



KALHOR

KALHOR, a Kurdish tribe in the southernmost part of Persian Kurdistan. Ely Soans (p. 386) and Hyacinth Louis Rabino (p. 25) described it as the most powerful tribe in the province of Kermānšāh, and Henry Rawlinson as “one of the most ancient, if not the most ancient, of the tribes of Kurdistan” (p. 44). It was already mentioned by Šaraf-al-Din Bedlisi in the late 1500s (I, pp. 317-19), according to whom, the chiefs of the Kalhor claimed to be descended from **Godarz**, father of **Gēv**, a major hero in the *Šāh-nāma* (Bedlisi, I, pp. 317-19). An even more fanciful theory is suggested by Rawlinson, considered the Kalhor as descendants of the Jews who were carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar (Rawlinson, p. 36).

The Kalhor were an important tribe in Safavid times. Vladimir Minorsky speculated that “Like the other Shi‘ite Kurdish tribe of Pāzuki, the Kalhor must have had close relations with the Safavid court” (Mirzā Sami‘ā, tr., comm., p. 171). In any case, the Kalhor contributed a contingent of 500 auxiliary troops (*yāsāqi*) to the Persian army (Mirzā Sami‘ā, Minorsky’s intro., p. 34). They were also strong supporters of Karim Khan Zand (r. 1747-79). On his behalf, they besieged the fortress at Kermānšāh in 1752 and remained closely connected with him throughout his reign (Golestāna, pp. 216 ff.; Perry, pp. 36-39, 225). But Karim Khan apparently did not take any of the Kalhor clans with him when he settled down in Shiraz, thinking perhaps that they were of more use to him protecting the border with the Ottoman Empire.

The last of the great Kalhor chiefs was Dāwud Khan, who ruled the tribe in the early 1900s. Dāwud Khan started out as a mere peddler but gradually made



himself “the absolute master of the entire territory between Kermānšāh and the Ottoman border” (Nikitine, p. 174). He also subjugated the Gurān and Sanjābi tribes, allied himself by marriage to several prominent families in the province, including that of the governor (*wāli*) of the Pošt-e Kuh, and provided his capital, the little town of Gilān, with new buildings and fruit gardens. He was killed in 1912, while fighting on the side of Abu’l-Fatḥ Mirzā Sālār-al-Dawla, the Qajar pretender (Nikitine, p. 174). After his death, the power of the Kalhor chiefs steadily declined. Dāwud Khan’s successor, ‘Abbās Khan, was imprisoned by Reżā Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-41) in 1926. He was released in 1941, after Reżā Shah’s abdication, and was even elected a deputy in the Parliament from Kermānšāh in 1944. But by then, most of the Kalhor had become sedentary and lost the cohesion that had once made them strong (Nikitine, p. 175). In 1963, William Eagleton referred to the tribe as “huge but amorphous” (p. 16). On the other hand, it was still comparatively rich (Komisiun-e melli, I, p. 137).

When the Kalhor tribe was still fully nomadic, its winter quarters were around Qaṣr-e Širin, Kerend, Dira, Gilān, and Sumār, on both sides of the Kāneqin-Kermānšāh road, and its summer quarters were around Hārunābād and Mahidašt, between 36 and 72 km west of Kermānšāh. Its clans (*tira*) were Kāledi, Šiāni, Siāsiā, Kāẓem-kāni, Kōmān, Taleš, Gargā, Kolehpā, Kolehjow, Šuān, Qučemi, Maṣuri, Alvandi, Māhidašti, Hārunābādi, Šāhini, Mušgir, Bodāqbeysi, Zeynal-kāni, and Komara (Marduḳ, I, p. 105; Kayhān, II, pp. 61-62; for a different, more recent list see Sāzmān-e omur-e ‘ašāyer, apud Afšār Sistāni, pp. 288-89). According to Mary Leonora Sheil (p. 401), the tribe numbered some 11,500 families in 1849, and, according to Mas‘ud Kayhān, it numbered some 10,000 families in 1932 (Kayhān, II, p. 61; Afšār Sistāni, pp. 287-88). A small branch of the Kalhor tribe has also settled down in the Saqqez region, in northern Kurdistan. According to George N. Curzon, it numbered some 300 families in 1889 (I, p. 556), while Marduḳ Kordestāni gives the figure of some 200 families in 1973 (I, p. 105). Yet another group of Kalhor, numbering some 150 families, joined the Tarḳāni clan (*tira*) of the Jāf tribe (Edmonds, p. 143). Ḥosayn-‘Ali Razmārā mentions a village by the name of Kalhorābād, some 30 km north of Sanandaj, which suggests the presence of Kalhor there (Razmārā, 1952, V, p. 372). The Kalhor are Shi‘ites, except for a few who are ‘Ali-‘Allāhis (Razmārā, 1941, p. 22; Komisiun-e melli, p. 137). Since the reign of Reżā Shah, the Kalhor tribe has been officially known by the name of Bāvandpur (Arfa, p. 19).



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