



JAMSHIDI TRIBE

JAMSHIDI (Jamšidi), one of several semi-nomadic, Persian-speaking, Hanafite Sunni groups of northwestern Afghanistan known as *aymāq* (Turk *oymāq*). The Jamshidi have often been subsumed within the larger category of *čār* (*čahār*) *aymāq* (the four tribes), which not only comprised the Jamshidi, Firuzkuhi, Taymani, and Sunni Hazāra of Qal'a-ye Now, but, according to some accounts, also included other groups like the Timuri, zuri, Qepčāq, Čengizi, and Tāheri (Janata, p. 141; Mehrabān, p. 34; Schurmann, p. 50-55). This apparent contradiction can be resolved in the light of the different usages of the Mongol term *aymāq*. Originally signifying a group of people, a tribe, it also denoted territorial and administrative subdivisions in the sense of "district" (Doerfer, I, p. 182, 185). From Mongol times on, the division of territories into four units can be observed in different settings, most famous among them the partition of Čengiz Khan's and Timur's realms among four descendants. The organization of Herat province into four constituent districts (*boluk*) is well established from the 18th century on (Föfalzay, 1967, pp. 65, 398-400; Lal, p. 10). The troops raised in the environs of Herat during the sadōzay era were generally known as *čahār oymāq* and also included local Qezelbāš contingents (Föfalzay, 1958, p. 300). This term thus primarily referred to a type of military and administrative organization rather than a purely ethnic category (Centlivres, p. 33; Janata, p. 149).

There is evidence that the Jamshidi owe their genesis to the formation of a military coalition. This is reflected by the popular etymology tracing their



name to *jam' šoda* “gathered or collected together.” According to Āqā Khan b. Yalangtuš, the leading family was of Kayanid descent and derived its name from the mythical king *Jamšid*. Resettled from Sistān to Bādġis north of Herat in 795/1392-93, this group gathered a number of local tribal segments under their command and assisted Timur in the protection of the frontier of Khorasan. As a result, the name Jamshidi was applied collectively to all their followers (Āqā Khan, tr., p. 165). Another version associates the Kayanid migration to Bādġis with the person of Timur’s grandson Oloġ Beg, during whose reign, according to this tradition, sixty thousand of them moved to Bādġis, led by two brothers, Ḥaydar-soltān and Yalangtuš (Adamec, p. 185). From the early safavid period on, the Jamshidi are mentioned as ancient revenue payers of Herat (Jonābādi, p. 525), and they figure among the groups who entered the service of shah ‘Abbās I the Great (r. 1588-1629) around 1598 (Eskandar Beg, ed. Afšār, I, p. 573, ed. Rezwāni, p. 921, tr., II, p. 759). Based in Harirud River and Karoġ east of Herat, they controlled the lands along the first stages along the highroad to Maymana and held service grants in the mountainous region of Ġarjestān (Eskandar Beg, pp. 1154, 1475; Naširi, pp. 158-59, 280-81).

In their own accounts, the members of the Jamshidi *kān kēl* project a continuum of Jamshidi dominance over Bādġis from the Timurid period to the 18th century (Adamec, p. 185; Āqā Khan, tr., pp. 165-56). In fact, a number of demographic shifts occurred prior and during Nāder shah Afšār’s time. One such event was the arrival of the Abdāli Afghans (later known as Dorrāni Paštuns) around 1000/1592, whose extensive nomadic migrations around Herat also included Bādġis. In 1717 the Abdāli established control over Herat and conquered all the dependencies of the former safavid province (Mar’aši, pp. 19, 21). According to the Āqā Khan b. Yalangtuš, Nāder shah’s invasion from 1727 on tipped the scales once more in favor of the Jamshidi. The Jamshidi and other Persian speaking groups were moved to Mašhad, Jām, and Langar subsequent to Nāder shah’s second campaign in 1141/1729 (Dorrāni, p. 105), but they were allowed to return to Bādġis after his conquest of Herat in February 1732. Moreover, their leader was appointed to the command over the four *aymāq* of Herat (Āqā Khan, tr., p. 166). There is evidence, however, that the Jamshidis were not the only group to benefit from the removal of the Abdāli population to various places in Khorasan and their later settlement in Qandahār (Minorsky, p. 9; Navā’i, pp. 198-9, 210-11). Nāder shah’s chronicler, Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi (I, p. 198), reports that Nāder shah awarded the government (*salṭanat*) over both the Jamshidi and sunni Hazāra (ṭāyefa-ye



uymāyqiya-ye Hazāra wa Jamšidi) to a local Hazāra leader.

In the early 19th century, Khorasan experienced a dramatic increase of political segmentation. With the dissolution of the *sadōzay* empire in 1818, the last representatives of the dynasty, Maḥmud shah (r. 1819-26) and his son Prince Kāmṛān (r. 1826-42) found their sphere of influence reduced to Herat and were situated within the orbit of Qajar territorial claims, which were intermittently enforced by military power. This setting of shifting patterns of authority presented opportunities and hazards for the local tribal leadership. By awarding a service grant in Karoḳ, Maḥmud shah caused one Jamshidi section to separate from the main group based in northern Bādḡis around Košk and along the Morḡāb River at Bālā Morḡāb, Māručāq, and Panjdeh at that time (Adamec, pp. 186, 206; Stirling, pp. 248-60). In the late 1830s the Jamshidi of northern Bādḡis were allied with the militarily and numerically dominant sunni Hazāras of Qal‘a-ye Now (Forrest, ed., p. 38). Shortly afterwards the efforts of Kāmṛān’s powerful vizier Yār-Moḥammad Khan Alekōzay (d. 1851) to build up a more compliant chief as counterpoise to the traditional leadership created another split among the northern section of the Jamshidi. As part of his endeavor to re-populate the valley of Herat after the Persian siege of 1837-38, Yār-Moḥammad forcefully resettled 5,000 Jamshidi families in this region (Adamec, pp. 187-88; Ferrier, pp. 158, 172).

During this time the bulk of the tribe moved to Kiva, where they joined the service of its amirs, Raḥimqoli Khan (r. 1258-61/1842-45) and Moḥammad-Amin Khan (r. 1261-71/1845-55). Estimates of the Jamshidi who settled in Kiva vary between 5,000, 7,000, 10,000 and 12,000 families (Ferrier, p. 193-94; Basiner, pp. 202-3; Adamec, p. 188; Vámbéry, p. 355; Āqā Khan, tr., p. 166). While the European sources speak of a forceful removal of the Jamshidi to Kiva, there is evidence that their leaders entertained a close relationship with the local court. Mir Aḥmad Khan Jamshidi received the title of Khan Āqā from Mohammad-Amin Khan, joined his activities against the Persians in Marv and Saraḳs in 1270-71/1854-55, and was killed together with him during the battle of Saraḳs against the joint Persian and Teke Turkmen forces in Jomādā II 1271/March 1855 (Sepehr, pp. 1202-3, 1248-52; see also CENTRAL ASIA vii). Given the unrest unfolding in Kiva after the death of the Khan, Mir Aḥmad Khan’s brother, Mahdiqoli Khan, and the Jamshidi returned to their erstwhile settlements in Bālā Morḡāb and Māručāq soon afterwards (Adamec, p. 189; Khanikoff, p. 376; Stewart, p. 51).

The incorporation of Herat into the Bārakzay/Moḥammadzay (see



AFGHANESTAN x; DORRĀNI) kingdom in 1863 also affected the Jamshidi. They gained political leverage during the reign of Amir Šēr ‘Ali Khan (r. 1279-83/1863-66 and 1285-96/1868-78) but suffered violent inroads into their domain under Amir ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Khan (r. 1297-1319/1880-1901). Subsequent to the Persian siege of 1856, the Persian appointee Solṭān-Aḥmad Khan (r. 1273-79/1857-63) attempted to establish tighter administrative control over the tribes around Herat. The Jamshidi of Karoḵ lost their customary service grants and were forced to pay revenues, and the northern section of the Jamshidi were driven from their stronghold in Bālā Morḡāb (Molloy, p. 10). In order to evade the military pressure exerted by Solṭān-Aḥmad Khan, the Jamshidi of northern Bādḡis supported Amir [Dōst Moḥammad Khan Bārakzāy](#)’s (r. 1242-79/1826-63) siege of Herat in *Ḍu’l-qa’da-Ḍu’l-ḥejja* 1279/May 1863. Mahdiqoli Khan Jamshidi entered a marriage alliance with Dōst Moḥammad Khan’s successor Amir Šēr ‘Ali Khan, giving two daughters to Šēr ‘Ali Khan’s sons Moḥammad-Ya’qub and Moḥammad-Ayyub. In 1863 Moḥammad-Ya’qub Khan was appointed governor of Herat at the age of fourteen. Mahdiqoli Khan Āqā Amin-al-Dawla acted as his guardian and virtually controlled the affairs of the province until Moḥammad-Ya’qub Khan’s recall and imprisonment in 1874. In 1880 he was put to death after an attempt to rebel against Moḥammad-Ayyub, who held Herat during the second [Anglo-Afghan War](#) of 1878-80. In order to evade the ensuing general persecution of the Jamshidi tribe, Mahdiqoli Khan’s son, Yalangtuš Khan fled to Maymana (Adamec, pp. 190-91; Kakar, 1971, pp. 70-71; Lee, pp. 400-2; Āqā Khan, tr., p. 169).

Within the first years of his reign, Amir ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Khan switched from a policy of patronage to one of relentless persecution. Until 1883 the chiefs of the four *aymāq* received a total subsidy amounting to 60,000 rupees annually (Molloy, p. 9). In recognition of Yalangtuš Khan’s services during the conquest of Herat in 1881, the Amir awarded the title of Amin-al-Dawla to him and confirmed him as leader of the Jamshidi. In 1883 he invited the Jamshidi to re-occupy their erstwhile possessions in Bālā Morḡāb in order to secure the northwestern frontier. In December 1884 Yalangtuš Khan was appointed governor of Panjdeh, and his brother Amin-Allāh was placed in charge of Bālā Morḡāb. Yet, subsequent to the Russian occupation of Panjdeh in March 1885, ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Khan accused Yalangtuš Khan of treachery and had him and Amin-Allāh Khan executed in late 1886. The Jamshidi returned to Košk but were deported to Herat in 1889. Those who were allowed to return to Košk a few years later found that their lands had been appropriated by Afghan



officials in the meantime (Adamec, p. 284; Yate, 2003, pp. 163-64). subsequent to the Panjdeh crisis Amir 'Abd-al-Raḥmān entrusted Paštuns rather than local tribesmen with the protection of the northwestern frontier (Adamec, pp. 198-204, 283; Kakar, 1979, pp. 131-32; Tapper, pp. 57-8, 62-4). Yalangtuš Khan's sons and nephews remained in prison until 1903 and eventually fled to Russian territory in 1908. Their flight once again exposed the Jamshidi to persecutions by the Afghan government, causing 3,000 families to flee to the Russian districts of Čaman-e Bēd and Qal'a-ye Mōr located on the lower course of the Košk River (Āqā Khan, tr., pp. 170-73). During the unrest accompanying the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and the advent of the Red Army, the Jamshidi were relocated to Kondozi in northeastern Afghanistan but returned to Turkmenistan in 1919 (Rzehak and Pristschepowa, p. 21).

In the course of the 19th century, a number of Jamshidi groups moved to the vicinity of Mašhad. These migrations were triggered by vizier Yār-Moḥammad Alekōzay's oppressive policies in 1842, the Persian siege of 1856, and Moḥammad-Ayyub Khan's defeat and flight to Persia in 1881 (Curzon, I, pp. 198-99; Adamec, pp. 207-8; Yate, 1900, pp. 32-3, Napier, p. 246). In 1883 the Jamshidi on Persian soil were estimated at 500 families (stewart, p. 51).

The Jamshidi population of Herat province hovered around the mark of 10,000 families during the 19th century. In 1839 Henry Pottinger reported a total of 12,000-13,000 families, 8,000 of whom belonged to the northern section (apud Adamec, p. 187). In the 1850s and 1870s the entire tribe was estimated to comprise 10,000-12,000 families and to have a fighting capacity of 4,000-5,000 men. During this period 400 Jamshidi cavalry were in the service of Herat (Daud Khan, p. 8; Napier, p. 243, Taylor, p. 855). The Jamshidi of Košk were thought to number 4,000-5,000 families in the late 1870s and 1880s, while the Jamshidi population of Karoḳ was estimated at 2,000 families (Adamec, pp. 192-93, 204-5; Grodekov, pp. 122, 158; stewart, p. 50). In the 1950s, the Jamshidi centered around Košk and Bālā Morḡāb reportedly amounted to 60,000 souls (Janata, p. 141). The sharpening of ethnic demarcations that evolved along with the anti-Communist resistance and the civil war of the 1980s and the 1990s also affected the Jamshidi, and as sunni Persian speakers they have increasingly been subsumed within the larger ethnic category of the Tājik.

In the 19th century the Jamshidi were divided into twelve major tax units (*maḥalla-ye pokta*), and 112 subdivisions (*maḥalla-ye kām*), each of which comprised a flock of about 500 sheep and was looked after by a headman



(*malek*). The Jamshidi were organized under a hierarchy of leaders, with the *katkodās* representing the major sections and the *arbāb* attending to the affairs of the minor sections (Adamec, p. 196; Elphinstone II, p. 206). The northern section of the Jamshidi followed a semi-nomadic lifestyle. They lived in black goats' hair tents and portable huts, and almost the whole population moved southwards with their flocks into the hills in spring and returned for the summer harvest. The Jamshidi of Karoḳ, by contrast, had given up their nomadic habits by the late 19th century (Adamec, pp. 194-95, 207). A portion of the Jamshidi in Persia were likewise settled (Stewart, p. 49). Like other groups in the region, the Jamshidi derived part of their income by participating in the slave trade with Kīva and Bukhara in the early 19th century (Kāvāri Širāzi, pp. 826, 830). The rich pastures of Bādḡis allowed the upkeep of vast herds of sheep and cattle. The horses of the region, described as small but enduring, formed a major item of export in the 19th century (Moḥammad-Ḥayāt Khan, p. 458). Among the local products are grain, melons, pistachios, pistachio galls for tanning (*bozḡonj*), and Persian manna (*taranjabin*, *širkešt*). The Jamshidi women were known for the production of fine fabrics from wool and goat's hair, which were sold in Herat and Persia (Mehrabān, p. 36; Vámbéry, p. 261).

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