

Nomads
of South Persia

The Basseri Tribe
of the Khamseh Confederacy

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Chapter VIII

ECONOMIC PROCESSES

Other aspects of the economic organization of the Basseri also have important implications for the social organization of the tribe and vice versa. Of particular importance are their organization into small economically independent households, and certain characteristic features of capital formation in a pastoral economy.

As we have seen, every Basseri obtains rights at birth in the pastures of his oulad. These rights are without restriction in the sense that there is no limit to the number of animals he may have on these pastures so long as they are his own. The limiting factor on his income is thus the size of his privately owned flocks; any increase in them brings a rich return in increased profits harvested from the communally owned pastures. The immense interest in conserving and increasing the herds which is characteristic of the Basseri - as apparently of most pastoral people — thus has an economic justification.

For the Basseri to invest labour in anything else than the care of animals and in satisfying the immediate needs for comfort of the household members would require forms of organization which are not found among them. Systematic division of labour within the tribe or any investment of communal labour in the improvement of pastures or roads requires for one thing a system for the distribution of foodstuffs, which is lacking, except where the chief uses his authority in an ad hoc manner to provide for such a system. Thus when he desires a large carpet to be made, the chief can call on labour — 10 to 12 women working full time for weeks or months — and provide them with food and facilities from his own large household; whereas in any other circumstances, only one or two women are able to work

together, for a few hours each day, between cooking food and tending the animals.

But the chief uses this power to organize larger enterprises only to satisfy the particular needs of his household, and not for the benefit of the oulads or the tribe as a whole. Thus, for example, several large spring pasture areas in the south are never used, though the tribesmen say they would be excellent if there were only water available to the animals within practicable distance. All that would be required to open up these pastures would be the digging of a probably not very deep well, but the nomads have no way of organizing themselves for digging such a well as a communal project — who would tend their flocks while they were engaged in the work, and why should one particular camp do it, when the fruits of the labour would be reaped by dozens of other camps as well? Where sedentary communities establish themselves in such areas, each nomadic householder can obtain water as he needs it from them, sometimes in return for a small payment. If no such sources exist, the nomads are unable to utilize the pastures. They are organizationally equipped only to exploit a natural environment as it is, not to invest labour in modifying it for subsequent more efficient utilization.

All attention then becomes focused on the well-being of the herd; and great emphasis is placed on conserving it, on postponing every slaughter, so as to benefit from every day of growth and every season of increase. The result is a great deal of very careful living, whereby people of fair means continue to deny themselves all luxuries. The Basseri themselves are fully aware of this weakness of theirs, that borders on miserliness; it comes out in gossip about persons, and in the great value placed on hospitality as a mortal virtue. Extreme cases of miserliness are made the target of ridicule and condemnation in public — one of the wealthiest members of the tribe, who dresses poorly, rides a mule, never gives food to visitors, and works as shepherd of much of his own flocks, is known by the delightful nickname of D.D.T. Khan, with the implication that he is so miserly he eats his own lice.

Together with this attitude goes the great faith placed in the capacity of the animals to grow and multiply, the feeling that for the person with herding luck, one ewe will inevitably be transformed into large herds, given the necessary labour force of reliable shepherds. On

the other hand, there are large risk factors, of early frosts that may kill the lambs, drought that will sap the herd's health, and pests that will decimate it, leaving the once rich herd-owner a pauper.

A major part of the nomad's labour is thus invested in the care of the flocks, in increasing them and building them up. As soon as a man's herd passes a certain minimal threshold which is required for the subsistence of himself and his family, the rate of growth tends to increase; and during a succession of good years, a number of members of the tribe can become great herd-owners, with flocks of 200 to 800 head, and a few even more.

At this point, however, new factors set in, deriving from the nature of pastoral capital. It is a characteristic feature of wealth in herds that its net productivity rate for the owner declines as the size of the herds increases. No effective means have been developed among the Basseri to protect the rights of the big herd-owner — the less the flocks are under the owner's constant supervision, the more he will be cheated out of his profits while made to carry real or fictitious losses. Shepherds can — and the Basseri agree that given a chance, they inevitably will — be more careless of their master's flocks than they would of their own: they can sell livestock and claim the animals have been lost, pocketing the profits; if they have some animals of their own, they can provide them with the lambs of other ewes in case of accidents at lambing; they will consume part of the product of the herd, and sell part, claiming that production has been low, etc. etc. These possibilities are reflected in the terms of the contracts on which flocks are farmed out (cf. pp. 13-14), whereby for longer-term contracts, the original capital value is secured in one way or another, while the terms with regard to profit sharing are extremely liberal. Yet such contracts can not counteract the tendency towards an inverse correlation between rate of interest and size of capital.

What is more, the capital asset itself, the flock, is, as we have seen, subject to unpredictable fluctuations and severe losses from natural causes, averaging as much as 50 % in some disaster years; and these risks also increase with the less careful attention the flocks will receive from hired shepherds than from owners.

As a herd-owner's wealth grows, there are thus growing economic incentives for him to transfer a part of his capital to another form than wealth in herds — that is, to a form in which it gives a greater

marginal profit, and where the owner is more secure against capital losses. The latter condition is satisfied by various forms of stored wealth common among nomads, mainly carpets and female jewelry. Most families wish to have a certain amount of such goods to exhibit as symbols of status and wealth; but wealth in this form gives no economic returns. The only other imperishable form of wealth into which wealth in flocks can be converted in the traditional South Persian economy is land — a form which also gives a high rate of interest in the form of landlord's rents. The typical pattern for wealthy nomads is therefore to convert a fraction of their wealth in flocks into landed property. There is an active market in landed property in the area; such property can be freely subdivided and transferred to any buyer, and except in outlying areas, administrative supervision is good enough, so such transactions are simple economic matters, with reasonably effective police support for the rights of the legal title holder. Nomadic pastoralists are thus free to purchase land. Along their whole route of migration, they acquire plots of variable sizes and values, which they let out to villagers on the standard land tenancy contracts of the area.

Some of the features of land tenancy contracts, and the privileged position of landowners in sedentary Persian society, should be summarized, since they affect the volume of this flow of capital, and its sociological consequences.

Lambton (1953: 259) summarizes the situation for Persia as a whole as follows; "... whereas the power and privileges of the land-owning class have been relatively constant over a long period, its composition has undergone many changes. From time to time it has incorporated new elements into its ranks and lost others. Never, however, has a stable landed aristocracy, transmitting its estates in their entirety from generation to generation, emerged." The nomad entering the ranks of the petty landlords thus does not meet with any strong social barriers; by virtue of the simple fact of title to land he exercises full privileges as a member of the land-owning class. These are considerable.

Vis-a-vis the tenants, his title gives him the right freely to dispose of his land — the peasants have no traditional usufruct rights, and in fact no legal security of tenure. In most places, fields are arbitrarily allotted on annual tenancy contracts as the landlord sees fit; where

there is a very definite pattern of rotation of crops, the contract period is usually extended to the termination of one full cycle, or a period of 2-3 years. In most areas there is over-population and competition between tenants for contracts; few men are provided with as much land as they are able, and wish, to cultivate. The terms of the contracts are thus throughout very advantageous to the landowner. They vary a great deal locally, but generally give the landowner $1/3$ - $1/2$ of unirrigated crops and $1/2$ - $2/3$ of irrigated crops. In the summer pasture areas, with more marginal agriculture, land values are low and the owner's share of the crop is reduced to $1/6$ of the total crop.

The tenants are expected by these contracts to supply all labour, animals, and farm equipment; but the landlord often gives seed. Though all formal traces of a feudal pattern of organization have disappeared, a landlord still wields great powers over his tenants. They must submit to his detailed control and supervision in most fields of life, not only in those directly connected with their work. Where the property is of any size, or the landlord is an absentee owner, this control is generally exercised through the landlord's appointed agent (*katkhoda*).

In the wider society, too, the position of even a petty landowner is one of relative privilege. His title to land gives him entry into the local elite of his village and district, and in the case of wealthier landlords, also on a provincial or national level. In dealings with the local authorities, the man who owns land, however small the plot may be, is in an entirely different position from the ordinary villager.

A transfer of capital from flocks into land holdings is thus economically advantageous to the wealthier herd-owner; it also offers striking social advantages within the framework of sedentary society. A number of Basseri choose to do this — frequently with no thoughts of future sedentarization. The land provides them with a secure store of wealth and a considerable annual income in the agricultural products needed in their normal pattern of consumption — it frees them from the necessity of purchasing these products and thus tends to increase the rate of growth of their herds. Unless disease strikes their herds severely, the process tends to become cumulative, with a steadily growing fraction of the nomad's wealth invested in land. The greater these interests in land are, the more the owner becomes

motivated to supervise and control his property; and he thus finds himself drawn increasingly into the in many ways very comfortable and privileged status of sedentary landlord. Once a certain point in the development has been passed, disasters striking the herds serve merely to end his engagement in pastoral activities. A number of Basseri in every generation pass through this development, and end up as sedentary landlords in villages in or near the Basseri migration channel, frequently camping in tents in the gardens of their houses half the year, and with a continuing emotional interest in and identification with nomad life and ways.

One brief life history may serve to illustrate this process. The man in question was a member of the Labu Musa section, and is now 50-55 years old. When he was 15, he started with 20 sheep and one donkey. His herd grew steadily, because of his herding skill and luck (though his enemies whisper that he augmented the natural growth of his herd by theft — a common accusation against the too prosperous). Very soon he started setting aside the value of about 20 sheep p. a. as savings; he also traded in hides. After some years he bought a piece of land by Band Amir. During the period of enforced settlement under Reza Shah he built a house, but never lived in it, and continued to migrate by bribing the police, thereby conserving his pastoral wealth through a period of great difficulties for most nomads. In 1956 he bought a larger compact block of land further north, by selling his land in Band Amir and elsewhere as well as most of his animals. On his new property he has constructed a good house and lives as a settled landowner with two wives and several small children, in considerable comfort. The few hundred head of sheep that he still owns are farmed out with relatives among the Labu Musa on the usual contracts.

Growth in the wealth of a pastoral nomad may thus, in certain circumstances, have cumulative effects that result in the nomad's quitting his tribe and his pastoral pursuits, and becoming assimilated into sedentary society as a petty landowner. This happens with considerable frequency; but there are features of Basseri organization which prevent it from becoming the predominant pattern. The most important of these features is the normal cycle of family development, which serves as a brake on extreme capital accumulation in the hands of one person. As we have noted, sons receive their patrimony at the time of marriage, which means that the fragmentation of a man's herd

sets in around the middle, rather than the end, of his adult life. Its timing also has some correlation with the wealth of the man: the poor man postpones the expense of his son's marriage till the boy is 30 or even 35 years old; a wealthier man is subject to strong pressures, both from public opinion and from his son, to arrange for the boy's marriage shortly after he is 20 years old. The greater the labour supply a man controls, in the form of sons who can assist him as shepherd boys, and the greater his success at accumulating wealth, the shorter is the period in which his herd grows, before it starts being subdivided and passing on to other hands. A man thus has not much more than twenty years, in a normally fertile marriage, within which the whole sedentarization process must be completed: from the time he starts a marriage, with his initial flock, till his sons start claiming their shares of the estate. Only childless men, or men with only daughters, can expect a cumulative growth of their herds throughout their life — but they, on the other hand, do not control the additional male labour required for rapid expansion.

An additional factor is the practice of polygyny. Wealthy herd owners frequently enter plural marriages, since they are in a position to secure and support an additional wife, and need additional female labour, as well as desiring the sexual services of a younger woman. Such marriages extend the period of a man's fecundity in a way that usually saps his wealth further: not only must he continue to support unproductive children over a long period; the system of anticipatory inheritance is such that marrying sons will tend to receive "too large" shares of the estate. This will happen, since the fraction which a son receives at marriage is computed on the basis of the number of living; unmarried sons at that moment. Additional male issue, born at a later date, have full rights on their father's estate without by their presence having reduced the share allotted to those of their brothers who were already married when the later births took place.

I have no reliable data on the numerical frequency of sedentarization as a result of capital accumulation, as compared to the frequency of rapid fragmentation and redistribution of such wealth, and a continuation of a pastoral subsistence for the persons involved. Settled, landowning Basseri are found scattered over a very large area; but it is safe to say that the latter pattern, of fragmentation and redistribution, is the one of greater importance to Basseri social

organization — it is the process which takes place within Basseri nomadic society, and which serves as a regular mechanism to maintain its present form.

Whereas the flocks tend to prosper and grow due to the nomad's work in herding and tending them, accidents, pests and mismanagement may also have the obverse effect of reducing the herds through time; or the needs of the pastoralist may be too great, and lead him to over-tax his herd, and result in a decline in the herder's wealth, rather than an accumulation. As we have seen, all such economic risks are carried in their entirety by the separate, individual households. Each Basseri household depends for its subsistence on its privately owned flocks, except for the small number of hired herdsmen who support themselves by selling their labour; so without their animals, most households would be debarred from continuing a nomadic existence as members of the tribe. Serious loss of wealth in a household thus has the result that the household is sloughed off from the tribe; or, to put it the other way around, the persistence of the present form of Basseri organization depends on a continual process of sloughing-off of members who fail to retain the productive capital in herds which is required for an independent pastoral existence. The process of sloughing-off, or sedentarization by impoverishment, depends precisely on the non-corporate nature of all market relations, described in the previous chapter.

The nomads are familiar with this process, in its various steps; it has happened and happens continually about them in their own tribe and section; and it is felt as a threatening and live possibility in a number of households of the lower economic range. Its stages are gradual and, though they may be fought against tooth and nail, have an impersonal and overwhelming feeling of inevitability about them.

The first stage is that of carrying large debts to a trading partner over from one year to the next. Chances are that, in spite of moderate herding luck, only a part of the debt can be paid off next year, in addition to the financing of the family's needs during that year. To meet such debts, and the running demands of his household, the herder is forced to invade his productive capital, slaughtering female lambs and selling livestock. Once this downward spiral starts, it tends to accelerate in spite of all efforts to cut down on consumption — the disparity between the minimal rate of consumption and the productivity of the declining capital grows geometrically. The figure of 60

adult sheep and goats seems at the time of my field-work to have been regarded the threshold below which a downward movement was inevitable for a normal household. If large flocks on tenancy terms are not available (and crises of this kind are generally set off by natural events which strike all, and reduce the already small number of herds available on such contracts), then such household, must seek other temporary source, to augment their income, all of them connected with sedentary communities.

There are a number of temporary and seasonal occupations of this kind open to the nomad; in harvesting, or guarding winter crops and stores, or as shepherd for a village flock, or by using donkeys in local transport or trading. Common to all these are the need for the nomad to establish an enduring association with one particular village or another and to be stationary during periods of his work for that village. While this opens the way for the development of more intimate bonds with villagers both personal and economic, it also usually accelerates the rate of reduction of the nomad's remaining herd by interfering with the normal migratory cycle. The result thus tends to be further loss of animals, loss of contact with the nomad's own tent group, increased dependence on sources of income within a village, and eventual integration into the sedentary community in the status of propertyless villager.

That the process of sedentarization, of "passing" from nomadic to settled society, should have these two basic form, might in fact have been deduced from first principles by comparing the status systems of the tribe and the South Persian villages. The situation might be diagrammatically expressed as in figure 7. In the village, there is an extreme gulf between the privileged and wealthy landowner and the subject and practically propertyless peasantry. In the tribe, common tribesmen are subject to their chief, but retain considerable rights and freedoms, and they have enough privately owned capital to permit them to be self-employed. In the wider Persian status system, tribesmen thus occupy a position intermediate between landowner and peasants; and in the South Persian tenancy villages there is no status

position on a corresponding level. For the bulk of the tribesmen, assimilation into village society in either of its major statuses is not feasible, even if it were desired: to be a landowner, they would require vastly larger capital than they in fact control, accompanied by an unrealistic increase in status, while to become a tenant would imply a shattering loss of status. Only the top and the bottom of the nomadic economic spectrum are at all comparable to the statuses found in the village community; and only for them can one see any motives that might encourage sedentarization: those near the top can thereby secure their capital and have their higher status confirmed; those near the bottom are already reduced to a position of poverty and submission like the tenant, and are driven to the village to secure work and their own survival.

Within the framework of Basseri social organization, economic processes are thus at work. The pattern of organization requires each adult man to have a certain minimum of wealth; and this wealth must be in the form of live herds of sheep and goats — a form continually dependent on replacement, and subject to unpredictable fluctuations of growth and loss. Radical departures from the middle range of wealth, except for the person of the chief, cannot be accommodated within the organization; and they must either be compensated for and thus corrected, or the deviant household must be eliminated from the tribe.

Various mechanisms have been described which set in and compensate (or fluctuations. In cases of loss of wealth, these are: reduced consumption, debts at interest rates appreciably lower than the rate of production of pastoral capital, postponement of the normal process of subdivision and multiplication of households by the marriage of sons, and occasional shepherding of the animals of others on advantageous terms. In cases of excessive accumulation of wealth, they are: increased consumption, decline in the rate of productivity of the capital, early subdivision of the household, and its division into an increased number of new units receiving disproportionate shares of the original estate. Where these mechanisms fail, as they frequently do, to compensate fully for growth or loss of herds, sedentarization takes place. In cases of excessive accumulation of wealth, the sedentarization process has a form where it remains subject to compensating mechanisms throughout, and socially has the appearance of a kind of reluctant upward mobility. In cases of impoverishment, its sets in after the compensatory mechanisms have failed, and is associated with a rapid economic collapse. As one would expect from these characteristics, all numerical evidence suggest, that sedentarization by impoverishment in the numerically predominant form

Chapter IX

DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

The previous chapters have sought to reveal the different processes which influence and determine Basseri social forms. Some of these processes are internal to the tribe, such as those governing the formation of camp groups; others have to do with the relations of the tribe to its environment, both physical and social. For the social organization to remain even moderately stable; these processes must produce an approximate balance. With respect to the relations between the tribe and its environment, this balance may be analysed in terms of several systems into which the tribe enters; and I have tried to show the place of the Basseri, in this respect, within the systems of the ecology, economy, and politics of South Persia. The Basseri maintain a short-term ecologic balance with the environment by migrations and winter dispersal, whereby the intensity of utilization of pastures is adjusted to the carrying capacity of the different pastures at the different seasons, while the long-term balance between flocks and pastures is beyond the control of the tribesmen, and depends mainly on natural growth rates on the one hand, and disease and taxation on the other. The Basseri also maintain an approximate economic and political balance with their external social environment, mediated through market exchanges, and the institution of centralized chieftaincy.

One further type of relation with the environment remains to be analysed. For the present form of organization to persist, the Basseri tribe must also have a moderately stable population — i. e. it must be in demographic balance. Since the tribe is only a partial isolate within the larger population of the area, the factors involved in this balance are both biological and social: on the one hand natural

fecundity and social accretion, on the other hand birth-control, death-rate, and mobility both in the forms of emigration and sedentari-zation.

Any systematic analysis of these factors requires demographic data of a type and reliability that does not as yet exist for the tribes. The numerical data which it was possible for me to collect first-hand on these topics are naturally very limited and incomplete, and can serve only to suggest some very general trends. However, their implications for the analysis of the organization of the tribe are so great that I feel they require some discussion.

The general level of nutrition and hygiene among the Basseri appears quite high. The population is generally healthy and robust, with an associated high fertility rate. With marriage taking place some time between the ages of 16-20 years, women have a long child-bearing period, and frequently a woman gives birth to her last child well after her eldest daughter gives birth to her first.

Reliable figures on the fertility rate of the tribe could only be derived from material collected over a long period, since the statements of informants on such a topic are hardly reliable. A certain index of this rate, however, is given by ordinary census counts. In a tent camp containing 32 living married couples, the average number of children at the time of my census was 4.25 per couple. In this sample are a scatter of couples from recently married to spouses who have passed their reproductive period. No couple in this camp was infertile, and only few cases of infertility were met with elsewhere in the tribe. Since few people know their own age, or the date of their marriage, it is impossible to break down this population into meaningful age categories. None the less, the figure 4.25 gives an indication of a high reproductive rate in the population.

Of the controls on natural growth, birth control is limited to herbal medicines of doubtful efficacy, and these are used mainly by women who have already produced a number of children, since plentiful issue are invariably desired by both parents. In view of the generally healthier conditions in the tent camps than in villages, one would expect infant and child mortality to be appreciably lower than in the villages of the area, though doubtless high by European standards. Even during migration, infants are not exposed to particular rigours, e.g. of heat or cold, that could cause exceptional deaths.

Periodic plagues and epidemics, on the other hand, such as till recently ravaged the area, have been an important control on population growth in South Persia. Older informants remember disasters, when people died so quickly and in such numbers that they were left, unburied, along the roadside. Famines, on the other hand, never seem to have been a major direct threat, though periods of want may have had their effect in reducing the natural resistance of the tribesmen to disease.

All the evidence, indicates that the balance between the factors of natural fecundity, and the natural controls of death-rate and birth control gives a high net rate of natural growth within the tribe. This net rate is indicated by the size of adult sibling groups. Since in each generation there is a dispersal of kin, such data are difficult to collect and check. But in the Darbar section, in which I did most work, I found the representatives of 13 sibling groups in the general age range 20-50, the sizes of which I could check by questioning one or both of the surviving parents, as well as the members themselves. In these 13 sibling groups, I found the staggering figure of an average of 7.2 live members per sibling group.

The Basseri themselves are very well aware of this high rate of increase, and it is discussed with great pride. Thus 600 bilateral descendants were claimed for Haji Mohammed Khan, the father's father of the present chief, while Kal Ali Baz of Il-e-Khas bragged of having fathered 24 children from two wives, and the headman of ulad-e-Qazem, Kolumbei proudly reported that his deceased father, Haji Sultan Ali, has a total of 20 sons and sons' sons alive today.

There is no reason to think that this rate of increase is recent, or unique for the generation born 20-50 years ago. The figures on present fertility seem consistent with those of the previous generation; and in the period 1908-38 in which that generation was born, none of the effects of modern medicine could yet have been felt, even indirectly, in the nomad camp of Fare. One is thus forced to assume that a consistently high rate of growth has been a characteristic of the tribal population in previous times as well as today. The evidence from the living generations in the Basseri camps today -- 4.25 children per tent, and 7.2 persons per adult sibling group — suggests a net growth factor of at least 3 per generation, i. e. a trebling of the nomad population every 30-40 years. This general

picture is, furthermore, not unique for the Basseri; superficial acquaintance with neighboring Arab and Qashqai suggest comparable natural growth rates.

Since nomadic tribes of a basic economy and organization similar to the Basseri are of great antiquity in the area, one may be justified in assuming that the total tribal population is and has been in approximate demographic balance, i. e. that there are processes which drain off at least a major fraction of this natural increase in every generation. These processes are emigration, and sedentarization.

Repeatedly in the past, groups have defected from the tribe and the area, to move either northward to the Isfahan area arid beyond, or eastward into Kerman. During the rule of Agha Jan Beg (cf. p. 73) a number of such defections took place. For example, according to the traditions of the Il-e-Khas, a total of 300 tents left as a group to join in the new tribe then being formed by ZeI-e-Sultan, a son of Nasr-ud-Din Shah, in Isfahan, while about 30 tents of Il-e-Khas went east to Kerman, and a remnant of 8-10 houses only of that section remained behind as settlers near Band Amir, where their descendants live today. But reverse movements also take place, of tribal splinters from other places moving to the Basseri area; so it is doubtful whether the net effect of such movements serves to relieve or increase the population pressure among the Basseri and allied tribes.

The other process effecting a flow of population from the Basseri, and from nomadic life in general, is sedentarization. We have seen the economic processes which produce such a flow; and detailed inquiries into the families of members even of rapidly growing sections show that this drain on population growth is both considerable, and of long standing. The accompanying genealogy of male members of a patriline in one such growing section illustrates the role of seden-

[Figure 8 is here]

tarization in the history of a fairly representative family. Persons marked in black have remained in the tribe, while those in white have become settled. In the present adult generation, the person marked with (+) had in 1958 bought roof timbers and was considering settling in Marvdasht.

Another form of sedentarization is in large groups, preferably in compact settlements, such as that of several sections of the Ali Mirzai part of the tribe-in villages in their traditional summer pastures in Chardonge. Most of the current sections of the Basseri also have recognized collateral settled branches in some localities. Thus, e. g. the Farhadi have the following subdivisions:

[Figure 9 is here]

This high frequency of sedentarization raises certain difficulties in the interpretation of the demographic data. It suggests a mechanism whereby a net population increase may be drained off; it also, if it has any appreciable frequency, may give a bias to the very data on which the rate of this increase is estimated. The analysis of sedentarization (pp. 105-11) uncovered certain selective factors in the recruitment of settlers, one of which is the absence of male issue. I also tried to show in the analysis of the organization of the camp the particular importance of numerous siblings and children for securing a person's position in nomad society. There is thus reason to believe that child-less couples, couples with only daughters, and persons belonging to small sibling groups show a higher frequency of sedentarization than do highly fertile members of larger sibling groups. The former thus tend to be removed from the nomad population, and statistical data on fertility collected on a sample of adults within the nomad camps will give exaggerated averages of the size of sibling groups. The actual effect of this selective factor is difficult to evaluate — that it should be a major factor in creating the impression of a high fertility and natural growth rate is, however, out of the question.

The considerable growth of the Basseri tribe over the last generations doubtless reflects an internal growth of the population, as well as the process of accretion whereby foreign nomad groups become attached to dynamic and effective chiefs. But even from those sections which have grown most rapidly there has been a constant flow of settlers. It is clear that the net growth rate of the population must be so high that a group may grow quickly by natural increase even while giving off a major fraction of the excess growth of population through individual and collective sedentarization. Furthermore, whereas the tribe as a whole is growing, some of its component sections are experiencing a decline. The fertility rate within these sections, as revealed by my censuses of a few small camps, seems to be as high as in the growing sections; but a far greater number of households are becoming sedentary. The difference between growth and decline in a section depends on differences in their rates of sedentarization and possibly emigration, and not on a difference in their fertility rates.

In evaluating the demographic effects of sedentarization, the opposite movement of persons from the village to the tribe must be considered, and the net balance estimated. There are today members of the tribe who were born of tenant parents in villages, and have become nomads through choice, usually after a period of service as shepherds for others; and there is a greater number of nomads who trace descent from sedentary ancestors two, three or more generations removed, as do even some whole *oulads* (e. g. Ali Marduni of Abduli) and sections (*Jouchin*, *Salvestuni*). The rates of movements into and out of the villages are according to the Basseri sensitive to economic and political conditions: in times of peace and strong administration, the flow towards the villages increases, while in times of economic stress and chaos, such as Persia has experienced at regular intervals throughout her history till today, villagers and even whole sedentary communities may assume nomadic life. The over-all balance, how-ever, as Judged from my own material and by Basseri, is overwhelmingly in the direction of sedentarization.

On the assumption that similar processes are at work in the other nomadic tribes of the Fars area, some puzzling features of the local history become understandable. A number of Ali Mirzai sections of the Basseri have completely disappeared within the memory of old people, without leaving any traces suggesting assimilation into the

rapidly growing Weisi sections. On a larger scale, recent South Persian history can report on large tribes and confederacies, such as, e. g. the Lak Lurs of Pars on which Karim Khan Zand based his power in the late 18th century (Sykes 1921 II: 277) — tribes which today have left no visible trace in the local nomad population. I found that tribal maps and lists of tribal names, collected and compiled at the time of the First World War, caused great mirth when I showed them to the Basseri, since, as they said, contemporary tribes and tribes long since defunct were there listed side by side. All this becomes understandable if it is possible that the rate of sedentarization, in certain circumstances, can rise well above a tribal group's fertility rate, leading to that group's complete elimination from the nomadic scene. This indeed is what happened within the Khamseh confederacy to the Ainalu in the 1870-80's, and the Baharlu around 1900.

There is, however, also the other side of the picture to consider: the capacity of sedentary society in Fars to assimilate settlers. If the estimated fertility rate of the Basseri is at all realistic and representative of the nomadic population of Fars, the populations involved in sedentarization are of no mean magnitude. The nomad population of Fars has been estimated variously at different times at roughly 100,000 (Curzon 1892, II: 112-14), 250,000 (Sykes 1921, II: 477-80), and 400,000 (Demorgny 1913: 92-129). Of these, Sykes' figures on the Khamseh correspond closely to estimates for that period which I was given by Ghavam; his estimate of a total of 250,000 is probably the best.

The sedentary population of Fars province has since 1945 experienced an explosive growth due to large-scale public health measures, largely under U. N. auspices, and is claimed now to be about 2 million; Field's estimate (1939: 211) of 500,000 in 1918 is perhaps conservative, but there is every reason to believe that it has until recently been less than 1 million.

The nomadic population of Fars has thus until the last decade or two constituted at least 1/4 of the population of the province; a growth and sedentarization rate like that implied in the data presented above then seems hardly credible, since it would mean that half the sedentary population in every generation was recruited from the

1 These date estimates by Basseri informants are confirmed from documentary sources by Lambton 1953; 159.

tribes, i. e. that the sedentary population of Fars was formerly unable to reproduce itself, and showed a very large population deficit. I have found no data on the demographic structure of villages in Fars; but there are strong suggestions that the fertility rate is low, infant mortality high, and emigration, both northward and abroad, common. Furthermore, there are also the dramatic population controls of epidemics and famine to consider. The nomads are less subject to contagion, since they live dispersed and tend to flee from contagion into the uninhabited hills and mountains when an epidemic strikes; and they are practically free from the threat of famine, with their large store of food in the form of herds. The villagers, on the other hand, are normally undernourished; they are packed together in unhygienic villages, often with a very poor and polluted water supply, and are therefore much more subject to contagion and to disease. Furthermore, all of Fars lies in the zone of Persia subject to locust invasions and consequent crop disasters and famines.

The effects of these conditions on the local sedentary population are revealed by occasional references in the literature. At times, travellers in Fars have found whole areas decimated and even depopulated as a result of plagues, typhus, and other epidemics (e. g. Rich 1836 II, who himself died as a victim of such an epidemic in Shiraz; Abbott 1857: 158, 180; Monteith 1857: 118; Sykes 1921, II: 515). For Persia as a whole, the population was estimated at 10 million in 1850, but in 1873, after two desolating visitations of cholera and famine, at 6 million (Gurzon 1892; II: 492). As well as striking the nomad population and reducing their population excess, such disasters have primarily served to keep down the reproductive rate of the villages and towns, and to clear whole areas for sedentarization by nomads. The patchwork ethnic composition of the settled districts in Fars can be explained as one result of such a series of accidental exterminations and resettlements.

The demographic data needed to evaluate these trends properly are lacking; the few figures included in this discussion can only serve to suggest the possible order of magnitude of the population imbalances and movements in Fars. But all the data fit the general schema which I have outlined: that considerable nomad populations have consistently produced a large population excess in every generation, which through sedentarization has been assimilated into villages, and

there has served to close a major gap between a low fertility rate and a high death rate in the sedentary population. The present form of nomad organization cannot persist unless this population excess is drawn off somehow — an accumulation of population would lead to overtaxing of pastures and flocks, economic collapse, and new organizational needs — a complex of phenomena that will be explored further in the next chapter. A comprehensive analysis of Basseri social organization can thus not be made without reference also to these interrelations between the nomadic and settled populations.

Chapter X

THE FORMS OF NOMADIC ORGANIZATION

IN SOUTH PERSIA

It should now be possible to draw together some of the major features of the preceding description and analysis. In the presentation so far, I have focused specifically on the Basseri tribe of the Khamseh con-federacy, among whom my participant observation was done. But in the analysis of this material I have tried to show how the forms of Basseri organization reflect various features of their cultural premises and environment. In other words, I have tried to discover the fundamental processes whereby Basseri forms of organization are produced and maintained. Since the relevant features of the environment, and most of the cultural premises current among the Basseri, seem to have a wide distribution in Fars and adjoining areas, the processes which affect nomadic life elsewhere in South Persia should be essentially similar to those observed among the Basseri. The model of Basseri organization which I shall summarize should therefore also be useful in elucidating the organizational forms of neighboring tribes, and in explaining variations in form in terms of limited variations in the relevant factors of environment and culture.

Firstly, the various aspects of the ecologic and economic adaptation of the Basseri must be drawn together and their interrelations explored, to determine whether the activities and processes described are sufficient to maintain a stable population through time. The Basseri cultural premises which are relevant to this are essentially summed up in the principle of individual private ownership of animals. While pastures are shared within oulads and may be reallocated between them, the productive capital in animals which is necessary for a nomadic

subsistence is private property, and nomadic households can only survive when their members own a sufficient amount of such property.

The stability of a pastoral population depends on the maintenance of a balance between pastures, animal population, and human population. The pastures available by their techniques of herding set a maximal limit to the total animal population that an area will support; while the patterns of nomadic production and consumption define a minimal limit to the size of herd that will support a human household.

In this double set of balances is summarized the special difficulty in establishing a population balance in a pastoral economy: the human population must be sensitive to imbalances between flocks and pastures. Among agricultural, or hunting and collecting people, a rude Malthusian type of population control is sufficient. With a growing population, starvation and death-rate rise, until a balance is reached around which the population stabilizes. Where pastoral nomadism is the predominant or exclusive subsistence pattern, the nomad population, if subjected to such a form of population control, would *not* establish a population balance, but would find its whole basis for subsistence removed. Quite simply, this is because the productive capital on which their subsistence is based is not simply land, it is animals — in other words food. A pastoral economy can only be maintained so long as there are no pressures on its practitioners to invade this large store of *food*. Once it has been consumed, the population can no longer pursue a pastoral subsistence. A pastoral population can therefore only reach a stable level if other effective population controls intervene *before* those of starvation and death-rate.

A first requirement in such an adaptation is the presence of the patterns of private ownership of herds, and individual economic responsibility for each household. By these patterns, the population becomes fragmented with respect to economic activities, and economic factors can strike differentially, eliminating some members of the population without affecting other members of the same population. This would be impossible if the corporate organization with respect to political life, and pasture rights, were also made relevant to economic responsibility and survival.

With this basic adaptation, the various processes described in previous chapters suffice to maintain a balance between pastures, herds, and people — they combine to produce a self-regulating "feed-back"

system. To demonstrate this, the mechanisms of short-term and long-term balance are most readily discussed separately.

A short-term balance between pastures and herds is maintained by the pattern of migration, whereby the herds are dispersed or concentrated according to the productivity of the pastures, and utilize widely separated pasture areas at their different periods of productivity I have shown in greater detail elsewhere (Barth 1960) the way in which the different tribes of Pars, through an organization in terms of regular migration routes and schedules, together utilize the pastures of Pars approximately to their total carrying capacity through the year.

The short-term balance between herds and human population is maintained individually by the different households. If they approach the minimal limit to the required size of herd, they reduce their level of consumption, obtain credit from villagers, and postpone the normal process of subdivision, thereby permitting their flocks to increase to a point where normal patterns may be resumed.

The effects of these balances between private herds and households however, is to produce a correlation between the growth of the total herds of a tribe and the growth of its population. We have seen that the Basseri fertility rate is high; here we see, furthermore, that it is not sensitive to a growing pressure of larger herds on the available pastures. In other words, a long-term balance between pastures, herds and people is not maintained by changes in the human fertility rate.

The discussion of demographics demonstrated that the effective control on population growth is not starvation and thereby reduced fertility and increased death-rate, but, as one would expect from the considerations advanced here, other controls, primarily that of sedentarization. A long-term balance between pastures, herds and people and a consequent stable pastoral population can only be maintained if the rate of sedentarization is sensitive to the population pressure of animals on the pastures.

This condition does in fact obtain. Of the two forms of sedentarization described, each shows a correlation with different phases of growth in the total size of herds. With growing herds, the frequency of sedentarization by upward mobility — the accumulation of wealth and its transfer to landed property — increases. In payment for such land, animals are drawn off from the Basseri herds and transferred to sedentary buyers, and both the human and animal population of the

tribe are thus reduced. As for sedentarization through impoverishment, this strikes in a later phase of growth. While the nomadic human population is not directly subject to Malthusian controls, the animal population is. Overpopulation results in poor health and reduced fertility among the flocks. And most important, this poor health and the increased density makes the animal population increasingly susceptible to epidemic animal diseases. Such diseases sweep the area and reduce the animal population; what is more, they strike randomly and differentially in the privately owned herds of the pastoralists, reducing some of them below the minimum required for a pastoral subsistence, while hardly touching others. Those struck in that way are forced by impoverishment to become sedentary, while those whose flocks remain above the minimum are unaffected. Because of the pattern of economic organization, animal epidemics thus serve as a control not only on the size of the animal population, but also on the human nomad population of the area.

The manner in which the growth of the nomad population is checked by controls different from the ultimate controls of starvation and death rate should thus be clear. Because of the nomads' different techniques for maintaining short-term balance between pastures, herds, and households, the size of the animal population reflects the size of the human population. But animal population growth beyond a certain point tends to be checked by controls, which strike in such a way as to increase the rate of sedentarization, and thus reduce also the human population. It is an essential prerequisite for a stable pastoral population that such controls are effective, and that they precede the biological controls on human populations of reduced fertility and increased death-rate.

Such an essentially stable nomadic population offers the basis for the development of the social forms exhibited by the Basseri. On this same foundation, varying forms of organization may be developed. Perhaps most striking in South Persia is the variation in political forms. While the Basseri have essentially a single, autocratic chief, ruling a homogeneous, population of subjects, the Qashqai to the west have a much more complex hierarchy of leaders, consisting of chiefs,

headmen, and commoners; while in the areas to the East of the BasBerri, including some of the Arab tribes of the Khamseh and extending on towards Herman, are nomad tribes without any strong centralized chiefship at all. It is an interesting problem to explore the factors which may be responsible for such differences, on the background of the preceding analysis of the processes which affect Basseri organizational forms.

The areas that concern us differ somewhat in the scope they offer for a pastoral economy; they may be ranged on an ecologic east-west gradient. The areas in the west have higher mountain chains and greater precipitation; pastures are rich and the distances between good

winter and summer pastures small. Passing eastward the country becomes increasingly drier, and the area and quality, particularly of the summer pastures, decrease, terminating in the Lut desert.

On this ecologic background, the political forms found among the Qashqai and in Kerman may be analysed with reference to the model which has been presented of Baaseri organization. In my analysis of the Basseri I tried to show how the position and authority of the chief are related to the political constitution of the Basseri camps. In such a camp, the component tents are economically unconnected with each other, each man owns sufficient herds and has grazing rights by virtue of his oulad membership. Camp communities are maintained through the daily repeated process of reaching unanimity by mutual persuasion; and consequently no strong leaders, or crystallized factions, emerge within them. The chief, with some external sources of authority, is able to dominate such camps in autocratic fashion; in return for economic advantages for himself, and politico-military support, he contributes to the welfare of the tribe by mediating their relations with the sedentary society, and defends each man's rights to pastures through regulating the migrations.

The homogeneity of the camp, on which its political constitution is based, is a result of the characteristic patterns of sedentarization. Since wealth in land is more secure than wealth in herds, few men have very large herds, but tend to transfer their excess wealth to land and become sedentary. Chiefs are also aware of the threat to their authority which the really big herd owners represent; they may exert pressure to remove them, or the big herd owners fear that the chief on some pretext will seize their flocks, and are thereby induced to make

the change. The absence of such large herds, on the other hand, forces the impoverished nomad also to become sedentary, since few positions as servants and shepherds can be found.

If the possibility to transfer capital from animals to title in land is blocked, one may predict certain definite changes in this organization. Big herd owners would retain their wealth in herds and not be removed from the camp community; to tend and guard their flocks they would need to employ additional labour, and a fraction of the impoverished nomads would thus also be able to remain in camp, tied to wealthy employers. In other words, very considerable differences in status and power would develop in the camp, with clear consequences for the decision-making process within that group. It is reasonable to assume that patterns of effective leadership, and the crystallization of factions and a wider ramifying hierarchy of leaders would result. A central chief confronted with this situation would need to develop certain coercive organs to support his authority.

From what I have been able to learn about the Qashqai, this is roughly the organizational pattern which they exhibit. The Qashqai, of course, are a unit of the structural order of the whole Khamseh; but within the component tribes of the Qashqai, of sizes comparable to the Basseri, there appear to be a considerably greater internal hierarch-ization of political offices, and greater difference in wealth, than are found among the Basseri. The Amaleh of the Qashqai, corresponding to the Basseri Darbar, also seems to have much more the character of a specialized coercive institution and bodyguard, paralleling the forms found among other nomad groups further north (Earth 1953: 52).

Though I have no clear evidence on the patterns of sedentarization within the tribe, their environment is such as to suggest the absence, until recently, of sedentarization by upward mobility. This follows in part from the ecologic factors noted above. With the richer pastures and partly shorter migration routes in the West, the nomad population has a more secure subsistence and is able to concentrate in larger numbers. Villages in the area, on the other hand, are poorer, and administrative control was until recently very defective. The balance

of power is therefore far more in favour of the nomads; property, crops, and even landed titles are far less secure than in the central areas of Fars. Land purchase and sedentarization thus become far less attractive, and the very economic considerations which encourage that course in the Basseri areas militate against it in the areas under Qashqai control. In the greater complexity of the Qashqai political hierarchy one may thus recognize the effects of many of the same processes as in the simpler autocracy of the Basseri; and considerable differences in organization may thus be derived from relatively subtle differences in the underlying determinants.

In Kerman, on the other hand, strong centralized chiefship is absent, though there is no reason to assume the camp organization of the nomads in that area to be different from that of the Basseri. However, other differences are undeniable. While oasis agriculture continues to be relatively profitable, the area is marginal in terms of the bases it offers for pastoral nomadism. The almost imposed nature of chieftaincy in the Khamseh-Basseri organization (cf. pp. 89-90) is relevant to this. The power of the chief is based mainly on sources outside the tribal system, and does not arise in or become delegated from the scattered nomadic camps. The chief can impose his authority on the Basseri, and be of use to them, because their environment is still so rich as to permit considerable concentration and highly regular movements in the *il-rah*. In the poorer pasture areas to the east, these conditions do not obtain. The density of population must be much lower, and the movements of camps are more erratic, since success in herding depends on the utilization of irregular occurrences of grass and water. The control of such a population is much more difficult, and for the herdsmen themselves such control implies a restriction on their adaptability, rather than a guarantee of their pasture rights. Furthermore, the rewards of chieftaincy are fewer in a poorer environment, so the incentive to invade that status, as did the Ghavam family of Shiraz, is lacking. The possibility for a chief to establish and maintain himself successfully in the dual role of autocratic nomad leader, and respected member of the sedentary *elite*, is thus severely reduced.

The tract of land utilized by the Basseri would seem to lie close to the limits of the area in which centralized nomadic organizations of this type can be maintained. Among the Arab tribes east of them, the extent of centralization appears to have fluctuated considerably;

and with the dissolution of the Khamseh confederacy those groups formerly under central control by Shaibani and Jabbare shaikhs have broken apart, even though the group have continued a nomadic life.

[End of the really great stuff]

A further and related factor in centralization and the maintenance of confederacies appears to be trade. There are suggestions that the existence of trade routes through the areas occupied by a nomadic tribe tends to correlate with the degree of centralization in that tribe. This might be expected, since such trade increases the number and importance of contacts with sedentary authorities, and thus the potential external sources of authority which support centralized chiefship. The interests of the Ghavams in the tribes increased the centralization

of the nomadic political organizations, and the development of the Khamseh confederacy is thus related to large-scale transit trade through the Gulf ports to Shiraz. The growth in the political importance of the Qashqai confederacy, on the other hand, correlates with the redirection of most English trade through Bushire and the Qash-qai area.

Through such centralization and wider interconnections, the nomad tribes become involved in the political dynamics of whole provinces, and at times of the state itself. The development of the Khamseh and Qashqai confederacies in Fars served to polarize the political interest groups in the area into two main factions. In terms of their urban components, these factions have been very unstable; the tribes, on the other hand, have been stable in their alignment in a simple chequer-board pattern. Thus the Khamseh stand against their neighbours the Qashqai; the Mamassani, north of the latter, are aligned with the Khamseh, while the Boir Ahmed, north of them again, align with the Qashqai. Such a chequer-board pattern is clearly related to the border maintaining effects of inter-tribal hostility (cf. pp. 84 ff.). A forceful chief can impose his authority on camp groups of friendly neighbouring tribes, thereby encroaching on the authority of allied chiefs and even supplanting them. The borders between the maximal political units, or confederacies, can only be maintained if active hostility prevents any exercise of chiefly authority across such borders. A stable alliance between independent units is therefore best established if these units at no point come into territorial contact; and the application of this principle produces a chequer-board pattern.

Finally, the problem of the ethnic diversity among South Persian

tribes, and the mechanisms of its persistence, should be discussed. The nomadic Arab population of Fars has according to its own tradition maintained itself without further transplantations of Arabs for more than 1,000 years, while the Turkish populations appear to have arrived in the 12th to 14th centuries. Though living among Persian villages and often subject to Persian administration, in both these groups are found persons and whole sections who know no Persian. Yet there is nothing to suggest any great stability in these populations and their groupings; whole new tribes emerge, while others disappear as have, e.g., the Lek and allied Lur tribes of most of Fars.

It is important first of all to be clear what the meaning of the ethnic appellations "Arab", "Turk" etc. are. A Western observer will tend to emphasize language as the crucial criterion, and in a very general way will find a correlation between the ethnic name applied to a group, and the language spoken by that group. Local people on the other hand use these same names in referring to tribes as political units. I was frequently corrected, e.g. when saying that the Baharlu are Turkish - "Turk" is used as a name for members of the Qashqai confederacy, whereas the Baharlu are members of the Khamseh and therefore "Arab". The frequent confusion in the literature, assigning Arabic language or origin to the Basseri (e.g. Morrier 1837- 232 Field 1939: 216) arises no doubt from this confusion of the political and linguistic reference of the "ethnic" name.

However, ethnic appellations may also be used to refer to origin or language. Thus, e.g. the Kashkuli are one of the larger tribes of the Qashqai confederacy; they are therefore "Turks" and do in fact also speak Turkish. But they have traditions of being originally Lurs of one of the old Farsi tribes which used to migrate in the present Basseri channel between Jahrom and Dehbid (cf. also Field 1939- 219 who notes this tradition). It is interesting to note that the Ahl-e-Ghon section of the Basseri has a tradition of origin from the Qarachei, one of the subdivisions of the Kashkuli (cf. p. 52). Historically, the process may have been the reverse, with the Ahl-e-Gholi representing a rem-nant of the Qarachei in their original locality.

This leads on to the problem of the genesis of tribes and sections —the rate of disappearance of such groups presupposes a certain rate of emergence of new groups. The process of natural growth and segmentation has been discussed; with only imperfect mechanisms for the

emergence of internal segments within the recognized units, ordered subdivision by segmentation would seem to require the administrative interference of the chief (pp. 61-68). But since these divisions are at times also in the interest of the chief himself, there is no reason to doubt that they constitute a common pattern for the multiplication and formation of new social groups. In such cases of natural growth and multiplication of units, the new groups will clearly be identified with the same linguistic and ethnic group as was the parental unit.

However, there are clear examples also of a different pattern of growth, which might be characterized as aggregational; and in such cases the question arises of the ethnic classification of the new groups. I have mentioned how the Basseri Darbar shows this aggregational pattern, growing partly by accretion. A group of similar origin among the Arabs has become an independent tribe. This small tribe (200 tents) under its chief Morteza Khan is known as the Amaleh; it became independent in the time of his father's father, Fate Ali Khan. He was simply leader of the camp group surrounding Amir Saleh Khan Shaibani, the central chief of the Shaibani Arabs. Like similar groups elsewhere (the various Amaleh of Arab and Qashqai chiefs, the Darbar of the Basseri, the Arbabdar of the Kurdshuli) this group grew by accretion from outside the tribe as well as within, and became composed of persons of Arab, Farsi, Turkish and Luri origin; their common language was Persian. When Amir Saled Khan died, the political unit around him dissolved, and his Amaleh declared itself independent. Today it is a purely Persian-speaking group, but calls itself, and is called by all, "Arab".

Growth by aggregation presupposes a basic common interest and advantage for members who join the group, in much the same way as kinship affects camp formation within oulads. The most important such common interest of strangers in banding together seems to have been military, and new pastoral nomadic units may develop from simple robber bands. Thus according to Basseri informants, the Qashqai group known as Jam-e-Buzurgi (The Big Gathering) was until a few years ago a small camp group of less than 20 tents. During the war and later in the period of breakdown of administration under Mossadeq, its members took to banditry, and therefore attracted outsiders so that it has grown by accretion to become an independent oulad of 60 tents.

On a larger scale, the whole Kurdshuli tribe has a similar original. Its nucleus may have been formed by a few camps who broke away from the Qashqai; as an independent unit it is generally credited with an age of no more than 50 years. During the First World War the group was engaged in robbery and did not migrate to the south in the winter (Sykes 1921, II; 481); today it numbers 600-700 tents of pastoral nomads, divided into several sections, each composed of persons of widely varying descent, mainly from different sections of the Qashqai and the Mamassani. In language, most members are bilingual in Turkish and Luri; by others the tribe is usually classified as Turk, sometimes as Lur.

In other words, these aggregational groups are classified ethnically with the political unit with which they are identified, or the ethnic group of origin of their original core. The language spoken by the group may well be different from this. The factors determining the language to be adopted seems to be the language(s) spoken by its constituting members, and the contacts which the group maintains. An understanding of the political structure is necessary to evaluate what these contacts are. Since the chief mediates most contacts with sedentary society, the fact that the nomadic population lives dispersed as a minority in a large host population of Persian language and culture is hardly relevant to its linguistic milieu. The institution of centralized chieftainship effectively insulates the tribesmen from contacts with his environment, and establishes them as a centripetally oriented linguistic community, with a few contacts with neighbouring friendly tribes. The persistence of different languages in the same general area is therefore readily understandable; only in cases where aggregational growth patterns produce camps of strongly mixed membership in terms of language does Persian, as the "lingua franca" of the area, become established. Since, however, the ethnic appellations of "Turk", "Lur" etc. mainly refer to tribal, political position, such persistence or change in language does not affect the ethnic classification of the group.