



BANĪ LĀM

BANĪ LĀM, a numerous and historically important Shi'ite Arab tribe of northwestern Kūzestān, southern Lorestān, and adjacent parts of Iraq. Their range extends from the foothills of the Pošt-e Kūh south to the Tigris at 'Amāra, and east to the Karḡa south of Šūš. Once nomadic pastoralists, the Banī Lām are now mainly sedentary, growing a range of cereals (except rice) and raising sheep. Nomadic sections used regularly to cross the frontier, some moving south to 'Amāra district and others north to the foothills in summer. Their total numbers were estimated at 45,000 ca. 1910, and their population in Iran at 5,700 families in 1934, rising to 10,650 in 1945 (Lorimer, *Gazetteer* II, p. 1084; Field, pp. 195-96; *Persia*, pp. 378-79). They are organized in four divisions and sixteen sections, and are predominantly Shi'ite. A number of later tribes and tribal sections of Kūzestān (e.g., of the [Āl-e Kaṭīr](#)) are said to be of Lām origin (Field, pp. 195-96).

Their eponym was one Lām b. Ḥāreṭa, a chief of the Qaḥṭān in the Hejaz. Until the late 4th/10th century they were part of the Ṭayye' tribe, but when this disintegrated the Banī Lām made a name for themselves raiding the pilgrim route between Basra and Medina. Pushed out of northern Hejaz in the 9th/15th century, they moved to the lower Tigris-Euphrates region about 950/1550 (Oppenheim, II, pp. 320, 324; III, pp. 18-19). Late in the 10th/16th century they migrated to the east bank of the Tigris, taking territory from the Banī Rabī'a, whose chief was provincial governor (*wālī*) of Howayza for the Safavids. Subjected to punitive raids by the Mamluk pashas of Baghdad throughout the 11th/17th and 12th/18th centuries, they at times joined with the



Montafeq Arabs, or their Lor neighbors, or Iranian armies, in attacks on Baghdad and Basra, as during Nāder Shah's sieges of Baghdad in 1145/1733 and of Basra in 1156/1743 (Longrigg, pp. 93-94, 124-26; Lockhart, p. 68). During the troubled 1750s, before the establishment of Zand rule in southwestern Iran, they joined with the Moša'sa'īān (q.v.) against the Āl-e Kaṭīr in almost continuous war (Kasrawī, pp. 142-50).

In the 13th/19th century both Ottoman and Iranian governments intervened periodically to chastise the turbulent Banī Lām and their neighbors, without appreciable effect; inter- and intratribal feuding continued, as did raids on road and river traffic. During World War I the Banī Lām under Shaikh Ġazbān answered the Turks' call for a *jehād* and harassed the British forces holding the line of the Karḡa to protect the oil pipeline (Oppenheim, III, pp. 200-04). In the 1920s frequent disputes flared between the *wālī* of Pošt-e Kūh and the Banī Lām when they moved in from Iraq for the summer grazing, but during the next decade Reżā Shah's government troops effectively reduced the scale of migration and accelerated sedentarization.

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