



ḲALAJ I. TRIBE

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The Ḳalaj/Khalaj are usually referred to as Turks, but Josef Marquart (pp. 251-54) claimed that they were remnants of the Hephthalite confederation, which would indicate that they were originally Indo-Iranian. “Muslim authors agree that the Khalaj are one of the earliest tribes to have crossed the Oxus,” Vladimir Minorsky informs us (p. 430). According to the *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam* (p. 111), compiled in 982-83 CE, most of them settled down in the Ġazna region, but they were also numerous in the Balk, Toḳārestān, Bost, and Guzgān regions. Many of the Khalaj of the Ġazna region became assimilated to the local Pashto-speaking population. Indeed, it seems very likely that they formed the core of the Pashto-speaking Ġalzay (see [ĠILZI](#)) tribe, the name Ġalzay being derived from Khalaj (Bosworth, p. 917; Frye, p. 1001).

Groups of Khalaj moved into Persia and the Near East, starting with the great Saljuq migrations of the 11th century (Köprülü, p. 114). Although they were very numerous and spread widely, they never formed a monolithic tribal entity. As a result, they were rapidly absorbed by other tribes, and their name rarely appears in historical records. Often today names of villages are their only vestiges. In 1932, *Köylerimiz* listed as many as sixteen villages throughout what is present-day Turkey, which bore the names of Halaç, Halaçlar or Halaçlı. They were to be found in the following provinces (*vilayet* s): Antalya, Afyon, Niğde, Kütahya, Bolu, Balıkesir, Aydın, Kastamonu, Çankırı, Zonguldak,



Yozgat, Ankara, Tokat, Giresun, Kirşehir, and İstanbul. There is even a village by the name of Khalaj in the Crimea (Köprülü, p. 116), and Minorsky suggested that the town of Kalach on the river Don in Southern Russia might have got its name from that of the tribe (Minorsky, p. 434).

There were also Khalaj in Azarbaijan, but we have very little information about them. The German diplomat [Adam Olearius](#), who visited the province in 1638, listed the Khalaj among the tribes of Moğān (Olearius, II, p. 28). A tribe by that name dwelling in Azarbaijan was mentioned by J.-M. Jouannin at the beginning of the 19th century (Jouannin, II, p. 465). In 1864, Keith E. Abbott wrote of a Khalaj tribe that lived near Miāna and Jamālābād (Abbott, p. 233). Finally, Basile Nikitine asserted that a Khalaj tribe “which was attested to be in the west of the country ... was absorbed by the Afšārs during the 19th century” (Nikitine, p. 233). By 1951, the only Khalaj left in Azarbaijan formed a *tira* (clan) by that name near Āstārā (Razmārā, IV, p. 19), but there were ten villages, the names of which were derived from that of the tribe in the *šahrestān* s (sub-provinces) of Tabriz, Māku, Orumiā, Marāğa, Bostānābād, Ahar, and Kīāv (Idem, pp. 75, 192-93, and 335).

A large group of the Khalaj settled down in the mountains to the southwest of Sāva, in the Markazi province, and many of them have retained their tribal identity to this day. In that area, there is even a region called *Ḳalajestān*. Ḥasan Fasāʿi believed that the Khalaj of central Persia had come from Anatolia (Fasāʿi, II, p. 312). In any case, we know that the Khalaj were already living there at the time of Timur (1336-1405), for in 1403 they were mentioned in a *farmān* sent by that ruler to his grandson Eskandar (1384-1415, see [ESKANDAR SOLṬĀN](#); *Zafar-nāma*, II, p. 573). According to Masʿūd Kayhān, in 1932-33 they numbered 17,500 individuals and occupied 77 villages (Kayhān, II, p. 396). According to Gerhard Doerfer, in the 1960s they numbered 17,000 individuals and occupied some 50 villages (Doerfer, 1968, p. 720). In his article “The Turkish Dialect of the Khalaj,” Vladimir Minorsky gives us two lists of Khalaj villages in central Persia (Minorsky, pp. 435-36). In a recent work, Iraj Afšār-Sistāni writes that “the people of this tribe live in the vicinity of Āštiān and Tafreš, and make a living from their flocks” (Afšār-Sistāni, p. 115). The Khalaj of central Persia speak a Turkic dialect which contains so many archaisms and other unique features that Doerfer argues it should be referred to as “the Khalaj group of languages” (Doerfer, 1978, p. 918).

A large group of Khalaj from central Persia made their way to Fārs province, but it is not known exactly when. There has been a close relationship between



these Khalaj and the Qašqā'i. Several authors, including Ḥasan Fasā'i, maintain that the Qašqā'is are but an offshoot of the Khalaj tribe (Fasā'i, II, p. 312). However, it is more likely that the Khalaj who moved to Fārs were absorbed by the Qašqā'i tribal confederation, for the Qašqā'i speak an Oğuz Turkic dialect which differs substantially from the language of the Khalaj of central Persia. According to Oliver Garrod, two of the major Qašqā'i tribes (the Šeš-Boluki and Fārsimadan), as well as the powerful Raḥimi clan, claim to be of Khalaj descent, and, as he asserts, the Šeš-boluki derive their name from the six *boluk* s, or districts, of Ḳalajestān (Garrod, p. 294). Garrod also wrote that "many villages of the Dehbid plateau (north of Shiraz) are today inhabited by Khalaj Turks, who claim a distant relationship with the Qashqai tribe" (idem, pp. 295-96). Finally, there is a clan by the name of Khalaj in the Kordšoli tribe, which is a mixture of Qašqā'i and Mamasani elements (Oberling, 1974, pp. 29-30).

There are also Khalaj in the provinces of Ḳuzestān and Kermān. In Ḳuzestān, they form a clan of the Gündüzlü tribe; in the Kermān province, they form a clan of the Afšār-'Amu'i tribe (Oberling, 1960, pp. 87 and 110). Finally, the villages of Ḳalaj-Darra, Ḳalaj-e 'Olyā, and Ḳalaj-e Soflā in Lorestān (*Index Mundi*) and three villages by the name of Khalaj in Khorasan (Razmārā, IX, p. 150) indicate that, at some time, there were Khalaj in those provinces as well. The Khalaj of Persia are Shi'ites.

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