrated with consisted of Jangi’s tent and members from Jomeh’s village, and others who live either only in tents further north or whose house in Lali I never ascertained. i.e. the Mal is by no means a permanent grouping. The composition of a Mal probably varies from year to year though I need to find out quite how and why. There is a limited number of people who potentially form a Mal, consisting of relatively close relatives.

Before the start of a migration a certain amount of buying of provisions of wheat flour, tea, rice, sugar has to take place. The Osiwands slowly build up a stock before leaving, buying from the Bazari, non-Bakhtiari, population in Lali. There is a slow movement converging on Lali preparatory to the final departure. Sufficient provisions have to be brought with them to the *Yailaq* [summer quarters] to last them for anything up to six weeks, as the nearest Bazars to the tribal summer quarters consist of the many villages populated in Chahr Mahal by a mixture of peasant and settled tribes. Each individual has a specific buying place I am sure within their territory, and with specific Bazari Merchants. However I need a great deal more information about this topic before I can in any way state what in fact is going on.

The five subdivisions of the Osiwands converge on the Rah-i Munar from their various starting points and each have slightly different routes at the beginning and after the migration

is over they spread out over their territory once again. A minor dispute arose the very first day because of the differences in routes at the start, where a Pel travelling with us tried to lead us off the Osiwand route proper and take us up the Pel route. However it takes no more than two or at most three days' travel for all the Osiwand to be following the same route. Jangi's Mal had as a leader of the whole group old Hajji who was a Galleh tribesman renowned for his knowledge of the mountains. He travelled with us till after the Bazuft when he left to travel further north to join his own herd. The Galleh had preceded us on the Munar road by more than two weeks.

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The migration starts after many talks among the Katkhodas of the Osiwands as to when exactly is the best time to make a move. We delayed our departure because of the very dusty weather and also because reports were brought in from higher up the mountains saying that there had been very heavy falls of snow. Finally after much discussion a date was fixed. Later it was changed because the time was inauspicious. The Koran was consulted on this point, but I do not know what made the day unacceptable or whether any other book was consulted or indeed who made the decision to leave one day later and on whose advice. The stars, calendars, legends and Hafiz are all looked at.

The first day's move is called "Making the hour". They move their goods a very short distance either by hand or on their backs. The hour on which they move is chosen for its auspicious character and over which no unlucky shadow hovered. The following day's move is the start proper. At first the tribes move slowly to break in the animals and people. It takes several days to get into the rhythm and disorganization characterizes the beginnings of all the migrations. These early stages are also when thieves know that the members of a Mal are not yet settled down and vigilance is more necessary than later in some respect.

Disagreements within the Mal are also common at this stage and Jangi's Mal split up on the third day due to a difference of opinion as to how far the sheep could go. It joined up and closed ranks again quickly but with the splitting of the Mal guards had to be posted all night in case of thieves.

Stopping places on the migration are traditional within flexible limits of course and groups who consequently travel together habitually stop at the same places year after year. However, with the changes in camp compositions occurring, this stopping at places may vary greatly. The presence of sufficient grass is the ultimate determining point of the halts and if a

traditional stopping place is barren then the Mal has no option but to travel on. Conflicts between Mal en route are rare except at the valleys of Shimbar and Chelow possibly when they are more crowded together. Otherwise often we never caught sight of another group of tents for an afternoon at a time.

Above the level of the Mal is the Korboh son-father. This consists of a group of Mal travelling together, or at least loosely speaking. I never saw anyone in Jangi's Mal have any contact except in Shimbar and possibly crossing over Munar, with members of his Oulad. I need more information on this, because in Cooper's "Grass" the crossing of the Zardeh pass presented a picture of thousands of tribesmen together closely organized. At specific points en route the Taifeh come into contact with other Taifeh and great fun is had by all. These points en route provide an opportunity to meet friends from another Taifeh again. This suggests that the same groups of people tend to congregate at the same time on the one spot more or less habitually. On the other side of the Munar we camped close to other Taifeh.

The central portion of the mountains is inhabited by the Mowri sub-tribe whose territory lies higher than any other. They have a history of raiding the passing tribes and maintain their size of herds this way. The passing Taifeh close up their ranks to some extent to avoid theft. All members of a Mal will chase a thief. Might always counts. In places like the other side of Munar, at Shimbar etc. members of the Taifeh, though of different Tireh, Tash or Oulads tend to congregate together. i.e. the Babadi members will be in one tiny defile and the Osiwands in another, the Beidarwand in another.

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This vast movement of people over the mountains along fairly tight, prescribed routes required a great deal of organisation. The techniques of migrating are imbibed at a young age, and routes are traditional. I am not entirely certain that the order of travel is immutable but Mary Gharagozlu in her novel describes the Baba Ahmedi, Babadi and Beidarwand travelling in close conjunction and the Osiwands. This ties in with Cooper's description in "Grass" where he describes a fight between the Raki and Baba Ahmedi and Beidarwand. The Raki are part of the Babadi Bab tribe. The Baba Ahmedi, who are Duraki, side with the Bakhtiarwand and protect them against the Babadi [with whom] ~~who~~ in 1924 they had a bad fight. This contrasts with my information which states that the Babadi Bab and Beidarwand traditionally side with one another if one is involved in a blood feud with the opposing faction, the Duraki. However Jomeh Hajjipur told me that "several years ago" there was a very bad fight between the Babadi

and the Beidarwand at Munar. Since Jomeh is 35-40 years at most he is unlikely to know anything about the fight reported by Cooper and anyway this would seem to contrast with the point that Babadi Bab and Beidarwand combine against the Duraki.

In addition to this confusion, historically, the Khans are Duraki while their opposing faction last century were Beidarwand Khans whom they defeated. It seems unlikely that the Duraki would be on specially good terms with the Beidarwand in a serious fight involving most of the Haft Lang. Much more information is needed on these points. Who sides with whom and for how long.

Since many fights break out in migrations, who fights who will depend on with what sections a sub-tribe comes onto contact. There are several main routes through the mountains. Most of the tribes use one route – Rah-I Munar, with some exceptions not all of which I can document. The Duraki use this route except the Zarraswand and Ahmad Khosrowi – which may be Zarraswand anyway. The reason is that the quarters of the Zarraswand, both summer and winter, lie in the south – Winter in Andeka and Summer in Oregon, in southern Chahar Mahal. They travel the Rah-i Disfart along with the Dinaruni and Janneki Sardsi. The Babadi winter near M.I.S. [Masjed-i Suleiman] and some in Lali and summer in Shurab and some in Tang-i Gazza. They migrate over a route the same as Munar and then veer north to cross the Zardeh Kuh and down into Shurab. The Bakhtiariwand travel the Rah-i Munar, wintering near Lali and M.I.S. and summering almost entirely in Tang-i Gazza. There is no consistent contiguity between Taifeh in summer and winter quarters. In fact I have not complete information on this point at all but what I have suggests only partial contiguity. Although tribal land is defined territorially, places like M.I.S, Izeh, and Lali have a mixed population. Lali has Bakhtiariwand, though few of them, some Babadi own houses there. I would like to know just how long the Babadi contingent has been there and who they bought the houses from. Jaffar Qoli has a house there. Possibly he did not visit it when the Babadi and Osiwand, whose Kalantar is also based there, were blood feuding.

Each Taifeh has its own land, though, as suggested above, the Il [tribes] do not seem to have territory entirely contiguous. This needs checking up on. But some Duraki are separated from other Duraki in the winter quarters by territory belonging to the Babadi or Beidarwand. I will have to get more accurate information as to the ground distribution and tribal affiliation.

To go on to the migration proper I would like to discuss in more detail the method of deciding the date of departure.

The Kalantars of the various Taifeh travelling over the same route get together, though I saw no evidence of all the Kalantars. Did the two young Qandali Kalantars discuss their early leaving date with Mash Barat or not? Once having decided the probable dates of leaving of the tribe as a whole, then the Katkhodas, [that is, the] heads of Tirehs within the Taifeh, get together and decide more specifically the departure dates of their smaller groups. But this still leaves groups of several hundred people who have different starting dates, even it is just one day after the other. Each Taifeh must be sufficiently spread over the ground to graze all the sheep. I need information on what basis length of stay in a particular place is decided. If a wealthy Mal has 3,000 sheep they will need more room than for one of 500 sheep. Or not. A detailed discussion of this sort of point is badly needed. Our Mal stayed for three days in Shimbar and the day we left some members of the Pel Tireh arrived on our spot. How did they know when we were to move? Since weather conditions must vary from one part of the mountains to another how does news get round that a particular group is stuck for two days as we were in dust. Especially at the beginning of the migration and at Munar we vied for positions for our camps. We hurried through some groups and others of the camp would dash on ahead to try and get the pick of the succeeding valley. This never led to fights so at least in some areas it seems to be a case of first come first served. The sheep have to go where the grass is and not always are the sheep with us. I seem to remember that on several occasions the sheep would be taken further up a valley, down which they had to return the following morning to get back on the road.

On the Il Rah [migration route] as it is called the tribes have the right to graze their sheep for specific periods and then move on to take advantage of the grass coming up ahead. However, a powerful closely knit Taifeh with a firm internal leader can take advantage of weaker less united Taifeh, by staying longer, over-grazing various valleys and fattening the sheep. Whether they cut grass as well and take it with them I have no idea other than the paltry information offered by Cooper about the cutting of Raki grass for the crossing of the Munar by the Baba Ahmedi. The importance of a united Taifeh under a respected and strong leader can be seen in the case of the Qandali, whose flocks are in good condition, whose population is comparatively well off and are efficiently breaking new ground under cultivation in the Yailaq. The two Qandali Kalantars speak of the Osiwands as being “finished”, and on the whole a stupid bunch of people. The Osiwands are not united strongly under Mash Barat and are continually fighting and disagreeing to the distinct detriment of the tribe as a whole. They have lost all their Yailaq lands to the Khans and are continually fighting each other as well as the peasants encroaching on their land. Since self-interest is necessary in the face of peasant-

government opposition, the Osiwands lost their chance to regain their land through Mary Gharagozlu's help. This continuing internal factionalism is weakening the tribe very quickly. The Babadi are renowned for their toughness and in recent years there have been almost no thefts at all from Babadi flocks, while their own thieves remain extremely active and efficient. Continuous thieving goes on on the migrations and represents what can become a serious drain to flocks, particularly if accompanied by a bad year.

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The pressures of pushing on for grass and utilising the intervening lush valleys to the utmost, and the pressures of following tribesmen wanting their own share of the grazing call for efficient and powerful leadership, and if peace is to be maintained, fights and disagreements have to be kept to a minimum. Otherwise, at the various mountain passes, which cause bottlenecks, chaos would ensue in the attempt to obtain pasture for the sheep.

I need more information as to the relationship of the period allotted to any particular Taifeh and to the number of people in that Taifeh, and the size of herds.

The Mowri, mentioned above as notorious thieves, live in the high central portion of the Zagros from Andeka to Bazuft. They grow a certain amount of wheat and have oak trees, both of which they keep walled off to prevent passing tribesmen from spoiling their groves or grazing the sheep and mules on their crops. Any infringement of this results in a fight and negotiations for compensation.

Something I came across in the mountains which I failed to understand was the grazing of Turkish sheep in Shimbar. That spring had been very bad and there was little grass. Up till Shimbar we had moved pretty fast because of the heat and dryness. Further south into Turkish speaking territory the weather was even worse and the grass had run out. The "Kalantar" or at least the Mowri who "was responsible" for "Shimbar" had been paid a great deal of money to let these Turkish herders graze in Shimbar. The Ministry of Agriculture had in some way given their O.K., though I don't pretend to understand quite what was supposed to be going on. The man involved is a first class crook apparently and the passing tribes were none too pleased but as the territory belongs to the Mowri there was nothing to be done or they chose to do nothing and not start a big fight. The Bakhtiari did not speak to the Turks and showed definite displeasure.

Shimbar has carried a settled population at some time and there was also an Imam Zadeh on the side of the hill. We did not visit it however. Up to the Bazuft [River] there were

several signs of settlement and agriculture being carried out though not extensively and there [were] was no conflicts evident at this stage.

There are two settlements at Bazuft including a “Bazar” consisting of one trader who is also a crook. He makes a tidy fortune out of the tribes, but there was no attempt at forcing the tribe to pay a toll for crossing the river. Following the Bazuft northwards towards Chehl Gird and Babadi territory along the slopes of Zardeh Kuh we came across many tribesmen living in caves, and eventually six hours’ ride from the crossing point came to two settlements about 1 kilometre apart. These were Mowri Kalantars and the northern most settlement consisted of a castle lived in by the Kalantar, his wives, his children and their families. He seems to have been a very powerful man and wealthy as well from the condition of the jewellery his wives wore. This group moved up the hills only for their “migration”. When the weather got too hot they moved into an open air house in a poplar wood. The sheep simply moved further up the mountains in a vertical movement. Rather a sophisticated style of living.

Not until after Charri did we move into the Yailaq proper and contact was made with the settled Qandali and the tribesmen who have already arrived. Disputes were common at this stage and the nomads were forced to travel high in the upper slopes out of the way of the villages. Insults are cheerfully exchanged and stone throwing and clubbing happened on two occasions, but only once had we to actually cross through a hamlet. Not all the tribes have trouble with the peasant

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population, as they do not come up against them. However the Osiwands had to move through the Ardal and Doab valleys, the first of which is populated by non-tribal stock and the latter by the Qandali mentioned already.

The Ardal area is the seat of the Khan’s summer quarters and a sizeable village exists there ruled over at the present by one of the wives of a deposed Khan. Thereafter the Osiwands move into their own territory and small hamlets settled by tribesmen cause no trouble. There is a string of non-tribal villages all along Chahar Mahal and the tribesmen steer clear of them.

The composition of these villages is unclear to me as some tribesmen have houses in non tribal villages. Some form separate hamlets and continually quarrel with the peasants over land ownership. However I shall deal with this topic in more detail later.

The migration in the spring for any one group on the Munar route varies in length depending on the weather and grass. The particular migration I made lasted 28 days and we

were described as moving fast because of the lack of the grass. The trek made by Cooper lasted 46 days and this would seem not uncommon. Any one of the main well-pastured valleys will be grazed by the tribes continuously for about six weeks to two months. The progressive movement across the mountains starts early in March, usually around Now Ruz when the grass starts drying up. The pastures in the mountain valleys remain rich for progressively longer as the altitude increases, and at least in the Shimbar valley another crop of grass often comes up after all tribes have gone and according to one informant who may not be entirely reliable this grass is allowed to dry and blow away unused. The higher valleys come to fruition progressively later and once the snow goes the pastures are usually rather good. The high summer pastures in the Yailaq are slowly grazed but start drying up in the early autumn which is the bad time of year for all areas. The movement of the flocks depends on the state of the grass. The return to the Garmsir [winter quarters] starts towards the end of September and, as there is very little grass anywhere on the mountains, and even the higher slopes are denuded, this migration is made as quickly as possible. However early snow fall can hold up the tribes badly and the Osiwands stated that in the autumn of 1963 they took nearly two months to return and the animals lost a lot of weight. The tribesmen had to gather what they could, including branches which they pulped to feed the sheep. The goats can survive on almost nothing and do not do so badly as the sheep. Also as the carrying capacities of supplies is dependent on the number of mules and donkeys owned, the tribesmen themselves ran out of food and had to push hard driving their sheep in a way detrimental to their health. They are caught between opposing necessities. Those who are in the upper economic bracket are less affected [in] this way as they can supply themselves better and as usual the poorer sections are hit hardest of all. Once a tribesman starts slipping economically I suspect it is very difficult to reverse the process in the face of such a tricky environment.

Jaffar Qoli, who has a reputation for being a good herder, apparently decided last autumn, 1965 not to move his sheep back to the Garmsir. I would like to check up on this as the sheep have to contend with a very severe winter. However for the first time I have heard of fodder cutting and storage being done by Jaffar Qoli to help his sheep over the winter. I am not sure that I believe it. The winter of 1964-65 was very bad and because there was no fodder in the Garmsir, heavy rains affected the grass which was too lush and up to 80% of the animals are reputed to be dead.



Such a loss is reckoned will take six years to be overcome. I need much more information on the care of sheep and herding principles; on when grass is and is not available, and what is done to offset the possibility of disaster particularly on the return trip to Khuzistan.

Communications between the winter and summer pastures are difficult and the routes run either from North-East to South-West across the mainline of the mountains or from North West – South East along the valleys. The most important of the routes are those running across the main mountain ranges and it is these that are called the Rah.

The Haft Lang migrate over [four] main migration routes, on which they converge and later disperse from and to their winter and summer quarters.

Rah-i Munar

Rah-i Sussan

Rah-i Pambekhal or Panbekhal

Rah-i Disfart

1.) The Rah-i Munar is the longest though not as difficult as the Rah-i Panbekhal. It is used by most of the Bakhtiari tribes with certain exceptions. As far as I know almost all of the Duraki “Il” travels this route with the exception of some sections of the Zarraswand. The Ahmad Khosrowi section of Zarraswand travels the Disfart route. The Bakhtiarwand travel this route almost entirely. The Babadi converge and travel on the Rah i Panbekhal which crosses the Zardeh Kuh slopes. Other tribes travel on this. See later.

2.) Rah-i Sussan This is a short route running from the Dinarun area north east of Deh Diz, to Sussan, where the river Karun has to be crossed and then on the Mal Amir Plain. This route is used by the Dinaruni.

3.) Rah-i Panbekhal This is used by the Babadi Bab mostly as their summer quarters are up on the eastern slopes of Zardeh Kuh in the area known as Shurab. Some of the Duraki use this route notably the Baba Ahmedi and according to the book “Grass” at least some Bakhtiarwand must use this route. By and large the summer quarters of the Bakhtiarwand are in a place called Tang-i Gazzi where are to be found Babadi Bab sub tribes so they use the Munar route first and then branch off north just before the road goes down into Chelow valley. Thereafter they swing northwards over the Zardeh Kuh mountain range and this part of the Panbekhal road is very grim indeed and takes a long time to cross. I do not know which part of the road is called Panbekhal and certainly in Grass there is the marvellous description of the crossing of the Karun early on in their migration. Possibly this route is known as something else on the

Khuzistan side. As usual I need more information of exact routes, particularly of the separate sub tribes, and exactly where they all converge on the part of the “Rah” that is named.

4.) Rah-i Disfart This is by far the most well-known route, also known as the Bakhtiari road or Lynch road. It runs from Chahar Mahal via Dopulan, Deh Diz and Izeh to M.I.S. and other points in the south of the Mal Amir Plain. It is approximately 165 miles long. This route is the easiest of all the tribal routes and was the main line of communication between Khuzistan and central Persia. It excited the interest of the British commercial traders involved in developing the Karun and trade in Khuzistan or Arabistan as it was then called. The Khans travelled this road and is used by several of the Zarraswand.

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I shall be discussing the Rah-i Disfart in much more detail in another part of this report, from the point of view of the development of the Lynch road, the activities of the Khans and a description stage by stage of the route. There are several accounts by foreign travellers of passing this route. The other point of interest on this route of course is that the part between Izeh and Mun Gasht is formed by the ancient “Sassanian” highway known as the Jaddeh-i Atabal. The route is also used by those tribes who winter in the Mal Amir plain. The tribes there are Chahar Lang in part, mostly settled, but round villages like Baghi Malek there are “Afshar” tribes who move their sheep on this road I think.

The tribes then converge on all of these routes and as stated earlier have the right to graze and draw water all along the route at specific times only. The areas on the edges of these routes are trouble spots when late comers have to pass through the road to their own pastures and the already arrived nomads try and push them through to prevent them from over-grazing the grass.

Only the very highest parts of the mountains in the central portion are not settled at all. Settlement is sparse but does occur. There are villages all along the Disfart route. The Munar route has sporadic settlement in Shimbar, in Chelow where some Bakhtiari look after an Imam Zadeh. Signs of cultivation in the Mowri territory have already been mentioned though no houses were seen until we had crossed Hazar Chameh and that was down in the valley [where] we saw two groups of settlement, running to the north. Bazuft was settled at the point where we crossed the river and on up towards Chehel Gird following the river.

Doab valley, officially the Yailaq was extensively settled and cultivated and gradually thickened as we approached Chahar Mahal which has several hundred settlements with sizable villages.

Before going on to give a detailed description of the migration I went on I will mention that en route there are places of good luck and bad luck. The latter are where accidents tend to happen consistently and were marked by rags, branches and stones inserted in the nearest tree.

Each valley seemed to have an Imam Zadeh in it, at least each of the main valleys had.

A fair amount of coming and going goes on by small groups or individuals after the migrations proper have been finished. They usually involve those tribesmen who were left behind to gather the flocks. I don't know what sort of reception they get travelling through Mowri territory however.