



## AYMĀQ

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**AYMĀQ** (Turk. OYMAQ), a term designating tribal peoples in Khorasan and Afghanistan, mostly semi-nomadic or semi-sedentary, in contrast to the fully sedentary, non-tribal population of the area. The local dialects of the Aymāq are very close either to the Fārsī of east Khorasan province or to the Herātī idiom of Fārsī Darī. The Čār Aymāq in western Afghanistan live in contiguous areas from Bādġīs, north of Herat, to the south of Ġūr. Their habitat is drained by the headwaters of the Ƙoškāb, Harī-rūd, Morġāb, and Farāh-rūd. From northwest to southwest they comprise 40,000 Jamšīdī, 60,000 Aymāq-Hazāra, 100,000 Firūzkūhī, and 180,000 Taymanī.

These tribes are ethnic formations of the 10th/16th and 11th/17th centuries; their grouping as four is in consequence a more recent administrative measure. There is consensus as to the composition of this grouping, among its members as well as among the other Aymāq. Ethnic groups of Iranian, Čaġatāy, Uzbek, Qepčāq, Eastern Turkic, Arab, and other origins have been unified by chiefs who originated outside their area. Among the Jamšīdī it was a branch of the Kayānī from Sīstān (tracing descent to the legendary hero Jamšīd, whence the tribal name has been derived), who had been invested as “Wardens of the Marches” in Bādġīs by Shah ‘Abbās II (*Taḍkerat al-molūk*, tr. V. Minorsky, p. 16). A Kākaṛ Pashtun from Baluchistan, Tayman, formed a coalition in Ġūr around 1650 (*Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan* III, Graz, 1975, p. 260; *Baluchistan District Gazetteer* I, Bombay, 1907, p. 69). The traditional chiefs of the northern Firūzkūhī, Zay Ḥākem, claim descent from Ačakzay Pashtun ancestors, whereas the tribe takes its name from



Firūzkūh, the capital of the Ghurid dynasty. After the downfall of the Safavid power and during the struggle for Herat in the 12th/18th and 13th/19th centuries, Bādġīs was haunted by marauding Turkmen; and all Aymāq at one time or another were involved in these international affairs. Changing intra-tribal coalitions and opportunistic siding with either of the contending powers resulted in intertribal feuds which facilitated the centralizing efforts of Amīr ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān at the end of the 13th/19th century and led to the breakdown of the power of tribal aristocracies. A new type of charismatic leader arose whose descendants still are of paramount importance in local politics. Members of the former aristocracy are still high ranking in prestige, holding government positions at various levels.

The events of the past 200 years forced the northern Aymāq to lead a nomadic life. The Jamšīdī, forcibly moved from one exile to the other, became indistinguishable from Turkmen in their way of life (Yate, *Northern Afghanistan*, p. 122). During this period, small groups of Aymāq-Hazāra and Jamšīdī settled in Persian Khorasan and Turkmenistan. (They now number about 2,000.) At the base of social organization, the extended family is still intact, functioning as a patriarchal household and also as a minimal economic unit. The tribes are segmented patrilineally into *ṭā’efas*, the larger ones subdivided into *awlād*, most frequently bearing the name of the fictitious founder or of the place of origin. There are 68 Jamšīdī *ṭā’efas*, 39 Aymāq-Hazāra, 44 Firūzkūhī, and 101 Taymanī. As far as their history can be traced, tribal unity never existed. Political power at the local level was maintained by coalitions based on marriage allegiances of the *ṭā’efa* chiefs. This pattern still prevails. Jamšīdī and Aymāq-Hazāra may be classed as semi-sedentary whereas Firūzkūhī and Taymanī are semi-nomadic. All the tribes use temporary housing during the summer season at varying degrees. In Bādġīs water and appropriate soil for irrigated agriculture are plentiful, and dry farming is also practiced. Conditions for herding are optimal, since the cattle can be kept grazing all year round (de Planhol, “La frontière,” pp. 1-16). Together with carpet weaving, these activities permit the production of a considerable surplus that can be sold at the markets of Herat and Qaḷ’aye Now. The narrow defiles of Ġūr provide only limited space for irrigated agriculture, and, due to scarce and irregular rainfalls, yields from dry-farming are poor. Severe winters with heavy snows limit the number of cattle.

Other semi-sedentary, semi-nomadic or nomadic Aymāq in western Afghanistan, chiefly in Herat province, are the Ġalmanī (600), Malekī (12,000),



Mīšmast (5,000), Sīāmūsā (300), Ṭāherī (17,000), Tīmūrī (33,000), and Zūrī (15,000). Another 25,000 Tīmūrī, descendants of nineteenth-century immigrants, live in Iranian Khorasan. They have incorporated small groups of Jamšīdī and Zūrī. Some now fully sedentary ethnic groups consider themselves, and are classified by the Herātī, as Aymāq: Bādġīsī (1,000), Čengīzī (6,000), Čaġatāy (2,000), Dāmanregī (200), Ġōrī (1,000), Kākerī (1,000), Maraydār (200), Mobarī (1,500), Qepčāq (17,000), and Kamedī (200). All of them have preserved their ethnic identity; but linguistically, economically, and in social structure and religion, they are fully assimilated to the Sunnite population of western Afghanistan. The Tīmūrī, once the most powerful of the “lesser” Aymāq, had their original homeland in western Bādġīs. Besides those still living there or in Khorasan, there are settled Tīmūrī south of Herat and near Šendand, as well as to the north of Ġaznī in Shi‘ite Hazāra country. A group of Pashtunized nomadic Tīmūrī has its winter quarters near Baġlān in northeastern Afghanistan. Some of the best qualities of “Herat Baluch” carpets are woven by Tīmūrī in Bādġīs, classified by the name of the respective *ṭā’efa* such as Kawdanī, Šērķānī, Ya‘qūbķānī, or Zakanī.

See also AFGHANISTAN IV: ETHNOGRAPHY; V: LANGUAGES.

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