



ESHĀQZĪ

ESHĀQZĪ (sometimes shortened as Sāqzī, Sākzī, or even Sāgzī; sg. Eshāqzay), an important Pashtun tribe of Afghanistan, member of the Panjpāy section of the Dorrānī confederation. It was the Afghan tribe with the largest pastoralist nomadic component in 1357 Š./1978: 10,600 families, i.e., nearly 60,000 persons or 7.5 percent of the total estimated nomadic population of Afghanistan, out of which only 1,941 (18%) were semi-nomadic. It is, however, difficult to estimate the total strength of the tribe since it also includes an unknown number of sedentary peasants and town dwellers (see DORRĀNĪ for old estimates). A figure of about 200,000, as suggested erroneously for Eshāqzī nomads alone, may not be too far off the mark (Tavakolian 1982a, p. 107, n. 4).

The geographical distribution of the tribe shows the dualism typical to those Pashtun tribes who have massively taken part in the colonization of North Afghanistan, a process in which the Eshāqzī played a leading role. Since Nāder Shah's times they had been located in southwest Afghanistan, around Nawzād and Mūsā Qal'a, from where nomadic families used to migrate with their flocks to the Gōr (Gūr) mountains in summer and to Dašt-e Bakwā in winter. They held several hereditary offices in the tribally-organized government of Aḥmad Shah (r. 1160-87/1747-73). In the late 18th century they took foot in northern Sīstān (Elphinstone, p. 399; *Gazetteer of Afghanistan* II, pp. 128, 184, 234). But the decisive step in the territorial expansion of the tribe dates back to late 19th century.

From 1886, the Eshāqzī under Tājū Khan of the Kānīkēl subtribe from Nawzād began to migrate to northwest Afghanistan (Tapper, 1973, pp. 63 ff.), and



infiltrations from southern Afghanistan went on during decades, until the 1960s (Tavakolian, 1979, p. 9). In the mid-20th century they therefore constituted a numerically important and socially dominant element of the population of northern Afghanistan, with colonies scattered from Golrān in the west to Qaṭaḡān in the east (Balland). The change of winter area from southwest to north Afghanistan enabled most of them to retain their former summer pastures in Ġōr. It would seem, however, that this picture has come to an end during the 1980s when most Eshāqzī of central north Afghanistan forcedly left for their original southern districts or refugee camps in southern Khorasan, where Eshāqzī tribesmen might constitute 2.7 percent of the Afghan refugees (Tapper, 1991, p. XVI; Papoli-Yazdi, p. 62).

In 1907, out of an estimated 20,000 nomadic Pashtun families who spent the winter in northern Afghanistan, 9,900, i.e., half of them, were reported to be Eshāqzī, of whom 7,000 lived in the present-day province of Jawzjān; the tribe, moreover, included some 22,200 nomadic families in southwest Afghanistan, mostly in what was then known as the Pošt-e Rūd district, i.e., the right bank of the Helmand river. In 1978, the “northern” nomadic and semi-nomadic Eshāqzī accounted for 7,500 families, out of which 1,939 wintered in the Sar-e Pol district of Jawzjān, and another 2,080 in the Golrān district of Herat province, their two main areas of concentration. A comparison between these figures emphasizes the general trend of decline in pastoral nomadism in Afghanistan: two out of three former Eshāqzī nomadic families would have become sedentary peasants, much less, however, in northern than in southern Afghanistan (Table 1). The drought of the early 1970s sharply accelerated the process, but it remains to be ascertained how long its effects will have lasted (one third of the nomads of the Šēkānzī subtribe had settled down according to Tavakolian, 1984, p. 287).

The internal structure of the Eshāqzī tribe is poorly known. The eponymous ancestor, Eshāq, is said to have been a contemporary of one Sayyed Abū Moslem Bokārī, who lived some “ten generations” ago (Tapper and Tapper, 1982, p. 169). From the former’s marriage with Hawā is issued the Hawāzī (i.e., Hawā’s descendants) subtribe, and from the marriage of the two daughters of Eshāq’s son ‘Īdī with Abū Moslem’s great-grandsons ‘Omar and Mūsā comes the Mandī(n)zī subtribe (from Mandīn, Abū Moslem’s wife of reputedly Sayyed origin). The fact that the two basic subtribes of the Eshāqzī bear a name derived from their respective feminine ancestors is altogether noteworthy within the Pashtun’s strict patrilineal system of descent. The Hawāzī are



further subdivided into the Meşrīkēl, ‘Omarzī, ‘Īdīzī, Paķīzī, Kōtīzī, and Dawlatzī subsections. The Mandī(n)zī include the Šēķānzī, Nāmanzī, Bābakzī, and Bārānzī on ‘Omar’s side, and the Kamōzī (further subdivided into Akbarķēl, Aķtarķēl, Amānķēl, and Šūfīķēl), Kānīķēl, Čakōzī (also Čökāzī), Maḥmūdķēl, and Mūsāzī (including a Nażarzī subsection) on Mūsā’s side (Tapper and Tapper, 1982, p. 170). Further subtribal units with uncertain genealogical status include the Pīrōzī (further divided into Madakzī and Lagōzī), Āķondķēl, Bādīnzī, Sīāmōzī, Tōrķēl, Panīzī, and Dākī (a geographical name, most uncommon in Pashtun tribal denomination), all listed in the *Afghan Nomad Survey*. Another source adds the Moḥammadķēl, Porhanzī, Aḥmadzī, Kōšmīrķēl, Kānōzī, Kaderzī, and ‘Īsāzī subsections, and records a somewhat different tradition of genealogical splitting among the Eşḥāqzī (Glatzer, pp. 117 f.).

As far as the nomadic component of each subtribe is concerned, the most powerful ones in 1978, numbering more than 1,200 nomadic families each (including semi-nomads), were the Šēķānzī and ‘Omarzī, both massively, though not entirely, located in northern Afghanistan. In decreasing order, the Nāmanzī, Aķtarķēl, Pīrōzī, Bābakzī, Maḥmūdķēl, Kānīķēl, Čakōzī/Čökāzī, ‘Īdīzī, Šūfīķēl, Bārānzī, Akbarķēl, Āķondķēl, and Dākī amounted at between 900 and 100 nomadic families, with all other subtribes numbering less than 100 nomadic families.

It has been convincingly argued that this segmentary organization, coupled with an overall strong tribal solidarity, has been instrumental in Eşḥāqzī’s successful encroachments over large tracts of pasture lands in northern Afghanistan: lineages “provide means of social and economic cooperation, political corporateness and autonomy, and collective adaptation within an ethnically diverse and economically fragmented region” (Tavakolian, 1982b, p. 20). Tribal extra-lineage endogamy is therefore quite frequent: 25 percent of all marriages recorded among the Šēķānzī of Golrān involve two different Eşḥāqzī lineages (Tavakolian, 1982b, p. 96), and the Pīrōzī of Sar-e Pol show a basically similar pattern (Tapper, 1991, p. 95).



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