



ALĪ KĀY

ALĪ KĀY, a semi-nomadic Gīlakī-speaking tribe that winters in the foothills of the central Alborz; about three hundred families stay in the villages of the Garmsār plain, while another one hundred are dispersed among a dozen villages to the west of Karaĵ (Fašand, Valiān). This division is already mentioned by A. Chodzko, who mistakenly represents the members of the tribe as Persian (“Une excursion de Téhéran aux Pyles Caspiennes en 1835,” *Nouvelles annales des voyages* 23, 1850, pp. 280-308). He also mentions the Ošānlū Turks, with whom the Alī Kāy of Garmsār were associated in the plain and in the mountains.

Like the majority of lesser nomads of the Tehran region the Alī Kāy seem to have been part of one of the tribes brought since the 18th century by various sovereigns to the environs of the capital or kept there as hostages. In all probability they are a Turkish tribe deported to the Caspian plains by Karīm Khan Zand (J. R. Perry, “Forced Migrations in Iran During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *Iranian Studies* 8, 1975, pp. 199-215); hence their Gīlakī dialect. Later, under Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah, they moved to the south of the Alborz and associated with similarly displaced Turkish families (Ošānlū near Garmsār and the Turkish-speaking stock breeders of K̄vor and Hiv to the west of Karaĵ).

Some of the Garmsār Alī Kāy migrate over one hundred km to spend summers in the valley of the Lār and on the slopes of the Damāvand (B. Hourcade, “Les nomades de Lār face aux problèmes de l’expansion de Téhéran,” *Revue géographique de l’Est*, 1977, 1-2, pp. 37-51). But the majority go into the



mountains of Fīrūz Kūh and especially to the steppe-like plateaus dominating the middle valley of the Ḥabla-rūd, areas to which they have been limited by the nationalization of pastures. The encampments consist of a dozen or so round tents made of white canvas, or gray or white wool. Carpet weaving is practiced, even in summer in the mountains. Since 1975 most herds have been integrated under cooperative societies; thus the pastoral activity has lost its social and family character and become professional. In winter the cooperative also controls the livestock and sells forage and barley to the stockbreeders, who no longer produce any themselves. During the past century it appears that some of the Alī Kāy have settled down at Būlān in the Anti-Alborz to the north of Eyvān-e Key. The group that lives to the west of Karaĵ has lost most of its ethnic and cultural characteristics including its language; for the sedentary peasants of the region Alī Kāy is synonymous with stock-breeders. Like the Turkish-speaking nomads of K̄v or these Alī Kāy spend the summer in the high valley of Ṭālaqān.

On the whole the Alī Kāy have adapted themselves well to modern transportation and the production of cheese and butter. As a result there are fewer small owners, since those did not possess enough livestock to equip themselves. The agreements and associations between owners (*bona*) have disappeared and only a few families continue their migrations and pastoral mode of life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also A. K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, Oxford, 1953, index.