

Outline for text for THE KALANTAR

To be a Kalantar of one of the Bakhtiari tribes is to be a leader, a man of honour and of prestige. Above all a Kalantar is a man who has managed to master the mountains, manipulating his varied and insecure environment rather than being dominated by it. It is a hostile, ^{world} ^{within} ~~changeable~~ often unpredictable ~~environment~~ which the Bakhtiari live in where daily decisions affecting the flocks or the tribesmen themselves must be made. An indecisive or ineffective Kalantar will quickly lose support ~~a~~ the respect and sometimes the following of his people. Poor decisions concerning movement high in the mountains can lead to loss of both animal and human lives. A kalantar must be experienced and knowledgeable if he ~~and~~ his group are ^{and the flocks} ~~going~~-to thrive.

Under the ecological conditions faced by the Bakhtiari on their migrations there is ^{no place} ~~little room~~ for a leader without a lifetime experience of the mountains. He has to be able to judge the changeable weather conditions, learn to know when the rivers which have to be crossed will ~~be~~ not be running too full, when the mountain passes will not ^{be snow bound} be impassable. To be caught on a cliff face by a rain storm can lead to instant disaster. Whole flocks of sheep can be caught by sudden snow falls and die in a single night. A successful Kalantar must also be a man of luck (BAKHT). Good fortune or luck plays a considerable part in the career of any leader, success coming to those with the skill, daring and often sheer audacity to minimise disaster and capitalise on the chances presented to them by circumstances.

The hazards of the mountains are not the only unpredictable element in the life of Bakhtiari tribesmen and their leaders. The social environment too is one that requires constant manipulation. A Kalantar is a political leader,. He mediates between members of his own group in their myriad conflicts and also acts as their representative in their relations with other Bakhtiari groups and with non Bakhtiaris.

His reputation, his public persona is a vital component of a leaders ability to both lead and mediate - and reputation comes with effectiveness, with success, Some are more effective than others in consolidating their position , others have been overthrown, either forcibly by a more dominant rival, often a close relative, or merely by the nomads taking their problems and disputes to a potential rival.

In recent times, this century the position of a KALANTAR has become more complex as the social environment has become more differentiated. The Bakhtiari are no longer so isolated in their mountains as they once were, and the Kalantars now have to deal increasingly with representatives of the central government, with a wide range of government officials as their mountains are gradually being opened up to the outside world. Now a Kalantar has to be literate, has to be fluent in Persian to deal effectively with modern law courts, agricultural offices, gendarmes etc.

A very wide range of talents is now required for successful leadership but concomitantly the rewards of such office are far greater than ever before for the Kalantar. Just as he has to be a good manager in the pastoral context he now has the possibility of extending his interests from animals, to land, agriculture and the many business interests open to an enterprising leader such as trucking, building trading monopolies. This involves dealing with non Bakhtiari people Persians of the vilages and towns in the areas surrounding Bakhtiari territory. Success in one sector of interests feeds into the other sectors, The social world in which a modern Kalantar lives extends far beyond the confines of the pastoral existence on the mountains. Some Kalanatr's have more oportunites of this nature open to them than others. Active participation in the wider economy can pay large dividends within the pastoral sector, reinforcing the wealth and political position of an enterprising Kalantar, over the more nomadic pastoral Bakhtiari followers. In the history of the Bakhtiari this tendency for leadership to be reinforced by economic and political activities outside if the pastoral sector is apparant. Wealth based exclusively on animals is subject to a wide variety of checks - both ecological and political. Large herds are more difficult to manage and un the mountainous conditions of the bakhtiari 200 is considered to be the maximum size of flock which can be effectively herded together.

A Kalantar, who may have ~~between two hundred and a thousand~~ animals will therefore have to split his total flocks into several herds ~~with~~ hiring shepherds or occasionally distant relatives to herd the animals. He has not the same sort of control over his animals and a proportion of the animals are paid to the shepherd for his services under a variety of either short term or long term contracts.

This is the means whereby impoverished nomads can slowly rebuild a flock of their own, and stay within the nomadic complex. Otherwise with the loss of one's animals the only alternative is to eke out a desperately poor existence on or even below subsistence level or move out of the mountains to settled villages or neighbouring towns. Settlement through impoverishment is common among the nomads, but again this depends on such factors as the possible proximity of settled villages, possibility of low income employment in the towns which is insecure. For the poor the alternative of staying within the mountains where there are kinsmen and the possibility of contract shepherding is often preferred. Those whose territory lies on the edges of the mountains at least have the possibility of moving to the towns, where many join the growing numbers of unemployed and unemployable. illiterate and inexperienced in town life.

Those sections of the Bakhtiari who live permanently high in the mountains have no such alternatives and they commonly supplement their flocks by theft from passing migrating tribesmen. The life style of those groups in a real sense exhibits much of the most tribal traditional features of pastoralists. They live far from authority of the central government, no roads reach THEIR TERRITORY, and are subject to the highly competitive conditions of pastoral life, where everyone, leaders and impoverished alike are subject to the same sort of ecological ~~controls~~ checks to their animal wealth. This region of the mountains has always been the most insecure, with constant raiding, looting, theft, no one group being able to permanently dominate any other. A fluid balance of power existed in this region with minimally developed leadership roles and positions. Only those who practice agriculture and can defend their crops of wheat - an almost full time job - can amass wealth and therefore power to any degree. The people who inhabit this region, - the mowri are notorious within the Bakhtiari for their lawlessness, both in the past and at the present time. All migrating tribes pass through their territory and are considered fair game for theft. They have a well deserved reputation for being poor herders but excellent thieves.

There are many desperately poor Bakhtiari nomads in the mountain. The Bakhtiari as a whole exhibit the widest possible spectrum of economic circumstances, ranging from those living part of the year in caves and part in ragged tents, living on a diet of acorn bread in the absence of any wheat and the milk products of whatever animals they have left. Malnutrition is common among such groups with a very high infant mortality rate. At the other end of the economic scale are the Kalantars of wealthy Bakhtiari groups, who often have two houses, one in the summer pastures and one in the winter quarters as well as a tent for migrating. Such Kalantars may also have town residences where they conduct their official government and business activities. These Kalantars have social links as far as the capital Tehran which they can utilize as and when needed. The boundaries of the relevant world for the Kalantar are as wide as he can make them.

The process whereby a Kalantar ascends the ladder of success is not new. The first prerequisite is always to be a good - an efficient and successful pastoralist. The wealth accrued in animals is then invested increasingly in agricultural land which is more stable, and the process of diversifying one's economic base can then take off. Under contemporary conditions the possibilities for enterprising Bakhtiaris are limited by the political conditions prevailing both within and outside of the Bakhtiari area.

This entails factors from the past as well as the history of tribe-s~~ae~~ relations in Iran. The social position of ~~KL~~ntars toaday is a reflection of ~~pas~~t the participation in Bakhtiari politics in the past. The wealth of any tribe - Taifeh is in part determined by the active political role played in the history of the Bakhtiari by that taifeh. Those who fought in tribal contests for power and won now live and co trol areas of better pasture. Tjose who were defeated were shifted by the successful to lest fertile areas of the mountains and often to more isolated heights.

Just as there is great differnces in wealth within the BAKHTIARI AS A WHOLE, ONE FINDS considerable differences between Taifeh groups and thier keaders. S_ome are wealthy, and live lifes which could scarcley be called nomadic, organising their pastoral cum agricultural interests rather in the manner of a city based business man, paying sporadic in regular visits into the mountains to keep a close eye on their property - animals and land. This sort of leadership "at a distance" is increaingly possible in contemporary conditions where the central Government has taken over much of the administrative durties of the traditional Bakhtiari leaders. In the past this ~~p~~rocess led to the increasing alienation of tribal leaders from their tribal base and the gradual transformation in to a village and then city based elite, an tribal elite which in the 1930's was finally broken and totally detached from their tribesmen.

Contemporary Kalanatr are faced with a social world which is now totally dominated by central Iranian institutions, and rarely if ever play more than a very local political role. Economically many are highly successful, but less as Bakhtiari Kalantars, than Persians with both animal and agricultural ND BUSINESS INCOMES.

Khans

Up till the second decade of the present century, with the appearance of the dominating and effective Pahlavi dynasty the political situation in Persia was such that the tribal groups in the Zagros were semi independent, and the tribal leaders - Khans, played a political role outside their mountain territories - particularly the Bakhtiari. At the height of Bakhtiari power these Khans dominated the political life of much of southern Iran, ruling their tribal population autocratically in as tribal leaders, and vast stretches of Isfahan and Khuzistan provinces on either side of their mountains more as feudal landlords.

They began to play an increasing role in the political life of the nation, culminating in their dominance for a period after the constitutional revolution on 1908, of the central government.

The discovery of oil by the British in Bakhtiari territory in 1905 further enhanced their economic and political position of the tribal Khans. This in turn made possible the autocratic dominance of the tribal Bakhtiari by the Khans, supported as they were by foreign powers, primarily the British.