Shahsevan in Safavid Persia

Richard Tapper


Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0041-977X%281974%2937%3A2%3C321%3ASISP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-7

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London is currently published by School of Oriental and African Studies.

____________________________________________________

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html. JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/soas.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

____________________________________________________

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
SHĀHSEVAN IN ŠĀFAVID PERSIA

By Richard Tapper

The problem

The Shāhsevan tribes of Persia are a heterogeneous collection of groups brought together in a confederation of that name some time between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. The question of how and when this confederation was formed is something of a riddle, which arises from the following considerations.

First, the accepted, ‘official’ version is that given by Malcolm, in which he recounts how Shāh ‘Abbās I (1587–1629) formed a special tribe of his own under the name of Shāhsevan, meaning ‘the King’s friends’, in order to counteract the turbulence of the rebellious Qizilbāsh tribes, who had helped his ancestor Shāh Ismā’īl to found the Šāfavid dynasty a century earlier. This version has been adopted by most later historians, and has been assimilated into Persian and even, through modern education, into current Shāhsevan mythology.

Secondly, in his article ‘Shāh-sewan’, Minorsky noted that ‘the known facts somewhat complicate Malcolm’s story’. The earliest uses of the word ‘Shāhsevan’ are found in the seventeenth-century chronicle Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī, relating events in sixteenth-century Persia under the early Šāfavid Shāhs; but Minorsky considered that these references did not amount to evidence that ‘a single regularly constituted tribe was ever founded by Shāh ‘Abbās under the name of Shāh-sewan’.

Thirdly, the traditions of the Shāhsevan tribes of north-east Ādharbāyjān, as first recorded late last century, relate that various groups of their ancestors left Turkey to become subjects of Shāh ‘Abbās I, who united them under their present name and granted them their present pasture-lands.

Finally, the earliest contemporary references unambiguously connecting tribal groups named Shāhsevan with north-east Ādharbāyjān or any other region, are not heard until the later seventeenth century, long after Shāh ‘Abbās I’s death.

Of earlier discussions of the problem, Minorsky’s does not do justice to the available evidence, while Rostopchin’s and Balayan’s speculations are largely unsupported by contemporary evidence. This article attempts to take the

---

1 I am grateful to Mr. A. H. Morton for valuable comments and suggestions on the original drafts of this article. I also benefited greatly from the comments of Professor A. K. S. Lambton on a later version, forming part of a thesis presented to the University of London. I remain responsible for the faults and deficiencies of the present article.


problem substantially further, by re-examining the evidence and adducing a number of important sources which have not yet been considered. I shall discuss first the sources of the ‘official’ version of the Shāhsevan origins as a composite tribe formed as part of the military and tribal policy of the Šafavīd rulers. I shall then examine the traditions of the Shāhsevan tribes, both those recorded and published during the later nineteenth century, and more recent versions including those collected by myself. Then follows a discussion of contemporary records from the Šafavīd period, linking the name Shāhsevan, and names of component tribes of the confederation, with the region of north-east Ādharbāyjān. Neither the ‘official’ nor the traditional versions of Shāhsevan origins can yet be fully documented; tribal groups named Shāhsevan did occupy their present habitat in the second half of the seventeenth century, but the evidence indicates that no tribal confederation was formed until the time of Nādir Šāh (about 1740). The early development of this confederation will be discussed in a later article.

Some more general preliminary remarks are needed. There are two distinct sets of tribes called Shāhsevan, though there is evidence that the ancestors of most of the tribes in each set coexisted in the Ardabil region in the early eighteenth century. No ethnographic study has been conducted among the Shāhsevan tribes of Kharaqān and Khamsa, and I have no personal knowledge of them, so this article is concerned mainly with the tribes of Ardabil, Mishkīn, and Mughān. The latter share many features in common as regards language, religious beliefs and practices, technology, social organization, etc. Their culture differentiates them from other tribes in Persia (if not from the Shāhsevan of Kharaqān and Khamsa), and may be seen as the product of the natural and social environment in which they find themselves and certain themes in the particular cultural heritage which they share. These themes are largely of Turkic origins; at least, they are found in other Turkic groups in Persia and elsewhere, and can often be traced to the cultures of the Ghuzz Turkic tribes of Central Asia which invaded south-west Asia in the eleventh century A.D. Many of the component Shāhsevan tribes can be shown to be of non-Turkic origin, and preserve distinct cultural features which are further evidence of this, but Turkic ethnicity and culture are overwhelmingly dominant.

The question of the origin, history, and distinctiveness of these tribes is not a genetic matter. A systematic physical anthropological study of the Shāhsevan and other Turkic groups of north and west Persia would probably, in my view, confirm that these groups are racially similar not only to each other and to the population of modern Turkey, but also to the ‘indigenous’ population (Kurds and others) of modern Persia. They are also probably distinct from the Turkmen and other ‘eastern Turkic’ groups of Central Asia, to whom they are, however, culturally related. This anomaly arises largely from two processes: Turkic culture has dominated much of south-west Asia since its introduction there, while its bearers have intermarried with the indigenous non-Turkic populations.
Nor is this question a genealogical matter. Few named tribal groups in the area preserve even fictional genealogies of any depth, and unilineal descent groups of more than a few hundred people are rare. Throughout the millennium of their presence in south-west Asia, as their 'racial purity' became diluted by intermarriage with local populations, the Turkic tribal groups have been subjected by various rulers to systematic policies of breakdown, dispersal, regroupment, and resettlement. All the major Turkic groups in the area are of quite heterogeneous composition. This is true particularly at the level of the tribal confederations: Qizilbash, Qaradaghī, Khamsa (only partly Turkic), Qashqai, Shâhsevan; but also at the level of their major constituent units. At these levels one must bear in mind Nikitine's warnings:

'Les notions d'unité ethnique et d'organisme politique ne sont plus les mêmes dès qu'on pénètre sur le terrain d'ethnologie asiatique. A un certain moment on y constate en effet des molécules qui tantôt se réunissent sous une forme de vague confédération, tantôt, avec la même facilité, se désagrègent. Les noms mêmes n'offrent aucune constance ni certitude... Ce sera le nom du chef de la période de prospérité auquel pourra avec le temps se substituer un autre. Ajoutons à ceci des scissions et des regroupements constants à travers l'histoire et nous nous apercevrons de tout ce qu'il y a de délicat dans la tâche du chercheur'.

None the less, in tracing the ancestry of present-day Turkic tribes in Persia, the only possible initial procedure is to trace the geographical movements of tribal names. The assumption by which this procedure is justified is that by and large the continuity of a tribal name, and hence of ethnic identity, also involves a continuity of major cultural features, and it is with this implicit assumption that a number of authors have considered the dispersal of the original Ghuzz Turk tribes. In fact, at a certain structural level within the confederation, represented in the Shâhsevan case by the tribe (tâ'īfah), named groups of at most a few hundred households do exhibit considerable continuity, stability, and cultural distinctiveness, due largely to territorial factors and to a tendency to endogamy, and it is on this basis that I attempt to elucidate the origins of the tribes in the Shâhsevan confederation, by tracing the earlier movements of groups bearing their names.

**Shâhisevanî: Safavid military and tribal policies**

Shaykh Šafi al-Dîn of Ardabil and his descendants were renowned at first, from the end of the thirteenth century, as holy ascetic Šûfis, but around 1450,

---

8. Of the tira in the case of the Bâsîrî, Kûrûs, Qashqâî, and other tribal groups.
9. Shaykh Šafi died in 1334; after him came Šadr al-Dîn (d. 1398), Sultan Khwaju 'Ali (d. 1429), Ibrâhîm (d. 1447), Junayd (d. 1460), 'Haydar (d. 1488), Sultan 'Ali (d. 1494) and his brother Isma'îl (b. 1487), who became Shâh Isma'il I of Persia. On the rise of the Şafavid
with the growth of Shi‘i extremism under Shaykh Junayd, they began to acquire quasi-divine attributes and to foster military aims. Early support for the dynasty came from local Turkoman and Ta‘lish tribesmen. In successive campaigns in Caucasia, Shaykh Junayd and Shaykh Ḥaydar relied on fanatical Shi‘i supporters from Rûm (Anatolia) and Shâm (Syria). Ḥaydar, supposedly prompted by a vision, had his followers wear a red cap with 12 scallops, in memory of the 12 Shi‘i Imâms, from which they became known as the Qizilbâsh ‘red-heads’. Junayd, his son Ḥaydar, and the latter’s eldest son Sultân ‘Ali, all died in battle.

Soon after Sultân ‘Ali’s death in 1494, his infant younger brother Ismâ‘îl fled from Ardabil to Gîlân, returning in 1499, aged 12, with the faithful from the tribes of Qâjâr, Qarâmânî, Khinisî, Qîchâq, Shâmlû, and Afshâr. He had to leave Ardabil again for Ta‘lish and Mughân, then penetrated into Qarâbâgh and the Caucasus, the numbers of his entourage constantly increasing. At Erzinjan in Anatolia he joined by Sûfî horsemen of the tribes of Ustâjlû, Shâmlû, Rûmlû, Takalû, Dulqadîr, Afshâr, Qâjâr, and Vârsâq. He defeated the Āq Qoyûnlû leaders Alvand and Murâd, the former at Sharûr in 1501, the latter near Hamadân in 1503; he was crowned Shâh of Ādharbâyjân in July 1501 at Tabriz, where he proclaimed the Shi‘a Ithna-‘ashariyya creed as the state religion.

The Qizilbâsh tribes, the core of Shâh Ismâ‘îl’s supporters, were mostly of Turkoman origin. He rewarded them with land grants, and thus the Turkomans from the west acquired a stake in Persia—anyway they could not return after the Ottoman Sultân Salîm’s massacre of Shi‘is in Asia Minor in 1514. Ismâ‘îl had so far relied primarily on the quasi-divinity afforded him by his Şafavid ancestry, and secondly on military levies from the Qizilbâsh, including the special qorchâ guards; forces which, like those of the defeated Alvand and Murâd, were organized on tribal principles. However, the Qizilbâsh defeat in 1514 at the hands of the modernized Ottoman army at the battle of Châldirân showed both these principles to be inadequate. The Qizilbâsh, whose direct political allegiance to their chiefs now diverged from their spiritual loyalty to the Shâh, began to squabble for office and dominant positions in the state. After Ismâ‘îl’s death in 1524, the tribes of Rûmlû, Ustâjlû, Takalû, and Shâmlû...
Map 1. Sketch-map of north-west Persia and neighbouring areas. For area within box, see map 2.
successively dominated the young Shāh Ṭahmāsp I. Having succeeded in 937/1530–1 in crushing a revolt of the Takalū, who fled to Baghdād, from 940/1533–4 Ṭahmāsp had the upper hand for 40 years. Towards the end of his long reign, however, he met more trouble from the Qizilbash, mainly directed against his newly-acquired Caucasian followers. At his death in 1576 there were two main parties struggling to control the succession. According to the Tārīkh-i ‘ālam-ārā, those who favoured the Prince Ismā‘îl and succeeded in ending his 20-year incarceration and in bringing him to the capital, called themselves shāhisevan.11

The ‘Ālam-ārā frequently uses the word shāhisevanī, with the sense of ‘loyalty to the Ṣafavid dynasty’, in expressions such as shī‘ār-i shāhisevanī zāhir sākhtan, izhār-i shāhisevanī kardan, or just shāhisevan shudan, when individuals or groups make declarations of loyalty and submission to the Shāh; the word daulatkhvāhī appears to be almost a synonym. There are also references to appeals by the Shāh to this loyalty: shāhisevan kardan or farmūdan, salā-yi shāhisevanī. In 1926 Minorsky wrote:

‘These ad hoc appeals played upon the religious sentiments of the adepts of the Ṣafawi family (dūdman, oğjaḫ). The sovereigns of this dynasty not only traced their origins to the Šī‘i imāms, but even claimed to be the incarnations of the latter . . . . The formula called of [sic] Shāh-sewan thus recalled to political recalcitrants their obligations to their superiors’.12

In addition, the plural shāhisevānī ‘Shāh-lovers’ is used collectively, or with a collective noun: the ‘class’ (sūlk, tabaqā), or the ‘community’ (jamā‘at, jumla) of ‘Shāh-lovers’; to denote those among the Shāh’s supporters who remain faithful, particularly in confrontations with the Ottoman (Sunni) Turks and with rebels among the Shāh’s own people. Of the other Ṣafavid chronicles dealing with the period up to and including Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign, Jalāl al-Dīn Munajjim Yazdī, his son Kamāl Khān, and Arakel of Tabrīz also use the term shāhisevan in a similar sense to the ‘Ālam-ārā, but much less frequently; Qāẓī ʿAḥmad Qumī, ʿHasan Rūmlū, Shaykh Ḥusayn Zāhidī do not use the term.13

After a bloody reign of 18 months, Shāh Ismā‘îl II died in mysterious circumstances and was succeeded by his brother Sultan Muḥammad Khudā-bandā, a weak and ineffectual ruler who was faced with renewed Qizilbash rebellions. In order to deal with these internal dissensions and to be able to


oppose invasions from the Uzbeks in the east and the Ottomans in the west, Sultan Muhammad, according to the ‘Alam-ārā, had vain recourse to the principle of ‘appealing to the šāhisevanān’. For example, when in 992/1583–4 Amīr Khān Turkmān, governor-general of Ādhabāyyān, was dismissed and imprisoned, the Taklū and Turkmān tribes revolted. The Shāh,

‘having launched the [appeal of] šāhisevanī, commanded that all those of the Turkmān tribe who were slaves and partisans of this family should rally to the palace . . . . When the Turkmān tribe heard the appeal (ṣalā) of šāhisevanī, they . . . rallied in their masses to the Shāh’s palace gates and joined the ranks of the šāhisevanān, so that even Amīr Khān sent his sons and brother lest they be excluded from the congregation (zumra) of the šāhisevanān’.

The reference to Shāh Ismā‘īl II’s early supporters as šāhisevanān is the first mention of the term, apart from two earlier references in the ‘Alam-ārā to ‘loyalists’ in Baghdād: Sayyid Beg Kamūna in 1507–8, and the followers of Muhammad Khān Taklū in 1534–5; as an earlier source for these events does not use the term, it may be supposed that Iskandar Munshi’s usage is anachronistic. I know of no record, in the ‘Alam-ārā or elsewhere, of the ‘principle’ of ‘appealing to šāhisevanī’, earlier than the reign of Sultan Muhammad.

However, it is not at all clear when the term šāhisevanī was in fact first employed. Bellan, and Minorsky in a later work than his ‘Shāh-sewan’ article, appear to equate Shāhsevan with Qizilbash as referring in general to the tribes which supported the Safavid monarchs, though the ‘Alam-ārā usage does not bear out this equation. Falsafi asserts that šāhisevanī, loyalty to the Shāh and devotion to him as head of the religious brotherhood, was a bond which united all the Qizilbash tribes from the time of Shāh Ismā‘īl onwards, and Minorsky too, in 1955, dated šāhisevanī to Ismā‘īl’s reign, and pointed out that to the Shī‘a Sufis ‘Shāh’ also signified ‘‘Ali’, and that the Qizilbash Shāhsevans were thus a ‘religious party’ devoted to the Shāh as their supreme head. Finally, Lockhart, following Minorsky, writes of Ismā‘īl I that ‘When in times of crisis the Shah found himself in need of military aid, he would invoke the principle of shahisevan’. Unfortunately, none of these authors, in putting forward such interpretations of the term, gives any reference to contemporary sources, and it remains unlikely that the term was used earlier than Sultan Muhammad’s reign.

Sultan Muhammad’s appeals to šāhisevanī had no lasting effect, and the

---

15 ‘Alam-ārā, 34, 68.
16 Seddon, op. cit.
tribes continued to disobey and to quarrel among themselves. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Turks invaded Ādharbāyjān and Georgia and in 1585 captured Tabriz. Two years later the Shāh abdicated in favour of his 16-year-old son ‘Abbās, a brilliant, shrewd, and tireless leader who in the succeeding years managed not only to crush the Uzbeks and drive out the Ottomans, but also to tame the Qizilbāsh chiefs who had for so long controlled political and military affairs in Persia.

In the first year of ‘Abbās’s reign (1588–9), some of the Qizilbāsh chiefs rebelled against the authority of his chief minister Murshid Quli Khān U斯塔jīš. The Shāh appealed to the shāhīsēvan, and the Qizilbāsh assembled en masse in front of the palace; the rebels began negotiations for forgiveness and reconciliation, but their proposals were rejected by Shāh ‘Abbās, and a few days later they were rounded up and executed. As Minorsky notes, the ‘Ālamārā says nothing of the permanent effects of this appeal, adding only that the community (jamā‘at) of shāhīsevanān who came at the Shāh’s call mounted guard until morning.18 The measure appears to have been successful, however, for ‘Abbās had little further trouble from the Qizilbāsh tribes. The many later references to shāhīsevanā during his reign are to scattered groups and individuals, often from outside the Qizilbāsh tribes, who declare their loyalty to the Shāh at one time or another.

Shāh ‘Abbās I deliberately cultivated his charismatic public image, but rather than rely entirely on the spiritual elements in his authority, he conducted a radical reorganization of his administration and armed forces.19 To counter the unruly Qizilbāsh nomad tribes, and particularly the qorčī praetorian guards, in about 1590 he promoted two new corps, the ghulāms or qullār ‘slaves’, cavalry of Caucasian Christian origin, and the tufangchī, infantry musketeers drawn from various peoples, mainly ‘pure Iranian’ peasantry; these forces were both paid by and devoted to the Shāh himself. In addition he ruthlessly broke up, dispersed, resettled, and regrouped the Turkoman Qizilbāsh tribes, such as the Qājārs, and diluted the power of their chiefs, who had formerly provided the bulk of the administrative bureaucracy, by appointing his personal devotees from among the ghulāms to the offices as they fell vacant, including the chiefships of some of the tribes. With this new-style army and administration, ‘Abbās acquired direct secular obedience to himself as ruler, and no longer depended on the indirect religious devotion of the Qizilbāsh to the dynasty. In Weberian terms, he compensated for the weaknesses of the dynastic charisma by transforming it into personal charisma; in the century after his death, his successors were unable to ‘routinize’ his personal charisma, while the charisma of the Šafavid house was no longer strong enough to rouse the people to duty.

18 ‘Ālamārā, 382–3; Minorsky, ‘Shāhīsevan’, 267.
According to some later histories, a major item of Shāh ‘Abbās’s military reforms was the creation of a ‘tribe’ or militia called Shāhsevan. The most well-known instance is the passage in Malcolm’s *History of Persia*: Shāh ‘Abbās had been early compelled to repress the ambition of the principal chiefs of the Kūzel-bash tribes, and had put several of them to death. He sought another defence against the effects of their turbulence, by forming a tribe of his own, which he styled Shah Sevund, or ‘the king’s friends’; and he invited men of all tribes to enrol themselves in a clan, which he considered as devoted to his family, and therefore distinguished by his peculiar favour and protection. Volunteers could not be wanting at such a call: and we have one instance of ten thousand men being registered by the name of Shah-Sevund in one day. This tribe, which became remarkable for its attachment to the Saffavean dynasty, still exists in Persia, though with diminished numbers. It could once boast of more than a hundred thousand families.\(^{20}\)

Fortunately we are able to identify Malcolm’s sources for these remarks. First of all, he had read the ‘Ālam-ārā and must have been familiar with its use of the term shāhisevanī; secondly, he gives a specific reference for the registration of 10,000 men as Shāhsevan: Kamāl Khān’s *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, a chronicle which he frequently used for events under Shāh ‘Abbās I; thirdly, his conception of the formation of a special tribe probably derives from Krusinski’s account, written nearly 100 years before his own, but still a century after the supposed event.

Kamāl Khān twice uses the term shāhisevan, both cases echoing the ‘Ālam-ārā’s usage. The passage to which Malcolm refers runs as follows.

‘News came of the impending arrival of 10,000 Jalālis under the leadership of Muḥammad Pāshā, who had become shāhisevan. It was accordingly arranged that Mirzā Ḥātam Beg I’timād al-Dawla should go to Tabrīz and allot them winter quarters, and 12,000 tumāns, 12,000 kharvār of grain, and 12,000 sheep were set aside for them. After winter quarters had been allotted to these people (*jamā’at*), the I’timād al-Dawla came to Isfahān to the Shāh’s presence, with Muḥammad Pāshā and 300 of their notables. In the year 1017 [1608–9] . . . they gave the Jalālis permission to depart, so that whoever so desired might go to his own country . . . ’\(^{21}\)

The ‘Ālam-ārā reports the same incidents, in much greater detail. It is difficult to see why Malcolm singled them out as evidence for recruitment to a ‘tribe’ of Shāhsevan, when there are so many other such instances in the ‘Ālam-ārā; though, as I shall show, none of them is any more convincing as evidence for the origin of the Shāhsevan tribes.

Krusinski in fact wrote of the Shāhsevan as the name not of a tribe, but of a reserve militia, not necessarily of tribal origins or organization:

\(^{20}\) Malcolm, op. cit., 556.

\(^{21}\) Kamāl Khān, op. cit., fol. 69 a–b.
Il y avait une autre milice dans le Royaume, établie par Schah-Abas..... Ceux qui la composaient s’appellaient Schah-Seven, c’est à dire, affectionés au roi. C’étaient des personnes de la Noblesse à qui Schah-Abas avait distribué des terres, à condition de servir avec un certain nombre de leurs Vassaux, quand ils seraient mandés... cette milice... allait à trois cents mille hommes, et... dans un besoin subit et pressant fournissait une ressource sûre'.

Though Krusinski’s source for this is not known, the account of the distribution of military fiefs fits the descriptions by Chardin and others of the military organization of the Safavid state; but neither in the ‘Alam-ārā nor in the accounts of European travellers earlier than Krusinski is this ‘reserve militia’ called by the name of Shāhsevan. There are, however, references to soldiers by this name; for example, when Evliya Chelebi was in Baku in 1647 he observed: ‘This place being a frontier fortress opposed to Russia is garrisoned with excellent troops called Shahseven and Dizchoken (who love the Shah and bend their knees before him).’

If, as Malcolm states, Shāh ‘Abbās created a ‘tribe’, as opposed to a militia, called Shāhsevan, one would surely expect to find some contemporary references, if not to a ‘clan’ (i‘l, tā‘ifah, oymāq) of Shāhsevan, at least to people bearing this tribal name. There are references in the ‘Alam-ārā—examples have already been given—to the ‘class’ (tabaqa), or ‘community’ (jamā‘at) of shāhisevanān, words often used of groups otherwise referred to as ‘tribes’ or ‘clans’, but not once, there or elsewhere, is there a reference to a ‘tribe’ or ‘clan’ of shāhisevanān. I have found only one individual in the ‘Alam-ārā bearing the name Shāhsevan: Muḥibb ‘Alī Beg Shāhisevan Shāmlū. All other persons or groups which have ‘become Shāhsevan’ are later referred to under their own former tribal name; if of Qizilbash origin, they continue to be included in the ranks of the Qizilbash. Shāhisevan is used as an epithet for both Qizilbash tribal names, as with Muḥibb ‘Alī Beg Shāmlū, and groups of qorčis. One must conclude, on this evidence, that the Shāhsevan were not a tribe or militia created as the opposite of the Qizilbash, or of the qorči guards in particular.

Whatever the reason, there was no further trouble from the Qizilbash in Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign, and ‘appeals to the feelings of the shahisevani, so

---


23 Evliya Chelebi (Evliya Efendi), Narrative of travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the seventeenth century, tr. from the Turkish by Ritter Joseph von Hammer, Ⅱ, London, 1850, 162.

common under Shah Tahmasp [sic], are hardly ever heard of under the later Safavis. The final appeal occurred in the last years of the dynasty, when it had quite lost the ability to rouse the people to religious adherence. In 1722 Shāh Sultān Ḥusayn was besieged by the Afghans in Isfahān; his son Ṭahmāsp Mīrzā escaped, having been declared successor, and from Qazvin tried to raise an army for the relief of the capital. Krusinski relates his desultory efforts, such as his appeal to the Shāhsevan militia, which could have been of great help to him if it had not been quite neglected in recent reigns, particularly that of Sultān Ḥusayn. Having not been called on for years to fulfil the obligations attached to their land grants, these Shāhsevan had come to look on them as private property, and through lack of use the military potential of this ‘militia’ was reduced to nothing. As a result, scarcely any of the nobles recognized their duty to respond to the appeal, most of them declaring that they were obliged to march only in a general expedition led by the Shāh himself. A small number of peasants were duly despatched, ill-paid and ill-equipped, but they returned home in disorder before covering half their journey.

There is no information, however, as to the location of these people and their lands; though we do know that tribespeople called Shāhsevan were in north-east Ādharbāyjān over half a century earlier than this appeal.

In summary, four separate features of Shāh ‘Abbās’s policy appear to have given rise to Malcolm’s mistaken account of the creation of the Shāhsevan tribe.

(i) The promotion of regular troops personally attached to the Shāh, especially the Caucasian qullār cavalry, to counter the military strength of the state-paid praetorian guards, the qorchi, drawn from the Qizilbāsh tribes.

(ii) The practice of breaking up, dispersing, regrouping, and resettling the various tribes.

(iii) The policy referred to by Iskandar Munshi in the ‘Ālam-ārā, of appeals to shāhisevanī, as a means of breaking the influence of rebellious Qizilbash tribal chiefs.

(iv) The practice of paying both regular troops and the provincial reserve militia with land assignments, with their attendant obligations of service.

Krusinski, referring primarily to (iv), attaches the name Shāhsevan to the holders of land assignments, though it is not clear why he should have done so. Malcolm appears to have confused all four features of the policy. In fact, some of the groups that later came to be known as the Shāhsevan tribes probably acquired the name as a result of a fifth feature of ‘Abbās’s policy: the application of the term shāhisevan, as a kind of category or title, to those who either surrendered to the Shāh’s forces or immigrated to his territory. Most groups which acquired this title did not retain it long, but preserved their own tribal

---


names. There is no evidence for the formation of a single composite tribe by
the name of Shâhsevan in Shâh ‘Abbâs’s time, but as a result of the second
feature of his policy, certain distinct geographical areas now contained fragments
of various tribes; in at least one case, that of north-east Ādbarbâyjan, these
fragments eventually came to unite into a confederation, under the only name
which they had in common: the title ‘ Shâhsevan’ which they had acquired
in Shâh ‘Abbâs’s time.

Before discussing the documentary evidence linking the name Shâhsevan
with north-east Ādbarbâyjan, I shall outline the traditions of the present
Shâhsevan tribes of that region, which emphasize their heterogeneous origins
but are not fully consistent with Malcolm’s account.

Shâhsevan traditions

Three versions of the traditions of the Shâhsevan tribes of north-east
Ādbarbâyjan were published in the late nineteenth century. The first was
written by I. A. Ogranoovich in 1870, soon after his appointment as Russian
Frontier Commissar for the Shâhsevan at Belasuvar. The second, published
by the naturalist G. Radde, derives from a manuscript sent by Ogranoovich to
Radde in 1884. The third was published by V. Markov, Russian political
agent, in 1890.\(^{27}\)

All three versions agree that the origin of the Shâhsevan was as follows:
a certain Yunsur Pâshâ from Anatolia brought his nomadic tribes to Persia,
and asked the Shâh for permission to stay. The Shâh graciously acceded to his
request, gave the tribes the name of Shâhsevan, and directed Yunsur Pâshâ
to go and choose himself a suitable area for winter and summer quarters. After
much wandering around the country, Yunsur Pâshâ’s choice fell on the Ardabil
province, including the Sâvalân mountains and the Mughân plains, and that is

---

\(^{27}\) I. A. Ogranoovich, ‘ Svedeniya o Shakhssevenakh ’, Karkazskiy Kalendar na 1871 god,
pt. 2, Tiflis, 1870, 68–84; Gustav Radde, Reisen an der persisch-russischen Grenze. Talysh und
seine Bewohner, Leipzig, 1886; V. Markov, ‘ Shakhseveni na Mugani. Istoriko-entnograficheskiy
ocherk ’, Zap. Kavc. Otd. Russk. Geogr. Obshch., xix, 1, 1890, 1–62. At this time the tribes were
extremely turbulent, being notorious for their raiding activities across the Russian frontier,
but they were still nominally within the control of two hereditary paramount chiefs (elbejî).
Unfortunately none of the authors indicates the tribal affiliations of his sources, but more than
likely they were from the ruling elbejî families or their collaterals, the bejzada. Markov’s main
source appears to be a report compiled in 1879 by E. Krebel, Russian Consul-General in Tabriz
at the time. Passages in Markov’s account are identical with passages in Radde’s, so we may
assume that the latter’s manuscript was also a copy of Krebel’s report. There are, as will be
shown, discrepancies between Radde’s and Markov’s versions of the traditions, and these may
well be explained by revisions or annotations in either copy of Krebel’s report, by either
Ogranoovich, Radde, or Markov, all of whom had first-hand acquaintance with the Shâhsevan.
However, to judge from their accounts, none of the authors were familiar with any Oriental
sources, and their knowledge of Persian history was rudimentary. Without knowing the identity
of the informants, we cannot establish any relationship between discrepancies in the recorded
traditions and differing claims to status on the part of different tribal groups; however, the
general features of these traditions throw considerable light on Shâhsevan politico-economic
organization in the nineteenth century.
where he settled, with his followers to the number of 3,300 tents. Radde and Markov agree that this occurred in the time of Shâh ‘Abbâs I.\textsuperscript{28}

The versions vary considerably as to the names of the tribes which came over with Yunsur Pâshâ, and those which are descended from him.

Ogranovich states that Yunsur Pâshâ lived at Khoy, ‘near lake Urmîya’, where he eventually died, leaving six sons: Kodzha;\textsuperscript{29} Bendali, Polat, Damirchi, Sarukhan, Novruzal—who split up, each having a tribal group or ‘clan’ named after him, with a total of 3,300 tents. Later, offshoots separated from each ‘clan’, though remaining dependent on their original ‘clan’:

Kodzhabeglu: Muratly, Udulu, Khalfeli
Bendalibeglu: Alibababeglu, Beybaglu, Khalfeli
Polatlu: Shikhli, Abubegli, Kuzatlu, Yurtchi, Dursun-Khadzhali, Tekle (2 parts), Ekeli
Damirchalu: Inally, Khadzhi-Khadzhal, Arably
Sarukhanbeglu: Edzhirli, Milli-Khalfeli, Balabegli, Bekdilli, Khomunny, Zerger
Novruzalibeglu: Geikli, Pir-Eyvatlu

The following groups, Ogranovich adds, also came out of Turkey and other places at various times and joined the Shâhsevan: Gyalsh, Sarvanney, Gilovdarry, Talysh-Mikeylyu, Kagremanbegli (bineler), Muganny-Geydar, Irzabegli, Dzhagan-khanumlu, Beybaglu, Geymutchi.

Radde and Markov agree that on arrival some groups separated from Yunsur’s tribe and went, with the Shâh’s permission, to Khurâsân, where they still lived. After Yunsur’s death the Shâhsevan broke up into smaller groups, the heirs dividing not only the property of their father but also his authority over the nomads.

According to Radde, Yunsur Pâshâ had six sons, for whom he gives the same names as Ogranovich, though in a different order. From them six tribes descend:

Saru-Chan-Beklinzen\textsuperscript{30}
Kodshaga-bekly

\textsuperscript{28} Ogranovich gave the time of this immigration as early in the reign of Fath `Ali Shâh, about 1216/1801–2. His editor pointed out that the immediately preceding article in the same issue of \textit{Kaukaszkij Kalendar}, N. von Seiditz, ‘Etnograficheskiy ocherk Bakinskoy gubernii’, 50, quoted an account of the Shâhsevan in Mughân as early as 1728, when they became Russian subjects for a few years: P. G. Butkov, \textit{Materialy dlya novoi istorii Kaukaz s 1722 po 1803 god}, 1, St. Petersburg, 1869, 92.

\textsuperscript{29} In the following I reproduce transliterations of names (except for Yunsur Pâshâ) employed by the authors, Ogranovich and Markov in Russian, Radde in German.

\textsuperscript{30} Radde gives the Germanized Russian ending -linzen for those tribes wintering at the time in Russian territory.
Polat-Beklinzen
Damir-Beklinzen
Nowrus-Ali-Beklinzen

One of the most influential Shähsevan chiefs who came with Yunsur Pāshā to Persia was Kurt-Bek, who had three sons, after one of whom the Kusat-Beklinzen were named. From Kurt-Bek's tribe other sub-groups separated and

Map 2. Sketch-map of north-east Ādharbāyjān.
migrated to Arak (sc. Persian ‘Irāq); two other tribes came over from Turkey in Yunsur’s time, Inally and Bekdilly; finally the tribes Risa-Beklinzen, Sariwanly, and Hemütschy came to Persia. The sub-groups which left Kurt- Bek, and divisions of the Inally and Bekdilly, are given as follows:

Kurt-Bek’s group: Talysch-Mikaily, Chalifely, Munganlinzen, Uduly, Muradly, Serger, etc.


In Markov’s version, Yunsur Pāshā had three grandsons, from whom came the following tribes:

Sarukhan-beklintsy


Kodzha-beklintsy

Kurt-bek in this version also had three sons, from whom came the following tribes: Palatlintsy from Palat-bek; Damirchalinzy from Damir-bek; Kuzatlintsy from Kuzat-bek. Markov gives listings identical to Radde’s of the six tribes which left Kurt-bek’s tribe, to go and live on the Araks (the river Aras), and of the clans of the Inallu and Bekdillu and of the other three tribes which came from Turkey at the same time as Yunsur Pāshā.

Finally Radde and Markov give different versions of the genealogies of the Shāhsevan elbedis. In Radde’s account the elbedis are descended from Yunsur Pāshā’s brother Allach-Kuli-Pascha (also mentioned by Ogranovich), whose two sons were Bedyr-Chan-Pascha and Nasar-Ali-Chan. The latter, and Bedyr-Chan’s son Kutschik-Chan, divided the Shāhsevan between them and quarrelled for a long time, until Kutschik-Chan’s son Ata-Chan drove Nasar-Ali-Chan and his grandson and their followers out of Mishkān; they settled in the Ardabil district, and from that time dates the present (1884) cleavage of the nomadic Shāhsevan into the Mishkān and Ardabil branches, each of which has its own chief. Ata-Chan was succeeded as Mishkān chief by his son Fersi-Chan, while the Ardabil chief Nasar-Ali-Chan was succeeded in turn by his two great-grandsons, Rustem-Chan and Dschafar-Chan. Radde gives genealogical diagrams of the descendants of Yunsur Pāshā and his brother.

In Markov’s account, the elbedis are descended from Yunsur Pāshā himself, through his grandson Sarukhan-bek. One of his descendants was Bedir-khan, whose sons Kyuchuk-khan and Nazar-Ali-khan divided the Shāhsevan between them. Ata-khan, son of Kyuchuk-khan, drove Nazar-Ali-khan’s grandson, also called Nazar-Ali-khan, out of Mishkān, etc. The differences between these two versions can best be illustrated by the accompanying diagram.

Shāhsevan elbeği genealogies

(a) Radde

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yunsur Pāshā</th>
<th>Allāh Qulī Pāshā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sāri Khān</td>
<td>Badr Khān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 'Ali</td>
<td>Nazar 'Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qoja</td>
<td>Küchik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polat</td>
<td>Muhammad Khān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damir</td>
<td>'Aţā Khān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naurūz 'Ali</td>
<td>Muhammad Qulī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir 'Ali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakili Kāzim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ali Baba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

(beţzada tribes)

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qurt Beg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quzāt Beg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```


(b) Markov

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yunsur Pāshā</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sāri Khān Beg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayd 'Ali Beg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qoja Beg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mast 'Ali</th>
<th>Qara</th>
<th>Qāsim</th>
<th>'Ali Bābā</th>
<th>Naurūz 'Ali</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badr Khān</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

(beţzada tribes)

```
| Küchik Khān | Nazar 'Ali |
| 'Aţā Khān   |           |
| Farzi Khān  | Nazar 'Ali |
| (Mishkin elbeği) |  (Ardabil elbeği) |
```

Qurt Beg

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polat</th>
<th>Damir Beg</th>
<th>Quzāt Beg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
```

The elbeği lost control around the turn of the century, and members of their family dispersed into various settlements in the region and elsewhere. Further versions of their traditions have been recorded from scions of the old dynasty. Probably from such a source is the following passage quoted by Balayan:

'The Shāhsevan tribes formed in two branches: one came to Mughān from Urmīya in the sixteenth century during Shāh 'Abbās I’s reign, and the other from [Persian 'Irāq]. The one from Urmīya was that of Bendali-Bek, and his sons Yunsur-khan, Sari-khan, and Kechi-khan.'

Hūsayn Bāybūrdī, a retired colonel in the Persian army, and from an old

---

32 M. Mehtī Tairov and P. A. Pavlenko, Shakhseveniya, ed. F. M. Isayeva, Baku, 1922, 1; quoted by B. P. Balayan, art. cit., 345. Balayan does not quote any further, and I do not know what the authors report of the other branch, from 'Irāq. Another source mentioned by Balayan is Ya. F. Shkinskiy and P. I. Averyanov, Otechet o poyezde po severnomu Azerbaydzhanu v kontse 1899 g., Tiflis, 1900.
family of Arasbārān, a district bordering Shāhsevan territory on the east, writes:

‘The Shāhsevans connected with the Arasbārān sphere are one part of the descendants of Kan’ān Beg and Sārī Khān Beg Afšār. From the time of Nādir Shāh Afšār the leadership and ilkhāni-ship of all the Shāhsevan was with the family of ‘Aṭā-ullāh Khān Sārīkhānbeglū, who was Afšār by origin . . . all Mishkīn and Mughān were under his command, and the tribe of Qojabeglū is named after his brother Qoja Beg. In the same way the tribes Jilaudārlū and Sarvānlū were his grooms and camel-herders, and the rest were servants, workers, chattels, and subjects . . .’.

In December 1965 I talked with another retired army officer who had on a number of occasions been closely involved with Shāhsevan affairs. He recorded for me a detailed story, of which the following is a summary:

‘The Shāhsevan elbeğis and their cousins the bežzada tribes Qojabeglū with ‘Īsabeglū, Mast’alibeglū, Rizābeglū, Sārīkhānbeglū, Bālābeglū, are descended from one Amīr Aşlān, who lived with his tribe in the district of Sārī Qāmish in eastern Anatolia in about 1500. They were Shi‘ī Muslims, and when Sulṭān Salīm began his persecution of the Shi‘īs they decided to flee from Turkey and take refuge in Persian territory. They fought their way across the frontier, reached Diyarbakr and delivered themselves into the protection of the Şafavid governor, Sulṭān Muḥammad Ustājlū, one of the Afšār chiefs [sic]. According to the Shāh’s instructions, the tribe was moved into the interior of Ādharbājān and granted winter pastures around Lake Urmīya and summer pastures on the Sahand mountains. Meanwhile Sulṭān Salīm invaded Ādharbājān. At the battle of Chaldīrān (1514), in which Shāh Ismā‘īl’s Qizilbāsh forces were outarmed, outnumbered, and heavily defeated, Amīr Aşlān’s men fought valiantly and barely three or four of them survived. Shāh Ismā‘īl appreciated their valour and loyalty, and when the tribe had once more grown numerous, and there was no longer any room in the Urmīya region, they were sent to north-east Ādharbājān, and given the Mughān plains and the Khurūzlū hills (which were then areas of lush grazing) as winter and summer pastures. Towards the end of the century, when Shāh ‘Abbās had trouble with the Qizilbāsh tribes, he called on Amīr Aşlān’s people, on whom he knew he could rely, and formed them into a new tribe called Shāhsevan, to counteract the Qizilbāsh. The most notable descendant of Amīr Aşlān was ‘Aṭā Khān, after whom the elbeği dynasty became known as ‘Aṭākhānlū, and also as Sarvānlū “camel-drivers”, presumably because they had hired out camels along the old Silk Road from Trabzon to Zāhīdān [sic], which their original habitat of Sārī Qāmish straddled’.

33 Ḥusayn Bāyhwirdī, Tāriḵ-i Arasbārān, Tehran, 1341/1962, 102.
34 Khān Muḥammad Ustājlū, Shāh Ismā‘īl’s brother-in-law.
35 Their protector Khān Muḥammad, one of the Shāh’s generals, was himself killed in the battle; see Sarwar, op. cit., 53.
I did not ask my informant’s sources, but I suspect the story to be the product of his reading of Persian history and of traditions he heard from the late Amîr Aşlân, chief of the ʻİsâlû, an offshoot of the Qojabegli tribe. I talked with Amîr Aşlân’s son in September 1966, when he gave me a genealogy going back to Shâh Qulî Beg, but an account similar to the above of the ancestor’s arrival in Persia, participation in the battle of Châldirân, etc.

Khân Aqā of Sarvânlâr lives in the village of that name not far from Mishkînshahr. In Mughân in December 1965 he told me that he is the paternal grandson of the last Mishkîn elbeyî, ʻAli Qulî Khân, grandson of the famous ʻAtâ Khân, son of Maḥmûd Khân, son of Kûchik Khân, son of Buyûk Khân, son of Yûnsur Pâshâ, son of Shâh Qulî Pâshâ, who was an important man in Turkey, a Sunni Muslim. Under the early Safavids he came with his people into Persia, was converted to Shi’ism, and sent by the Shâh to watch the marches in the region of Mughân and Mishkîn. The tribes of ʻAtâkhânî/Sarvânlâr, Qojabegli, Bâlâbegli, Sârîkhânbegli, and ʻIsâbegli are cousins, descendants of Shâh Qulî Pâshâ. The latter, said Khân Aqâ, died in Ardâbil and was buried in the precincts of the Safavid shrine. I visited the shrine shortly after and was directed by the gate-keeper to a gravestone plaque located under the outer gateway, bearing the inscription, ‘The tomb of Abû ʻl-Qâsim Beg son of Shâh Qulî Beg’ (marqad-i Abû ʻl-Qâsim Beg bin Shâh Qulî Beg). The gate-keeper assured me that Shâh Qulî Beg was the ancestor of the famous Qojabegli tribe, but he knew no more about him or about the history of the Shâhsevan. There are documents in the shrine library, he said, which might reveal more about Shâh Qulî; but I did not have the necessary authorization to consult them.

I have found no reference to an Amîr Aşlân immigrant from Anatolia in the early sixteenth century, nor among the Safavid army at Châldirân, though an Amîr Aşlân Afshâr was prominent later on.36

All versions so far have probably originated with members of the old ruling elbeyî dynasty or its offshoots.37 The most consistent element in the

---

36 For instance, among Ismâ’îl II’s supporters, who according to the ‘Alamat-ārû called themselves shâhisevan; see above, p. 325. Note also my informant’s reference to Khân Muhammad Ustâjîlî as an Afshâr chief; Ustâjîlî is usually reckoned a clan of the Shâmîlî tribe by origin; in any case, we shall have reason to connect both Afshâr and Shâmîlî with the Shâhsevan. As for Shâh Qulî Beg, this name is among the commonest for the Qizilbash chiefs, and there is no reason to connect any particular one of those mentioned in the sources with the presumed Shâhsevan ancestor. It is probably not a significant coincidence that names figuring in the traditions often have the same literal meaning, e.g. Shâh Qulî ‘slave of the Shâh’ or ‘of ‘Ali’; Band ‘Ali’ slave of ‘Ali’; ‘Allâh Qulî ‘slave of God’.

37 I was told by the chief of Geyiklû, a large tribe which did not claim common descent with the former elbeyîs, that in Shâh ‘Abbâs’s time three brothers came to Persia: the eldest, Qojâ Beg, was the ancestor of the Mughân Shâhsevan chiefs; the second, Yûnsur Pâshâ, was the ancestor of the tribes of Qarâdâgh; the third, ‘Ali Mardân, went south and founded the Qashqâ’î confederation in Fârs. I was also told of the existence of a MS history of the Shâhsevan, in Ottoman Turkish, a copy of which was promised me on several occasions; however, I was not fortunate enough to be allowed to examine this elusive work, and am not even convinced of its existence.
stories appears to be the association of the ancestors either with the Afshār tribe or with the district of Urmiya, which in fact became the domain of the Ímānlū branch of the Afshār tribe after their arrival there at the end of the sixteenth century. The evidence from tradition, that the nineteenth-century Shāhsevan elbeğiš were of Afshār origins, seems overwhelming; I shall examine other evidence for this below.

Apart from the former ‘noble’ (elbeği and beţzada) tribes, many others of the present Shāhsevan tribes of north-east Ādharbāyyjān believe that their ancestors came from Rūm and/or Shām, but nobody claims common descent or a unitary origin for all of them. Several tribes have preserved traditions of origin separate from the ‘nobles’, and the names of others indicate different provenance for them too. Thus the Mughānlū tribe, traditionally large, rich, and peaceable and somewhat different in character from other Shāhsevan groups, is said by some to have come to the region from an original homeland in Bākū or Shīrvān. According to Tairov and Pavlenko, ‘The Mughānlū tribe came earlier than all the other tribes from [Persian ‘Īrāq] and took qīshlāqs in Mughān along the Aras, and received their name in this way’.

There are references to Mughān in 1570 and again in 1623, long before the Shāhsevan are first heard of in Mughān. Then in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century


39 The Qurt Beg group mentioned in both Radde’s and Markov’s accounts (see above) may also be of Afshār origins. Sümer mentions no Turkoman tribal group called Qurtbegli, but one group called Kutbegli, an Afshār clan in south-east Anatolia in the fifteenth century; nothing is known of their later fate, but perhaps they came to Persia with the Ímānlū Afshārs and the Ínāllū, with both of whom they are associated; Sümer, op. cit., 263, 268. In recent years there has been a large tribe of Qurtbegli Shāhsevan in the Khamsa region. That they may be the descendants of Radde’s and Markov’s Qurt Beg’s group is indicated by the discrepancies in the two accounts: Markov states that certain groups separated from Qurt Beg’s tribe and went to live on the Aras river, while Radde gives their destination as ‘Arak’, so ‘Īrāq-i ‘Ajam, a large area of western Persia sometimes taken to include the Khamsa region. Movement to the Aras would not have meant much of a separation from Qurt Beg’s tribe, if the latter was with Yunsur Pāshā in Mughān, which is after all bounded by the Aras; and would thus hardly warrant special mention. For this reason, Radde’s ‘Arak’ seems more likely, except for the fact that the tribes which both sources list as having left Qurt Beg—Tālisī Mikā’illū, Khalīfīlū, Mughānlū, Udulū, Murādlū, Zargar—are all now found among the Shāhsevan of Mughān; i.e. they at any rate did not move to ‘Irāq. The puzzle remains.

40 The forty or so ‘commoner’ tribes are generally social units of some continuity, but in few of them do all the component sections claim common descent or origin, and there is sometimes documentary evidence for their heterogeneity. The ‘noble’ tribes themselves include subordinate sections of different origins.

41 Tairov and Pavlenko, op. cit., quoted in Balayan, art. cit., 369.

42 I am grateful to Mr. A. H. Morton for the information that a vaqfnāma concerning properties in Mīshkīn and Mughān belonging to one Malik Mīrzā Beg ibn Sayfāl Beg Mughānī, is copied in the Sarīh al-milk, original dated 977/1570, Tehran National Library M5 fā’ 2734, pp. 194–5. The original document, badly damaged, is in the chini-khāna of the Ardabil shrine, No. 403 in Mr. Morton’s inventory. Travelling through the Mughān steppe south of the Kur in 1623, K. F. Kotov met nomads called Mughanī living in felt tents, see Khos httpClient kuptsa Fedota Kotova v Persiyu, ed. A. A. Kuznetsov, Moscow, 1958, 36, 73.
sources Mughānlū are mentioned as neighbours of but separate from the Shāhsevan, and possibly of Kurdish origins.43

One other group of tribes, the Yeddī-Oymaq/Begdīlū complex, has traditions of common origin. The chief of the Begdīlū, now a villager in Mughān, told me that there was once a tribe Yeddī-Oymaq, composed (as its name indicates) of 'seven clans', which he listed as Begdīlū, Homunlū, Ayvatlū, Ḥājjī-Khojalū, Gaballū, İnallū, 'Arablū; all of these are now Shāhsevan tribes, though he knew nothing further of their origins. Several nineteenth-century sources mention the Begdīlū in north-east Ādharbāyjān, together with but distinct from the Shāhsevan,44 while other groups of this name have long been found in various parts of Persia. One of the original Ghuzz Turkoman tribes was Begdīlū, which arrived by the fourteenth century in Syria and Anatolia, where large sections of them have remained ever since.45 A branch came thence to Persia as part of the composite Qizīlbašt tribe of Shāmlū, and provided many important Šafavīd administrators, particularly under Shāh 'Abbās I. In the 'Ālam-ārā, among numerous references to Begdīlū personages, we learn that one of the Shāmlū notables, 'Gundoghmush Sultan Bekdīlū, who lived in Tā'ūk of Kirkūk, with his followers, having in [Shāh 'Abbās's] first campaign to Baghdād [1623] become Shāhsevan, presented himself to the Shāh, received the rank of Sultan, and has various assignments in the lands of Ādharbāyjān'.46 There is, however, no tradition or other evidence to connect this individual, or any of those mentioned in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,47 with the present Begdīlū tribe among the Shāhsevan of north-east Ādharbāyjān.

Apart from the Begdīlū, a number of other Qizīlbašt tribal names are found among the Shāhsevan: İnallū, Ajirlū, Takla/Takileh/Takalū, and Dilaqārdā/Dilaqādār(lū) which may be identified with the Turkoman Dulaqādīr/Dhū'qalidar. I was unable to consult members of any of these except Ajirlū, which appears however to have preserved no distinctive traditions other than possible membership of the Yeddī-Oymaq group. The İnallū, Ajirlū, and Begdīlū were sections of the great composite Qizīlbašt tribe of Shāmlū. In Markov's and Radde's versions of the traditions it is from the İnallū and

43 See below, p. 352. Like the Mughānlū, the Arāllū/Arālū tribe too has only just been accepted into the number of the Shāhsevan; they preserve traditions of comparative autochthony in the Ujārūd–Ṭalish region. The Lārlū are based on the village of Lārī/Lārūd, as the Khāulū are on Khāul/Mishkinshahr. Yārtchī are said to have had a special role choosing Nādir Shāh's camp-site (gyurt), v. Radde, op. cit., 442, but cf. Markov, art. cit., 13. Others of the present tribes (Khuraunlū, Jaferlū) have plausible stories of comparatively recent advent to the region. The names of others (Shaykhlū, Sayyidīlar, 'Arablū, Qurtlar, Tālish-Mīkallū) suggest separate, non-Turkic origins, though these may well have been in the Shāhsevan confederation since its formation.
45 Sümner, Ojuzlar, esp. 292–304.
46 'Ālam-ārā, 1085.
47 Sümner, Ojuzlar, 302–4.
Begdilū (including Ajirlū) tribes that most of the non-chiefly Shāhsevan tribes are descended; they do not mention the Shāmlū, which is not surprising, since like many of the Qizilbāsh tribes Shāmlū disintegrated in the eighteenth century into its component parts.48

The evidence from the traditions indicates that most of the present Shāhsevan tribes originated in Anatolia and that they arrived in Persia in association with, if not as part of, certain of the Qizilbāsh tribes, especially the Afshār and Shāmlū. It is now in place to examine the literary evidence concerning the tribal population of north-east Ādharbāyjān and the first appearances in that region either of groups explicitly called Shāhsevan, or of the various Qizilbāsh and other names mentioned above.

North-east Ādharbāyjān under the Šafavids

Eastern Transcaucasia has always offered a highly favourable environment for both pastoral and agricultural activities. High mountains, with abundant summer pasturages, command the vast and fertile Shīrvān, Qarābāgh, and Mughān plains of the lower Aras and Kur rivers, which at once provide correspondingly extensive winter grazing and invite the construction of large-scale irrigation works. The plains were a favourite wintering place of conquerors, while not surprisingly the whole area was long the object of intense struggle between powerful nations. The Šafavids gained control at the beginning of the sixteenth century, but had difficulty keeping it from the Russians and various Caucasian powers, and when the dynasty crumbled in the early eighteenth century, the area was divided briefly between the Ottomans and Russians. It was the latter who eventually, after a further 80 years of Persian hegemony, annexed most of the area for good.

It is also a natural cross-roads, and trade and travel between Russia and Persia and between Anatolia and Central Asia passed through or close by. From Šafavid times, travellers and merchants from Europe commonly journeyed overland through Russia and took ship on the Caspian, to land at Shīrvān and halt awhile at the growing trading centre of Shamākhī, before crossing the Kur at the Javāt bridge and passing via Mughān and Ardabil into central Persia, and beyond to India.

Of the several excellent pastoral nomad habitats which centre on this area, the only one still left in Persian territory is the region I have termed north-east Ādharbāyjān, from the Mughān steppe to the mountains of Savalān, Buzgūş, and Baghrau. While the other plains fell within the provinces of Qarābāgh and Shīrvān, the Mughān steppe south of the Aras and Kur rivers seems to have been regularly part of the Ādharbāyjān province. It is not clear, however,

48 Some of the Shāmlū, at least, became part of the Afshār tribe by the beginning of the eighteenth century; A. K. S. Lambton, 'Itāt', EI, second ed., iii, 1102. A century later James Morier reports that one of the two Afshār clans was Shāmlū; 'Some account of the išiyāts, or wandering tribes of Persia, obtained in the years 1814 and 1815', Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, vii, 1837, 233.
exactly how north-east Ṣadharbāyjān was divided administratively during the Ṣafavid era. Geographically the following districts could be distinguished: Qarādāgh (Qarāja-dāgh), Sarāb, Khalkhāl, Ardabil, Tālish, Mughān, Ujārūd, Barzand, Ungūt, Mishkīn, and Arshaq. Of these, Qarādāgh (and its component districts), Ardabil, and Tālish were governed separately, while the rest, on occasion independent districts, were usually administered by the governor of one or other of the three already mentioned.

Important trade routes passed through Ardabil, leading to the Caspian, to Miyāna and the south, to Tabrīz and the west, and to Mughān, Shirvān, and the north. The major towns were Ardabil and Sarāb, Ahar in Qarādāgh, Lankarān in Tālish, and Sālyān on the edge of Mughān. There was also a substantial settlement at Javāt with its strategically important bridge over the Kur.

A whole range of country in the centre of the region, stretching from the Savałān mountains to the Aras and Kur rivers, and covering the districts of Mishkīn, Arshaq, Ungūt, Barzand, Ujārūd, and Mughān, did not contain a town of any size. However, this tract contained not only rich pastures but also fertile agricultural lands, and it also straddled two of the important trade routes: between Ardabil and Mughān and between Ardabil, Ahar, and Tabrīz. Control over these resources and their revenues would have been, in the period under discussion just as certainly as it was later, the object of competition both between the nomadic tribes and among the provincial administrators and landowners.

The advent of Turkic peoples to this region may be traced back to the Ghuzz invasions of the early eleventh century. The Saljūqīd Ghuzz Turkoman tribes, which came into Khurāsān in late Ghaznavid times, soon expanded to the west and south, and large numbers concentrated in Ṣadharbāyjān; more than likely the excellent pastures of Mughān and Ardabil attracted many to settle there. The Saljūqīd conquest meant a victory for the Sunnī religion, and the eventual adoption of the Turki language by the indigenous Iranian population of Ṣadharbāyjān. During the twelfth century, while the Turkomans moved forward into Asia Minor, Ṣadharbāyjān was ruled by the Atabeg Eldigöz and his successors. When the Mongols arrived, in 1220–1 their generals Jebe and Subutai wintered in Mughān before ravaging Georgia and the rest of Ṣadharbāyjān, driving out the Turkomans. Hulagu Khān came in 1256, and he and his successors ruled in Persia for 130 years; Ṣadharbāyjān was their metropolitan province and many of the Mongols must have settled south of our area, around Marāgha, Tabrīz, and Sultānīya, but more than half of Hulagu’s armies had been composed of Central Asian Turkomans, and in 1258 he settled large numbers of them in Transcaucasia. Minorsky considered that the Mongol elements were quickly assimilated, losing their own culture, religion and

49 From Ṣafavid times until the development of Khīāu/Mishkinshahr in the present century, the largest villages in this tract were Garmī, Barzand, and Lārūd, each with a population probably not exceeding 2,000 souls, not large enough ever to have provided a governor’s residence.
language and adopting those of the Turkomans. After Timūr conquered Ādharbāyjān in 1386 he liked to winter in the district of Qarābāgh and Mughān. He also brought large numbers of Turkomans back from Asia Minor to Ādharbāyjān, where some of them became known as Rūmlū and Shāmlū. The Turkic nomads of the Qara Qoyunlu confederation, largely descendants of the Saljuqs who had moved into Armenia, Upper Mesopotamia, and Anatolia, came back and seized Ādharbāyjān from Timūr's son Mirān Shāh. At this period and later in the fifteenth century under their rivals the Āq Qoyunlu confederation, steppe pastoralism prevailed. After the groups brought by Timūr and by the Qara Qoyunlu and Āq Qoyunlu, yet another wave of Turkoman tribes returned from the west to Ādharbāyjān under the early Safavid monarchs. The great majority of Shah Ismā‘īl I's supporters belonged to the tribes from Asia Minor, Syria and Armenia mixed with the tribes detached from the rival Qara-qoyunlu and Āq-qoyunlu.

These Qizilbash tribes, mostly of Turkoman origin, were nomadic pastoralists, raising stock for sale and living in tents apart from the surrounding Persian population, whom they called tāt or tājik with some scorn. They migrated between summer and winter quarters, and were organized in clans, obeying their own chieftains. Most of them soon dispersed to various parts of northwest Persia, wherever their leaders had been appointed governors or had acquired or been granted tribal territories (ulkā'). These grants were not necessarily permanent at this period. Before Shāh 'Abbās's reforms tribal leaders were also commonly both military commanders and provincial governors; under Shāh Ṭahmāsp, they were moved around, no tribe having a special claim to the government of a specific area.

It is difficult to establish which of the tribes were to be found nomadizing in the Mughān–Ardabil region during the sixteenth century. An early reference concerns some of the Takalū tribe; having fled in 1531 to Baghdad after their defeat by Shāh Ṭahmāsp (see above), nine years later Ghāzī Khān Takalū deserted the Turks, and came to Court with 5,000 men, and was given as assignment (tuyūl) the territories (ulkā') of Sālyān and Maḥmūdābād, among the districts of Shīrvān. Between 1549 and 1579 Shīrvān was governed for the Safavids by Qizilbash chiefs from the Ustājlū, Rūmlū, Takalū, and Dulqadir.

51 Barbaro and Contarini describe nomad life of the Turkomans at the time; indeed Barbaro details the construction of a Turkoman tent in north-east Ādharbāyjān apparently identical to the present Shāhsevan salaqū; J. Barbaro and A. Contarini, Travels to Tana and Persia, tr. by W. Thomas and S. A. Roy, ed. by Lord Stanley of Alderley (Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, [First Series], 49), London, 1873.
52 Minorsky, Tadhkira al-muluk, 188.
53 Jean Chardin, Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient, ed. Langles, v, Paris, 1811, 300 ff. All these characteristics they share with present Shāhsevan tribes.
54 Lambton, ' Ṭāt ', 1101.
55 Seddon, op. cit., i (Persian text), 295–6. These were farming communities, with lands irrigated by canals from the Kur, but probably including the steppe pastures of Mughān.
tribes, who presumably had large numbers of their followers living a pastoral life in the vicinity. Balayan believes that Takalū tribesmen occupied Mughān for half a century following their advent in 1540. During this time, the Takalū became more and more refractory; they rebelled with the Turkmān tribe in 1584, and their loyalty became so suspect that finally in 1005/1596–7 Shāh ‘Abbās issued an order for their total destruction. In Balayan’s view this meant their abandonment of Mughān, and was the occasion for the latter to be set aside for the newly created Shāhsevan tribe. Now it may be that this was indeed the time when a new tribe was formed, given the name Shāhsevan, and allotted the pastures of north-east Ādharbājijān, but Balayan presents no evidence for this nor for the continued occupation of Mughān by Takalū between 1540 and 1596. Actually most of the Takalū lived in the Hamadān area towards the end of the sixteenth century, and the massacre was carried out there. However, some of Ghażī Khān’s tribesmen may have remained in the Mughān region, and others may have dispersed there after the massacre, for Takalūs were definitely in Mughān by 1638.

Shirvān was occupied by the Ottomans from 1579 to 1607, as was much of Ādharbājijān from 1585 to 1603. By the treaty of 1591–2, Shāh ‘Abbās held them to the west of Sarāb and Khudā-Āfarīn, and north of the Aras. Qarābāgh, Qarādāgh, and Shirvān were occupied, but Mishkīn, Mughān, and Tālish were left in Persian control and administered from Ardabil. This must now have been a politically sensitive frontier region, particularly as it contained the Šafavid shrines at Ardabil, though it was probably also by 1600 in a state of considerable desolation. ‘Abbās’s usual border policy of creating a ‘buffer state’ region, occupied by semi-independent tribes, would not have sufficed for north-east Ādharbājijān and the shrine, and the defenders of this region would have enjoyed the Shāh’s extreme confidence.

For the first part of Shāh ‘Abbās’s reign, during the Ottoman occupation of western Ādharbājijān, the rest of the province was governed from Ardabil by Mahdī Quli Khān Bījarlū Shāmlū, and then by Dhub‘liqār Khān Qaramānlū.

56 See B. Dorn, Geschichte Shirwans, pt. II of Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kaukasischen Länder und Völker, St. Petersburg, 1849, also Leipzig, 1967. Anthony Jenkinson noted nomadic pastoralists in Mughān in 1562, but does not name them: Early voyages and travels to Russia and Persia (Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, [First Series,] 72–3), I. London, 1885–6, 128–9. They may have been Takalū, or tribal followers of the governor of Shirvān, ‘Abdullāh Khān Ustājlū.
57 ‘Alam-ārā, 529–30, and see above; Balayan, art. cit., 338, 360.
58 ‘Alam-ārā, 322, 340, 529.
59 See below, p. 348. We hear of Musayyib Khān Takalū accompanying Muhammad Khān Turkmān from Tālish and Ardabil to court at the very beginning of Shāh ‘Abbās’s reign (1587); Müller, op. cit., 30. In the nineteenth century, separate groups of Takalū were to be found dispersed over Russian Ādharbājijān, see D. I. Ismail-zade, ‘Iz istorii kochevogo khozyaystva Azerbaidzhanana pervoy polovini xix v.’, Istoricheskiy Zapisiki, 1960, 125 and map 1.
60 Röhrborn, op. cit., 7.
61 Or Mahdī Quli Khān Chāushīlū Ustājlū, see Röhrborn, op. cit., 35.
Considerable land in the Ardabil and Mughān districts was held in *soyūrghāl* by members of the Shaykhāvānd and Zāhidī families, both closely related to the Šafavids.⁶² It is not clear who else were among the local grant-holders near Ardabil at this time. There is no specific reference to named tribal or nomadic peoples in north-east Ādharbāyjān, though we hear that in 1603 the nomad tribes of Ardabil, Arshaq, and Tašīsh were ordered to help the Georgian Prince Constantine to recover the province of Shirvān.⁶³ Then there is a reference to shāhisevanān, which might, if supported by other evidence, be taken as referring to a tribal group under that name. In 1000/1591–2, Alvand Sultān, governor-elect of Lankarān, was prevented from taking up his post by Amir Ḥamza Khān of Tašīsh. The latter was defeated and the former installed, with the help of Šafavids from Ardabil, and the ‘crowd (tabaqā) of the Shaykhāvānds and shāhisevanān’.⁶⁴ This isolated early reference to Shāhīsevan in the Ardabil district remains ambiguous and can of itself hardly be taken to constitute proof of the existence of a tribe of that name.⁶⁵

Throughout 'Abbās’s reign there are frequent references to declarations of shāhisevanān, i.e. loyalty and submission on the part of immigrants and refugees from outside Persia, and surrender on the part of enemies. Arakel of Tabriz, a contemporary observer, mentions three such declarations, by Ottomans and Armenians at Erivan in 1604, and by Kakhetians in 1615.⁶⁶ The references in the ‘Ālam-ārā are numerous, and many of them concern events not far from Mughān and Ardabil; but none of them concern a Yunsur Pāshā or any other supposed Shāhīsevan ancestors, nor can any be interpreted as evidence for the formation of a tribe or a militia called Shāhīsevan. Some of these references are


⁶³ 'Ālam-ārā, 670 ff. This venture failed, and when Shirvān was recovered in 1607, it was the same Dhū’l-fiqār Khān Qarāmānlū who became governor-general.

⁶⁴ 'Ālam-ārā, 442.

⁶⁵ Balayan, art. cit., 346, finds it unlikely that recent immigrants from Ottoman territory, such as the Shāhīsevan tribes claim to have been, would have been entrusted with the defence of any frontier region against their former countrymen, his implication being that either the Shāhīsevan did not come from Anatolia, or they did not arrive in north-east Ādharbāyjān before 1600. He forgets the religious factor: a declaration of *shāhisevanān* included a conversion from Sunni or Christian to Shi‘i affiliations, if the immigrants were not already Shi‘i before they arrived. In many cases, newcomers had left Sunni domains and ‘become Shāhīsevan’ just because, as Shi‘is, they were being persecuted. In other words, it would have been quite logical to entrust the defence of north-east Ādharbāyjān, during Ottoman occupation of neighbouring districts, to loyal *shāhisevanān*, devoted adherents of the Shi‘a sect and the Šafavi family, who would be fanatical in their defence of the shrine-city and their resistance to the hated Sunni Ottomans. However, there is no indication other than the above in the ‘Ālam-ārā, that people known as Shāhīsevan were especially introduced into the region at this time.

worth citing, however, partly as negative evidence, and partly to show the kinds of processes which would have been affecting north-east Ādharbāyjān at this time.

After the original Turkoman recruitment by the early Šafavids, at the end of the sixteenth century many more groups, both Shi‘i and Sunnī, left the expanding and oppressive Ottoman Empire to take refuge with the Šafavids in Persia. In both Ottoman and Persian domains tribal confederacies were being deliberately broken up, regrouped, diluted, and displaced. At the turn of the century, eastern Anatolia in particular was in a state of thorough turmoil due to the Jalālī rebellion, whose initial anti-Ottoman activities increased after Sultān Murād’s death in 1602–3 and intensified still further in the terrible famine that lasted from 1605 to 1609. In 1608 some 15,000 Jalālīs, having been heavily chastised by Ottoman troops, fled to Persia and declared themselves Šakhtešan. They were warmly but cautiously received at Erivan and Tabrīz, and their chiefs were brought to court at Iṣfahān, while they spent the winter in ʿIrāq. The following spring they were granted lands in Kūrtistān.67

It was particularly at the time of Shāh ʿAbbās’s recovery of Ādharbāyjān from the Ottomans (1603–4) that various groups joined him to declare their loyalty. In 1604 Amīr Gūnā Khān Qājār was sent to occupy Qarābāgh; when he crossed the Aras at the Khudā-Āfarīn bridge, ‘many of the tribes (ʿil va ʿoymat) of the Qājarīs and Oṭūz-īkī Turkmāns of Qarābāgh, having become Šakhtešan, assembled before him’68. At this time, too, the ex-Qızılbash tribes Qazāqlār, Shamsaldīnlū, and Ḥājjīlār from Qarābāgh, who had officially recognized Ottoman authority, now came to submit to Shāh ʿAbbās and to declare themselves once more eager to adopt the ‘flashing twelve-notched cap of the Twelvers’,69 in other words to re-enter the ranks of the Qızılbash gorči guards, whose symbol this strange cap was.

Other groups left the Ottoman frontier provinces at the same time to become the Shāh’s subjects:

‘Meanwhile a body of tribes of mixed origins (ʿoymat-i mutafarrīqa) of the


\[\text{68 ʿĀlam-ārā, 657. It is tempting to connect these Oṭūz-īkī ‘Thirty-two’ with the Shāhsevan of Mughān, who nowadays state it as dogma that they have always consisted of 32 tribes. There is a stock phrase: otuz-īkī Shaksīvīn-dā, ‘throughout the Shāhsevan’. However, the Oṭūz-īkī tribe has persisted until recently in Qarābāgh with no close connexion with the Shāhsevan. Besides, the number 32 seems to have almost the same proverbial value as the number 40; apart from the Oṭūz-īkī and the Mughān Shāhsevan, the Qızılbash confederation itself is said to have comprised 32 tribes, see G. Le Strange (ed. and tr.), Don Juan of Persia, a Shiah Catholic, 1560–1604, London, 1926, 45. According to Minorsky, ‘the opposite number of the Oṭūz-īkī were the Yigirmi-dört, i.e. the Twenty-Four Kurdish tribes of Qarābāgh’, Tadhkīrat ul-mulūk, 167. The Yigirmi-dört are associated with, or part of, the Qājarīs of Qarābāgh, while the Oṭūz-īkī are associated with, or part of, the Javānhīr tribe, see ‘ʿĀlam-ārā, 857, 1085. On the Javānhīr, see Mīrzā Jamāl Javānhīr Qarābāghī, Tārīkh-i Qarābāgh, Baku, 1969; and Āhmādbāy Javanshir, Qarabag Khanlūyun niṣṭast vażiyāyītinā dar, ed. A. B. Shūktūrazdā, Baku, 1961.

\[\text{69 ʿĀlam-ārā, 648–9; see also, ibid., 416–17, 643.} \]
province of Rûm, who had called themselves in Turki Sil-supür, i.e. "Sweep-clean", having become shâhisevan, to the number of 2,000 households applied in expectation at the royal Court ... They would pass through every district of the Rûm provinces, and whatever they found they swept clean with the broom of disaster, in conformity with their name'. Their elders came to the Court and 'qishlâq and yaylâq having been appointed for the above tribe (tâ'-îfâ) in the provinces of Ray, Sâva, Khâr, and Frûzkûh, they returned to 'Irâq'.

Later it is stated that the above Sil-supür immigrants were led by one Khalîl Sultân. On their reception in Persia, 'some of them were enrolled in the ranks of the great gorchi, the rest were appointed to the retinue of the same Khalîl Sultân'. The latter, retaining his name Sil-supür, figures among Shâh 'Abbâs's generals.

So far, of the Qizilbash tribes which we have reason to connect with the Shâhisevan, the following names have appeared in the region: governors at Shîrvân from Dulqadîr and Takalû, groups of the latter in Mughân, and a Shâmlû (Ustâjlû?) governor at Ardabîl. The Afshâr have not yet made their appearance. There is little further information to indicate the nature of the tribal population of the region in the early seventeenth century. A Qârawânîlû governor of Ardabîl has been mentioned; after Shâh 'Abbâs recovered Ædharbâyân, the governor-general once more resided at Tabrîz, and Ardabîl and the rest were districts within the province; by 1628 the governor of Ardabîl and Sârâb was from the Ispîrîlû tribe, but there must have been nomads from other groups in the vicinity—the Mughânî/Mughânîlû have already been mentioned.

Balayan suggests reasonably that some of the Jalâlî immigrants found their way to the region, and that the famine of 1605–9 may have forced some of the settled population to adopt a nomadic existence. Finally, Arakel

70 'Ālam-ārâ, 648.
71 'Ālam-ārâ, 782, 797, 1046, 1087. Sûmer, op. cit., 152, referring to his forthcoming study of the role of the Turks in the Šâfâvî state, writes that the Jerid-Sil-stîpur came from the Dulqadîrlî district of Anatolia, whence came also the Qizilbash tribes of Dulqadîrlû, Shâmlû, and Īmânûlû Afshâr. A MS of the 'Ālam-ārâ used by Petrushevskiy differs from the published version in the passage quoted above, adding that the Sil-supür were appointed land for settlement (yûrî uth maqâm) in the Sâva district; I. P. Petrushevskiy, Ocherki po istorii feodalnykh otnosheniy v Azerbaydzhan i Armenii v xvi–nachale xix vv., Leningrad, 1949, 96. Balayan is led by this, by his former assumptions concerning the population of Mughân, and by confusing the gorchi with the qullâr, to conclude that the Shâhîsevan tribal organization was already in existence by this date (1604), and that it was now overflowing from the Mughân–Ardabîl region; art. cit., 347–8.
72 'Ālam-ārâ, 1085; Petrushevskiy, op. cit., 131. In Shîrvân, Dhu'-l-Îqâr Khân Qâramânîlû was followed as governor-general by a number of ghlûms, until in 1635, under 'Abbâs's successor Shâh Şâfi, the post went to 'Arab Khân of the Shâmlû tribe, a man of humble origins from Sârâb. Other notables in Shîrvân in the early seventeenth century came from the Alpâtû and Khinislû tribes. Under Shâh 'Abbâs the governors of the neighbouring districts of Qarâdâgh and Arasbârân seem regularly to have been drawn from the local tribes of Qarâdâghlû and Bâyûrûlû, whose descendants remain there today; 'Ālam-ārâ, 1086.
73 See above, p. 338.
74 Balayan, art. cit., 341, 347, 352.
of Tabriz, describing Shâh 'Abbâs's wholesale transfer of the Armenian population from Erivan to Isfahân, mentions that, having passed down the Aras valley, they spent the winter of 1604–5 in the districts of Mishkîn, Ahar, Khalkhâl, and Târum; some of these Armenians remained in north-east Ādharbâyân in communities which exist today.

Although the evidence is lacking, it remains quite likely that, of the many Turkoman tribal groups which did at this time declare themselves shâhîsevan, whether on immigration to Persian territory or as a result of some upheaval within it, one or more were allotted the pasture-lands of Mughân and Ardabil, as the Shâhsevan traditions tell us they were. It is not long after Shâh 'Abbâs's death that we begin to hear more detailed travellers' reports concerning the nomadic tribes of that region.

The Holstein ambassadors whose journey to Persia was described by Adam Olearius, passed through Mughân in the spring of 1637; between Shamâkhi and Jâvat they met

'a company of Sheep-herds and Cow-herds, who march'd with their Houses and all their Household Stuff, their Wives and Children, all as it were shuffled together in Wagons, or pack'd up upon Horses, Cows, Asses, and other Creatures, not ordinarily us'd in carriage, after a very odd manner, and such as represented a very Fantastick kind of Trans-migration'.

In the Ardabil districts Olearius mentions Arabian and Turkish shepherds who are 'allow'd to feed their Cattel thereabouts, and to Trade therewith in those Parts, after they have purchased the Schach's Protection, or embrac'd the Religion of the Persians', and who pay substantial pasture-dues and sales-tax on their animals. It appears that the pastures of north-east Ādharbâyân were largely the property of the Ardabil shrine. This account fits very well with the traditional versions of the origin of the Shâhsevan, though we still do not find any local tribes named. However, on their return through Mughân in February 1638, Olearius observed of the steppe:

'It is inhabited by several peoples and families, whose Predecessors, having born Arms under the command of Jesid against Hossein, were banished into this Desert, and they are not permitted to live either in Cities or Villages. In Summer, they encamp at the foot of the Mountain, and in Winter, they lodge in Tents upon the Heath.

They subsist by their Cattel, but so poorly, that it is as much as they can do. Whence it comes, that they are called Sumek Rajeti, either for that, from bone to bone, that is, from Father to Son, they are subject to the King no otherwise than as the most miserable Slaves are, or that they have hardly left them wherewith to cover their bones. They are a kind of Savages, and their chief families are called Chotze Tshaubani, Tekle,
Elmenku, Hatzikasilu, Sultan bacschelu, Carai, Ardendu schenu, Chaletz, &c. I speak in another particular Treatise of the origins of these families, and the manner of life of these people.\textsuperscript{78} Alas! I have not found any such Treatise. Of the names, Tekle (Taкалũ), Chaletz (Khalaи), and Carai (Qarai, Qaralăr, or Karai) are all found in eastern Transcaucasia in the nineteenth century. Takile/Takalû and Qaralăr are names of present-day Shâhsevan tribes. Chotze Tschoubani (Khvâja Chûbâni) are also mentioned in 1649 as being responsible for the flocks belonging to the Ardabil shrine.\textsuperscript{79} Hatzikasilu (Ḫâjî Qâžîlû), and Sultan bacschelu (Sultãn Bakhshlû, or Pashalû?) are recognizable names, though they are not heard of elsewhere,\textsuperscript{80} while Elmenku\textsuperscript{81} and Ardendu schenu are hard to decipher.

As for their Predecessors\textsuperscript{82} ‘having born Arms under the command of Jesid against Hossein’, this is presumably a periphrasis for ‘having fought for the Sunni Ottoman against the Shi‘i Persians’, which would clearly be true of what we know of the Takalû, and the presence of a Takalû remnant in Mughan could be regarded as the result of banishment. Yet, on their way across Mughan, the ambassadors passed a wayside chapel which contained the sepulchre of Bairam Tekle (Obasã), said to have been a famous robber of Shāh Abbâs’s time, who gathered 12,000 men and did more damage to the Turkish invaders under Jaqâl Oghlû than the royal army could. Shâh Abbâs rewarded him with villages, lands, and the title of Khan.\textsuperscript{82} This is not consistent with the ‘exile’ story the traveller relates earlier on the same page. Although it must have taken many years for the area to recover from the devastations of the Ottoman-Persian wars, one should not set too much store by Olearius’s and later travellers’ observations on the poverty-stricken appearance of the nomads in Mughan. Given the exceptional qualities of the pasture-lands of north-east Ardhabâyjân, it is most unlikely that groups would have been sent there by Shâh Abbâs as exiles; the traditional version, that these pastures were granted as a reward for loyalty, seems more credible.

The most notable conclusion that can be drawn from Olearius’s account is

\textsuperscript{78} ibid., 295.
\textsuperscript{79} Shaykh Ḥusayn, op. cit., 49.
\textsuperscript{80} Z. V. Toğan, ‘Azerbaycan’, \textit{Islam ansiklopedisi}, II. 1943, 92, considers that Hatzikasilu is the present-day Shâhsevan ḫâ’ja Ḥâjî-Khwâjâli/Khojâli, but I find this far-fetched.
\textsuperscript{81} Possibly Armanilû = Armenians?
\textsuperscript{82} Olearius, op. cit., 295. In early spring 1608, the Ottoman governor of Baghêdã declared himself shâhîsûn and sent an envoy to Shâh Abbâs to invite him to take over the city; the envoy was one Bayrâm Khân Takalû, who had been among the Takalû Khâns who fled earlier from Persia to Baghêdã (see above, p. 325). The Shâh accepted the invitation, but before his Qizilbash army had time to reach Baghêdã, an Ottoman army attacked the city, and the governor changed his mind. Meanwhile the Jalâlis arrived in Persia (see above, p. 345), and further plans for Baghêdã were postponed; ‘Ašar-âr, 764-5. Bayrâm Khân Takalû, who presumably remained in Persia, was perhaps sent to Mughan on this occasion, though the story in the ‘Ašar-âr hardly amounts to documentation for that which Olearius tells. We are left wondering, was it Olearius’s Persian escort, or the tribesmen themselves, who told him of the latters’ origins; no doubt his ‘particular Treatise’ could tell us more.
negative, that apart from the Takalû there is no evidence of any of the names for which we are looking: Shâhsevan, Afshâr, Shâmlû, Inâllû, Begdilû, Ajirlû, Dulqadir. Three or four years earlier, however, when Shâh Šafi’s army returned from Georgia to Ādharbāyjân, Salâm Khân Shamsaldinlû had been sent to Georgia with a collection of princes and soldiers and tribesmen, particularly Sil-supur and Shâhsevan of all classes of Shâmlû and Afshâr, who had their homelands in the districts of Ādharbâyjân. These might well have come from north-east Ādharbâyjân, leaving just the tribal remnants of which Olearius speaks; but there is no evidence that they did so, nor that they ever came back from Georgia, though this too is more than likely.

The contemporary evidence from the first half of the seventeenth century, for the formation of a tribal group called Shâhsevan in north-east Ādharbâyjân, is non-existent, while evidence for the arrival there of groups later connected with or part of the Shâhsevan is, to say the least, thin. It remains possible that, contrary to the traditions, either the Shâhsevan ancestors had not yet left Anatolia, or they had not yet reached north-east Ādharbâyjân. Although a peace was arranged between Persia and Turkey in 1639, which lasted until 1721, migrations across the border evidently still occurred, for in July 1667 Tavernier witnessed the reception of such a group of immigrants at Shâh Sulaymân’s court at Iṣfahân, in a fashion strikingly reminiscent of the presumably mythical accounts of Yunsur Pâshâ’s arrival at the court of Shâh ‘Abbâs I:

‘After them enter’d three hundred Turks, which were fled from the Borders of Turkie . . . . All these were order’d to advance into the middle of the Piazza, where they made their obeysance to [the Shâh] three times, and then humbly besought him that they might dwell in his Kingdom, with their Wives, their Children and their Cattel. The King order’d Money to be distributed among them, and that they should have Lands assign’d them to manure.’

We have no record of this group’s name nor of the lands assigned to them. On the whole, Shâh ‘Abbâs’s successors did not continue his policy of resettling the tribes in new areas, and the above instance is hardly typical of Šafavid policy in the later seventeenth century. Yet there are strong indications that by this time some Shâhsevan groups were already in Mughân. A document in the chînî-khâna at Ardabil, dated 1071/1660–1, mentions a Shâh ‘Ali Beg Shâhsevan,85 while a year later an ‘Ali Beg Shâhisevan figures in a marginal note to the Šarîh al-milk; a further note, datable no later than 1080/1669–70,

84 Jean Baptiste Tavernier, The six voyages of John Baptistta Tavernier through Turchy into Persia and the East-Indies, transl. by J. Philips, 1, London, 1678, 162. This account is also strangely similar to that in the ‘Ālam-ārâ, of the reception of the Jalâli chiefs some 60 years earlier, see above, pp. 328, 345.
85 I am grateful to Mr. A. H. Morton for this reference. The document is No. 397 in his inventory.
mentions villages in the steppes of Mughān as being in the possession of the ‘jamā‘at of Takla and Shāhisevan’.68

Olearius noted that the Ardabil shrine (in the control of the Crown khāṣṣa) collected revenue from the pastures of the vicinity and from Mughān, and from parts of Khalkhāl and other neighbouring districts to the south, while the farmlands were probably still largely in the control of powerful local families. In 1647 Naẓar ‘Ali Khān Soklān Dulqādir was governor of Ardabil, but in 1657 he was dismissed by Shāh ‘Abbās II and the district was removed from the state domains (divānā) and placed under the direct control of the Crown administration (khāṣṣa).67 There is no indication of what lands were then included in the Ardabil district, or how long they remained in the khāṣṣa. Around 1700, Mughān and Tabriz and some other districts of Ādharbāyjān were entrusted to the sipahsālār, the most important military official after the qorčhī-bāshi, who was inter alia the chief (rīš-safīd) of all the tribes (ilāt va oymāqāt) of Persia.68 In the Tadhkīrat ul-mulūk, written about 1725, Ardabil appears neither among the khāṣṣa domains nor among the divānā districts in the control of the governor-general of Ādharbāyjān. At that time, however, the latter did control Mishkīn and the irrigated parts (anẖār) of Mughān.69

Of travellers who passed through Mughān in the later seventeenth century, neither Struys (in November 1671) nor Kaempfer (in 1683) recorded the existence of pastoral nomads, though the former remarks on the local hut-dwellers: ‘ Ils sont extremement pauvres et apeient-ils dequoi couvrir ce qu’il faut cacher. Avec cela ils étoient gais, et nous donnèrent de ce qu’ils avoient pour trespe de chose ’.60 But Père de la Maze, Superior of the Shamākhī Jesuit mission, who crossed Mughān in October 1698, had more to say on the inhabitants then. He and his companions did not like the desolation of the Mughān ‘deserts’, but were hospitably entertained by the local nomads; after describing the construction of their round felt-covered tents, he notes that Mughān ‘est habité par des Turcs, qui se donnent le nom de Chasseven : c’est à dire, ami du Roy, parce qu’ils ont passe de la domination du Grand Seigneur

68 Șarīh al-milk, Tehran National Library MS fa’ 2734, pp. 189, 366. This MS, dated 1115/1703, appears to be a copy of MS 3719 in the Irān Bāstān Museum; MS 3718 in the same library seems to be the original, dated 977/1570, and is without these marginal notes. MS 3719 was entered in the Safavid Royal Library in 1080/1670–70, and the note referring to Takla and Shāhisevan could have been added at any time before then. I am indebted to Mr. Morton for the above information.

67 Olearius, op. cit., 177, 180; Muhammad Ṭāhir Vahl Qazvīnī, op. cit., 109, 216; Röhrborn, op. cit., ch. iii.


69 Tadhkīrat ul-mulūk, 101, 165. These must have been of some extent, to judge from the relatively high revenue assessment. Apart from the ancient canal system restored by Timūr in 1401, which may or may not have still been operating, in 1700 a new canal from the Aras was constructed in Mughān by order of the Khān; according to de Bruin, the settlements there were known as ‘Anẖār’, i.e. anẖār; Cornelis de Bruin, Travels into Muscovy, Persia and divers parts of the East-Indies, IV, London, 1759, 12.

60 Jean Struys, Les voyages, Amsterdam, 1681, 276.
sous celle du Roy de Mougan', i.e. from the Sultan to the Shāh. This information seems to confirm the historicity of the 'traditional' rather than the 'official' theory; the Shāhsevan of Mughān were immigrants to Persia from the Ottoman Empire. It is also, of course, quite consistent with Tavernier's account of immigrants just 21 years before.

A recently published farmān of Shāh Sultan Husayn, dated 1116/1703-4, discusses the salaried appointment, in the district of Shīrvān and Shāki, of one Imām Quli Beg, son of Muhammad Beg (Bāybūrdūlū?), deputy of Sulaymān Beg Ajirlū Shāhsevan, who was apparently a captain (yuzbāshī) in the gorchi guards. There is also a reference to Shāh Verdi Beg, son of Muhammad Beg İnnīlū. As mentioned above, the tribes of Ajirlū and İnnīlū are both found among the Shāhsevan in later years, while their names are associated in the earlier sources with Begdilū in the Shāmlū Qizibilāsh tribe. Even though there are no relevant traditions, at any rate not among the present Ajirlū and Begdilū (I have not met any member of the İnnīlū), it seems reasonable to suppose that they descend from the original Shāmlū sections, and that the İnnīlū and Ajirlū Begs mentioned in this farmān as inhabiting the region in 1704 are part of the same tradition.

We have now heard evidence that all the groups for which we were looking are by 1700 living in north-east Adharbājjan. There is nothing yet to indicate that these various groups, and others whose names were mentioned, formed any sort of a unified tribal confederation. Whatever unity there was, was quite disrupted by the events of 1725-30, when the Ottomans once again overcame Adharbājjan. Before concluding, I shall follow further references to the tribal population of the region up to the time of the occupation.

De Bruin passed through Mughān in September 1703 and again in April 1707, when he remarked on the large numbers of 'Tartar' nomads and their animals. John Bell of Antermony, who travelled with the Russian mission under Volinskii, was in Mughān in December 1716, and noted that 'The inhabitants are the Kurdi, live in tents all the year. The soil is very dry and barren, notwithstanding the cattle are in good condition, and the mutton particularly good.' In his own journal, Volinskii says that in 1717 the

93 See Sümer, op. cit., 174, 191, 302 ff.; e.g. in 1609 Qapān Sultan Begdilū and Imām Quli Ajirlū co-operated in dealings with the Jalālis, 'Ālām-ārā, 800. In the military forces of the later Safavids there was a special corps of gorchi-yi ajirlū, 'with functions similar to those of a gendarmerie', Minorsky, Tadhkirat ul-mulakā, 51, 117, cf. Chardin, op. cit., VII, 421. In the nineteenth century, Begdilū and Ajirlū are found together in Khalajastān, K. E. Abbott, 'Geographical notes, taken during a journey in Persia in 1849 and 1850', Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, XXV, 1855, 6.
94 De Bruin, op. cit.; John Bell of Antermony, 'A journey from St. Petersberg in Russia to Ispahan in Persia', in Travels from St. Petersberg in Russia to diverse parts of Asia, London, 1764, 70. One might infer from these two references that the prosperity of the Mughān nomads had increased since the time when Olearius and Struys observed them.
inhabitants of Mughān, nomadizing between the Kur and Aras rivers, revolted against their Khān, a Persian noble imposed on them by the Shāh, chose their own leader (kalāntar), and fought the Persian troops sent against them. This leader is not named, but an influential Mughānī chief was active elsewhere at this time: Manṣūr Khān Mughānī, Šāfavid governor-general of Mashhad, who was defeated by the Abdālī/Durrānī Afghāns and dismissed from his post in 1716.

In the Tadhkirat ul-mulāk, the Urmiya Afshārs, the Shāqāqī, and the İnāllū Shāhsevan are listed separately as dependencies of the Tabrīz beglerbegī; the other Shāhsevan of Mughān are not listed. However, under the Ottoman occupation of Ādharbāyjān from 1725 to 1730, the north-east corner of the province once more became a frontier district, and the tribal population figures more prominently in the records. In 1726 the following groups were in Mughān: Schikaki (Shāqāqī), Schahseven, Tekele, Delakarda (Dulqadīr), Tschendrouz (?), Yourbour (?), Hadji Iskaklou (Hājī Isḥāqīl) and Saboundji (?). In 1728 Hammer mentions Shāhsevan, Mughānī, and Killebedjan (?) in the region of Ardabil, and the Shāqāqī are said to have been centred on Mishkīn. In January 1729, when the Shāhsevan and Mughānūṭī fled from the Ottomans across Mughān and into Russian protection, they were abandoned at the River Kur near Sālyān by 3,000 families of İnāllū and Afshār, who submitted to the Ottomans. An Ottoman document of 1141/1729 records the appointment, at the recommendation of the vassal Surkhay Khān of Shīrvān, of Mīrzā ‘Ali Bey, chief of the İnāllū, as deputy (mutasallīm) of the İnāllū and Afshār, apparently in the region of the Shāhsevan of Mughān. Finally, Gärber tells of ‘Arab nomads in the Shīrvān-Mughān region in 1728, a peaceful people who speak a mixed Turki-Tartar-Arabic (?) dialect and are organized in units of

---


86 Muhammad Kāẓim, Vazir of Marv, Nāma-yi ḍam-ārā-gī Nādīrī, introd. by N. D. Mikhukho-Maklaya, 1, Moscow, 1960, fol. 16a. Manṣūr Khān returned to Ādharbāyjān, where he was involved in disturbances and executed in 1734; ibid., 1, fol. 277b. Lockhart and Minorsky both refer to him as Manṣūr Khān Shāhsevan; L. Lockhart, The fall of the Safavid dynasty, 97; Minorsky, Tadhkirat ul-mulāk, 10.

87 Tadhkirat ul-mulāk, 100.

88 J. von Hammer-Purgstall, Histoire de l’Empire Ottoman depuis son origine jusqu’à nos jours, transl. from the German by J.-J. Hellert, xiv, Paris, 1839, 149, 154. Hammer refers to Chelebi-Zaideh. At this time a survey of population and lands was made for the city and province of Ardabil, a copy of which is preserved in the Başvekalet Arşivi, Istanbul, see R. Frye, ‘Ardabil’, El, second ed., 1, but I have unfortunately been unable to consult it.


100 families headed by elected chiefs called Yuzbashi ‘captain of 100 ’; they summer in Ottoman-occupied mountains, but winter in Russian territory by the Kur.102 These people may be connected with the ‘Arabs mentioned by Olearius in the Ardabil district.

In other words, in the early eighteenth century the following groups would appear to have occupied the Mughan-Ardabil region. (i) Descendants of Turkoman Qizilbash tribes some of which may have first arrived in the region with Isma’il I as early as 1500, but may not have settled until long after 1600: Takalū, Dulqadir, Afshār, Shāmlū (including Ināllū, Ajīrlū, Begīlū 103). (ii) Non-Turkoman groups which may have been in the area substantially longer than the others, such as the Kurdish Shaqqāqī and the Mughānlū, who may also be of Kurdish origins, but could be a composite group of descendants of the pre-Turkoman inhabitants of Mughan. (iii) ‘Arabs and others probably more recently immigrant from the west; I cannot identify several groups whose names are mentioned by Olearius and Hammer. Part at least of this tribal population was now known as Shāhsevan; the ex-Shāmlū chiefs mentioned appear to have borne the name in addition to their tribal name, but two other Shāhsevan Khāns were referred to with no other tribal name. However, it is not clear to what extent the Shāhsevan groups formed a ‘tribe’ or a ‘confederation’ of tribes at this stage.

The last 100 years of the Šāfavid era, probably coinciding with the first 100 of the presence in north-east Ādharbāyjān of tribes that eventually came to be called Shāhsevan, were for that region a period of comparative freedom from external interference. In such conditions at any later date the population would have steadily increased to a point of substantial overcrowding, and what little information is available might be taken to indicate that this in fact did occur towards the end of the seventeenth century.104 However, there is a complete lack of information on the economic organization of the nomads or of the districts in which they ranged before the nineteenth century.105 In any case, the nomads were, it is fair to assume, economically dependent on access to markets, for sale of their stock or pastoral produce, and for purchase of various items, especially foodstuffs, which they did not themselves produce. In addition, then as in more recent times, a major aim of the tribal chiefs would have been to supplement the insecure natural foundations of their pastoral economy by gaining control not only of agricultural production but also of trade routes passing near or through their lands, and, when conditions permitted,
of the market centres of the region. Apart from Sālyān and Lankarān near Mughān, two main market centres were available to these tribes in their summer quarters, both surrounded by mountain pastures and hence comparatively easily controllable by the nomads: Sarāb and Ardabil. The best agricultural lands were attached to Ardabil and the neighbouring district of Mishkīn, which as we have seen had no urban centre but lay between the Ahar and Ardabil districts.

Much of the eighteenth century saw the tribes of the region competing for domination of these three central districts, Ardabil, Sarāb, and Mishkīn. The competition was governed, and ultimately decided, by factors outside their control. To begin with, in the years following the end of the Șafavid dynasty, the population of the region, especially the nomad tribes, suffered radical upheavals, which resulted in the eventual consolidation of the tribes which remained or were meanwhile introduced, into a strong confederation under the name of Shāhsevan. In a later article I shall trace the increasingly important political role of this confederation in the history of Ādharbāyjān and of Persia, during the 100 years from the end of the Șafavid dynasty until the Treaty of Turkmānchāy (1828), by which the province of Ādharbāyjān and the Shāhsevan tribal territory were permanently partitioned between Russia and Persia. I shall also discuss in more general terms the evidence relating to the nature and development of the confederation from the time of its foundation.

106 Ahar was already, and has been ever since, within the sphere of the tribes inhabiting Qarādāgh.