Published: December 15, 1990
Last Updated: October 26, 2012

TENTS I. GENERAL SURVEY

TENTS in Iran

i. General Survey

Čādor "tent," is a portable dwelling characteristic of certain nomad groups. It consists of a canopy of cloth or skin supported by upright posts and anchored to the ground by means of pegs and ropes. The word *čādor* refers to both the canopy and to the entire tent.

The most common type of tent in Iran and Afghanistan is the "black tent" (constructed of bands of woven goat hair stitched together), which is known from Mauritania to India (Feilberg, 1944, passim). White tents of cotton canvas imported from Europe are rarer and are generally found at opposite ends of the social scale: Depending on their size, the richness of their decoration, and their interior arrangements, they can be the dwellings of either powerful nomad chiefs (formerly even of kings and their courts during the summer) or of certain categories of migrant service workers (*kowlī*, *ḡorbatī*, etc.), who are more or less looked down upon.

The use of the term *čādor* (eventually in the form *čādo(-e) sīāh* or *qara-čādor* "black tent") to designate the tent is now almost universal in Iran. Local terms include: *kon* or *re mal* in Kurdish (author's notes), where, however, *čādor* is used to refer to the white tent; and Lori *bohun*, Baluchi *gidān*, and so on, which represent the Old Iranian word for tent, **widāna-*, descendants of which are found in Middle Persian *wiyān*, Parthian *widān* (> Armenian *vran*), Judeo--

Persian *biyān* and *guyān*, and Modern Persian *bayān* (in the dictionaries; see Asmussen for references). In Persian literary sources *ḵayma* is employed for tent in general and *sarā-parda* and *parda-sarā(y)* often for a royal tent. On the other hand, in Afghanistan the tent is designated not by the term *čādor* (reserved there for the women's veil) but by Persian/Arabic *ḵayma* or Pashto *ḵəždəy* for the black tent and *qawwal* or *deylā* for the white tent (Hallet and Samizay, pp. 17-33, 53-73).

Despite inadvertent confusion in the works of several authors (Andrews, 1973, pp. 93-110; 1977, pp. 19-45, 125-33; 1980, pp. 40-59; Land, pp. 237-43; Wright, pp. 159-60), tents must be carefully distinguished on technological grounds from "huts," though they share a certain impermanent and portable character; the latter include both huts proper (*kapar*, *kappa*, *čapar*, *lawka*, *lāčeq*, etc.) and in particular yurts (*uy*, *ḵīrgāh* [Pers. *ḵargāh*], *ālāček*, etc.; Centlivres-Demont, 1975; 1977). Both the fixed hut and the portable yurt consist of roofs resting on walls, which precisely delimit the living space. In the tent, on the contrary, the canopy is supported in the center by upright posts (occasionally by arches, as in Baluchistan) that simply rest on the ground; the stability of the whole is ensured by the tautness of the canopy owing to a system of ropes tied to pegs planted solidly in the ground. The living area sheltered by the tent is thus a space largely open to the outside (a fact that must be taken into account in relation to such characteristic aspects of nomad social life as strong internal cohesion and hospitality to strangers). In eastern Azarbaijan and Ṭaleš on one hand, and in Baluchistan, Sīstān, and Bašakerd, on the other, there are dwellings of a type intermediate between the tent and the hut: They consist of frames made of branches and covered with woven goat hair (Bazin, II, p. 17; Ferdinand, 1959, 1960; see also baluchistan i; bašākerd).

Although the hut occurs nearly everywhere in Iran and Afghanistan, in forms that can complement or substitute for other types of dwelling, the territorial distribution of the yurt and the tent seems to follow ethnic lines. The yurt is found among turcophones (Šāhsevan, Turkman, western Aymaq, Uzbek, Kirghiz), the tent mainly among iranophone nomads (Kurds, Lors, Baluch, Pashtun), though with noteworthy incursions among turcophones (the Afšār and Qašqāʾī, for example).

Ethnic variants in the tent are limited mainly to form: with an awning in the Zagros, semicylindrical in Baluchistan, with symmetrical sloping sides nearly everywhere else. Other variations are determined by natural and economic conditions: There are light, largely open tents for summer; larger tents

surrounded by mats in such a way as also to shelter the youngest animals in winter; tents with two or three supports for the poor; tents with up to ten or more among the rich; and so on (Faegre).

The interior arrangement of the tent is the same almost everywhere. On one side is the domestic space, reserved for women and young children (*andarūn*, *keybān*). It is there that the hearth, the fuel supply (wood, dried cow or goat dung); storage vessels for water and yogurt; sacks of wheat, tea, and sugar; and the weaving equipment are found. There is always a great deal going on and the characteristic disorder associated with activity. On the other side of the tent is the space reserved for men (*bīrūn*, *lā-mardān*), furnished with carpets, mats, and cushions for the proper reception of guests. The separation of these two spaces is sometimes—but only sometimes—expressed materially by means of a movable partition (a mat or curtain). The furnishings, like the tent itself, must be easily stowed and portable: Skins are preferred to pottery, sacks and saddlebags to boxes. They are stacked with the bedding on a low wall of stones (*bālā* "high [place]") that marks the back of the tent.

Among the nomads each tent generally shelters a nuclear family (a couple and their children) and corresponds economically to a consumption unit. Except during migration, three to twenty tents are grouped in camps (*māl*), which encompass extended families and semiautonomous production units (Digard, 1975).

The economic and political changes that have affected the life of the tribes in Iran, especially since the establishment of the Pahlavi régime in 1304 Š./1925, have led to the spread of agriculture and the multiplication of fixed dwellings (*ḵāna*) among the nomads. Adoption of the house does not always, however, signal abandonment of nomadism, for in Iran today there is no shortage of nomads who migrate between two houses, as well as between two wheat fields. Although the black tent is tending to disappear, the change is the result not so much of sedentarization among nomads as of rises in the price of the goat hair necessary to make the canopy, the goat having been the victim in the 1350s Š./1970s of a particularly absurd policy of protecting pasturelands in Iran.

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