The Dirakvand, whose winter camping grounds were in the plain north of Dizful known as Sahra-i Lūr (with a long u), were perhaps the most interesting tribe of Bala Gariva, both for historical reasons and because the process of disintegration had gone further and, if I may use the expression, more neatly than in the others. The members of the former ruling family claimed descent from Shahverdi Khan and were in consequence styled ‘Mir’. At some stage the two largest ryot clans had been divided between two brothers, Mir Abbas and Mir Ali, the Baharvand going to the former and the Qalavand to the latter. But in course of time the ryots had succeeded in completely ousting their Mirs, who now formed two quite separate clans apart. In typical Lur fashion the Mir-Ali-Khanis were further divided into four collateral branches, or hūz, according to their descent from the four wives (Nisa, Qadam Khayr, Rahziya and Shahzaman) of the eponymous ancestor, each branch being known by the name of the lady. The family also claimed to be sayyids by reason of their descent, not indeed from the Prophet himself, but from his cousin Aqil.

Towards the end of June the heat together with stories of a beautiful, secluded valley called Mungara, only about forty miles to the north and so less than two days march away, a veritable second paradise blessed with icy springs, running streams, trees and fruits of every kind, combined to stimulate the urge to start feeling my way into Luristan. The first step was to send for the principal Mirs of the Ali-Khani branch, in whose territory Mungara lay, to make the necessary arrangements: each huz to give one hostage to be detained in the Agency pending my safe return, while the senior Mirs came with me, entertained me there, and escorted me back, when they would be suitably rewarded. Sartip’s brother, Mihr Ali Khan, would also come, while Sartip himself stayed behind to supervise the hostages and to be ready to act in case of treachery. My hosts-to-be did not in any way resent these customary precautions. My own party was to consist of Abbud, my gondolier-servant from Basra, Qurban Ali, the muleteers under Mashhadi Riza who always kept his animals in splendid condition, and four savars, two Kurds and two Sagvands.
Travel in the plain during the heat of the day being out of the question, we crossed the bridge towards sunset (3 July) to make a first short march of seven miles to a Sagvand camp at Salihabad (later the site of the railway-station of Andimishk!), where all were to assemble. We were received by Darab Khan in a large kula with a channel of water cunningly conducted all round it. As each traveller arrived our host would greet him by pronouncing first his name and then the formula *Khuda hafiz*, which corresponds exactly in literal meaning and in normal Persian, but not in Lurish, usage with our ‘Good-bye’. Most of the Mirs were trudging it on foot. The only one to have a horse was Mir Muhammad Shah, a sombre figure dressed entirely in black except for the green sayyid’s waistband, and looking as if he had just stepped out of an Assyrian rock-relief as he bowed so as to bring his long crinkly black beard down over two hands held stiffly at the waist, palms upward. The last to arrive was Mihr Ali: at the last moment the hostages had quite innocently disappeared into the Bazaar, and he had been obliged to round them up, see them securely but honourably confined in the guest-rooms at the Agency, and then gallop out the whole way to catch us up.

We set out again at half past one in bright moonlight, following here and there through the foothills traces of an ancient paved road, attributed by the Lurs to Shah Abbas but probably much older. At about seven we reached the Ab-i Anaraki, a stream coming down from the valley of that name to the east of Mungara, and halted for the day. We sat on a carpet in the shade of some reeds, and Mihr Ali’s men in charge of the abdarkhana soon brought us some very welcome tea. Old Mulla Ma Taqi, who had managed to borrow a nag in Dizful, was in his element, constantly mopping his forehead or blowing his nose on the end of the turban hanging down from his hat—a duty it had probably fulfilled for months without being washed—as he held forth and quoted verses on such themes as contentment with a bowl of curds and flap of acorn bread (a common but very constipating diet), or asked questions about the English: were we nomadic tribes or settled villagers? How much did we have to pay for a wife? And so on. Mir Muhammad Shah, in his turn, expatiated on the past glories of his family. As we talked I began to sense that a curious political significance was being attached to my visit and that, the wish being father to the thought, the Mirs had jumped to the conclusion that order was to be restored in Luristan and that the first step would of course be the reinstatement of the ruling family in authority over the upstart ryot kadkhudas.