Multi-Resource Nomadism in Iranian Baluchistan¹

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Many pastoral tribes of the Iranian plateau region migrate seasonally up to and down from the plateau or the mountains that make up its rim. The Khamseh and Qashqai confederacies of Fars province spend the winter on the plains between the southern Zagros and the Persian Gulf and make a major migration to the north past Shiraz to the upper valleys of the Zagros for their summer camping ground. As winter approaches, the migration out of the mountains and back to the plains takes place (F. Barth, 1964). The winter camp of the Bakhtiari is in Khuzistan; as summer approaches the arduous journey to the east across the central Zagros to the summer camping area in the vicinity of Isfahan begins. Migration back to Khuzistan takes place before the snowfalls block the route through the mountains (C. Coon, 1964; D. Brooks, personal communication). In Azerbaijan, the Shahsavan migrate from southern summer grazing areas in the Savalan and Buzgush mountain ranges to winter camping grounds in the Moghan plains to the north (R. Tapper, unpublished manuscript).

These are pastoral migrations. That is, the goals which the tribesmen aim to further by the migration are primarily those having to do with the welfare

¹ The first debt of an anthropologist is always to the people who put up with his intrusions, confusions, and heresies. Thus it is the Yarahmadzai, and especially the Dadolzai among whom my wife and I lived, who must first be thanked. That I have used their traditional name, rather than the current Iranian period “Shah Navazi”, is in no way meant to be a slight to them or the Iranian Government, but rather a sign that they too have a history and tradition that must be recognised along with the new imperative of integration into the broader modern world.

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