

## Miscellanea

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# The Socio-Economic Census of Nomadic Tribes in Iran in July 1987

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**Abstract:** In many African and Asian countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, a population of tribes has been living a nomadic life along side of the sedentary population. Statistical organizations usually experience difficulty in including the nomadic populations in sample surveys

and censuses. After studying nomadic populations, the Statistical Centre of Iran conducted its first socio-economic census of the nomadic tribes in Iran in 1366 (1987 A.D.).

**Key words:** Nomadic tribes; clans and tribes; tribal migration; nomadic tribal household.

### 1. Introduction

In Iran, in addition to the urban and rural communities, there is another community distinct from the other two; the nomadic tribes who rarely participate in statistical surveys because of their perpetual migration and inaccessibility. From 1935 to 1941, the nomads were compelled by the government to practice a sedentary life. After the Second World War broke out, government control lessened and the tribes again began to migrate. Nationalization of pasture lands in 1962 was the last means for the central government to deprive the nomads of their political and economic

independence. Before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the nomads lived either in the arduous, mountainous areas or in the vast barren plains. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, it was strongly felt that the nomadic population should be taken into consideration and be a part of the country's planning. For this purpose, the Statistical Centre of Iran designed and conducted the Socio-Economic Census of Nomadic Tribes.

The nomadic tribes have occasionally been enumerated. For example, during the population censuses of 1966 and 1976 enumerators en route to populations scattered in the mountains and plains accidentally met nomads who were temporarily residing in their summer and winter villages.

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Another example is the Agricultural Census of 1973 when a part of nomadic tribe dwelling in temporary residences were counted as rural households. The part of the tribe that was dwelling in tents distant from the rural area was not enumerated.

The Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) conducted its first census of nomadic tribes in the winter of 1974: the Agricultural Census of Nomadic Tribes. This census was, however, meant to complete the 1973 census which was able to enumerate only those tribes who had rural dwellings and were then present at these dwellings. The non-rural tribes had been completely omitted. In the meantime, both Iranian and foreign researchers had studied the tribal societies scattered throughout the country, and produced a number of books on the lifestyle of the tribes and clans. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the nomadic tribes remained elusive and statistical enumeration of the tribes remained unsolved.

Since late 1982, the SCI wanted a complete coverage of agricultural statistics with the intention of completing the agricultural surveys already taken in rural areas with surveys of urban and tribal (mainly animal husbandry) agriculture. This is important because tribes are responsible for a large part of the animal husbandry practiced in the country. The fact that the nomadic tribes had not been completely identified complicated the problem and the SCI drew up plans for conducting a socio-economic census of the nomadic tribes, before any other agency or organization had requested it. The point of enumerating the nomads was two-fold: to achieve a complete agricultural census and to identify the problems and issues surrounding the nomads, and thus create an incentive for the allocation of funds and manpower for development programs.

Once the design of the census was provi-

sionally decided upon, representatives of interested organizations as well as other researchers and experts were invited to comment in consultative sessions at the SCI. Topics discussed were: the definition of nomadic tribes and discriminating them from sedentary tribes and villagers, the choice of the smallest socio-economic unit as the statistical unit, choice of frame, choice of time and place, and the best method of interviewing.

The initial design, entitled "Proposed Socio-Economic Survey of Nomadic Tribes in Iran" was brought to the attention of the ministries, and institutions dealing with tribal issues, and experts on tribal affairs.

In August 1984, a pilot study of the first part of the census was conducted for two clans: the Babadi clan from the Bakhti-yari tribe and the Negin Taji, a sub-clan from the Boyer Ahmadi tribe. The results were used to revise the first stage of the census, thus making the overall design ready for execution.

## **2. Method for the Statistical Identification of Tribes**

In the rural and urban surveys and censuses, villages and urban blocks are selected as frames, within which households are listed and individual questionnaires are completed for each household. Enumeration districts are outlined on maps prepared for the census.

But, the above method used to enumerate the rural and urban populations could not be used to enumerate the tribes. Because the tribes do not have a permanent settlement, it was not possible to delineate enumeration districts on a map. Even if one visited the tribes at their winter or summer dwellings, a great portion of them were settled outside the hamlets and could not be visited. Moreover, synchronizing the

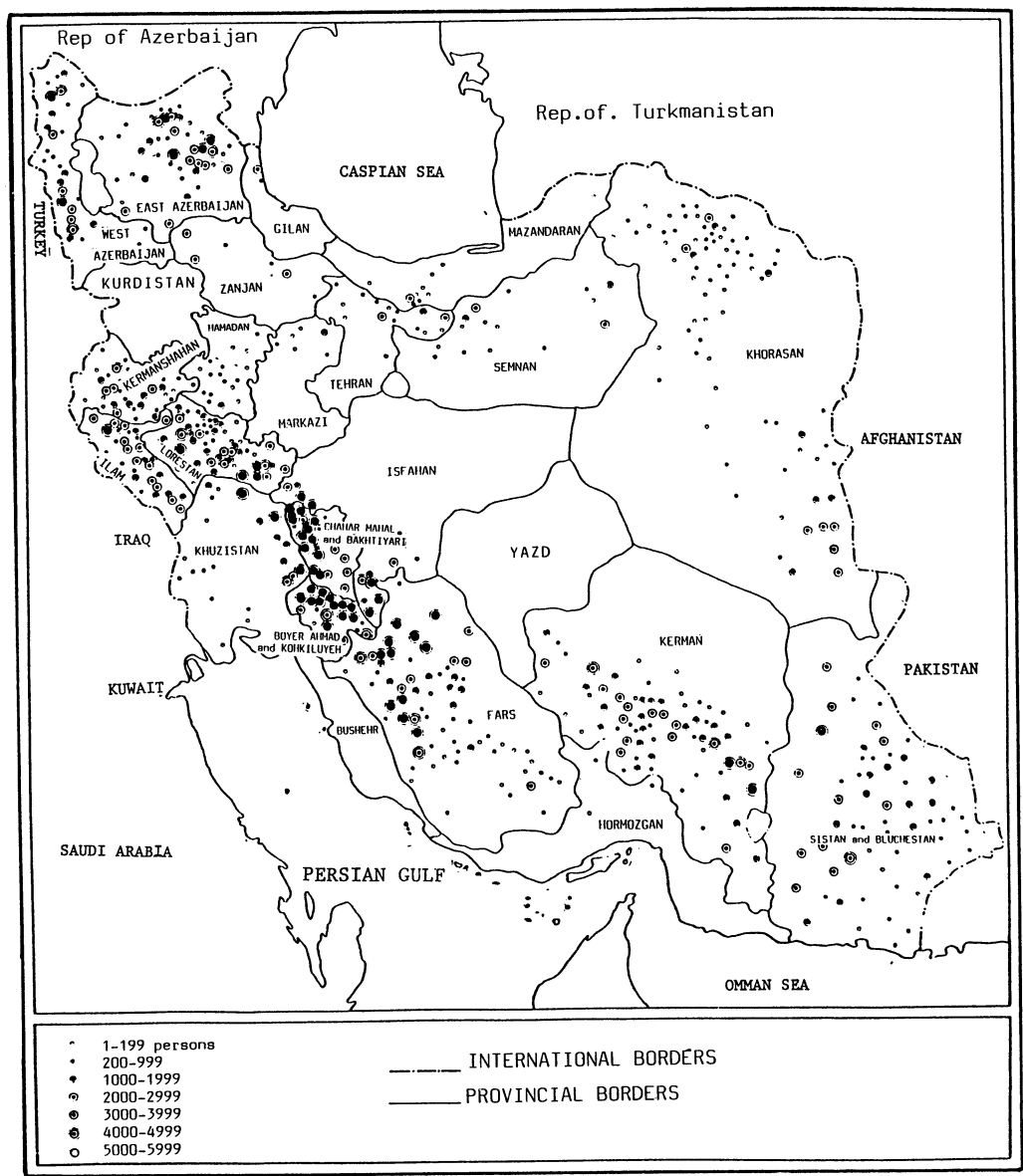


Fig. 1. Distribution of nomadic population in summer quarters by provinces (1987)

enumeration work so that it would coincide with the nomads either at their temporary dwellings or at points where they were due to pass while en route to these dwellings was not feasible for a host of reasons.

Even after studying the social structure and organization of the tribes, it was determined that the social structure and organ-

ization of all the tribes and clans were not known. The time of migration to the winter and summer dwellings were not known, and the routes of migration were not clear. To accommodate for the lack of basic information, measures would have to be taken to identify the clans. This information would then be used to design the census. In this

way, the census was divided into two phases.

### 3. Phase I: Identification

The objective of this phase was to gain knowledge about the following characteristics of nomadic tribes:

1. The social structure and organization of tribes or independent clans down to the "nomadic camps," and prepare lists of and diagrams depicting these hierarchical levels.
2. Estimate the number of households in each nomadic camp.
3. Estimate the number of livestock in each nomadic camp.
4. Chart the migration time-table of the nomadic camps, i.e., the dates of departure from the winter dwellings and the dates of arrival at the summer dwellings and the period of their residence at the summer dwellings and the time of their return to the winter dwellings.
5. Identifying (on a map) the exact locations of the summer and winter dwellings.
6. The type of dwelling (stationary or portable shelter) for each household.
7. The best time and place to visit each clan and the names of well-informed persons (potential household respondents) in each clan.

#### 3.1. Information items

In phase I, the following information was collected about each nomadic clan:

- \* the names of the tribes, clans, and the other sub-divisions,
- \* the name of the head of the clan, and his father's name,
- \* the number of households,
- \* the approximate number of sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes, and camels,

- \* date when migration to summer dwellings begins,
- \* date of arrival at and settling in the summer dwellings,
- \* duration of stay at the summer dwellings,
- \* the name and the "address" of the summer dwellings according to the local administrative authorities,
- \* the number of households living in stationary dwellings.

### 4. Concepts and Definitions

#### 4.1. Nomadic tribes

The social structure of the Iranian tribal population is patriarchal in which each person, for identification purposes, knows his father, grandfather, and successively up to five generations back. After the fifth and sometimes seventh generation, it is the clan, grand clan, or tribe that completes the identification. This system is as hierarchical as a military organization.

People having the three following characteristics are by definition a nomadic tribe.

1. Tribal relationship: Every person in this community considers his family and himself associated with a bigger social group whose members are usually relatives. The name of the group is, in the broad sense, a clan and all the members take pride in their affiliation to the clan. Several clans comprise a tribe.
2. Livelihood dependent on animal husbandry: Other means of livelihood, if any, are of only secondary significance. Secondary sources of livelihood would be: the cultivation of crops such as wheat and barley, such handicrafts as carpets, tent covers, and saddle bags.
3. Seasonal migration patterns: Since the livelihood of nomadic tribes depends on finding fresh pasture land on

Table 1. Basic characteristics of main IIs (tribes) of Iran, 1987

| The name of the IIs (tribes) | Number of clans | Number of nomadic camps | Number of households | Population (persons) | Number of sheep | Number of goats | Number of cows and buffalos | Number of camels | Number of horses | Number of donkeys and mules |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bakhtiyāri                   | 50              | 4,988                   | 27,960               | 181,777              | 728,647         | 904,759         | 19,647                      | 51               | 1,240            | 53,296                      |
| Qashqa'i                     | 6               | 651                     | 16,891               | 112,430              | 1,231,330       | 999,099         | 3,204                       | 2,678            | 2,101            | 42,805                      |
| Mamivand                     | 6               | 725                     | 6,768                | 40,087               | 256,753         | 294,811         | 6,562                       | 19               | 1,281            | 16,182                      |
| Boyerahmad sofā              | 33              | 583                     | 6,230                | 38,667               | 104,486         | 161,559         | 6,230                       | 3                | 349              | 8,379                       |
| Shāhsavan                    | 44              | 1,527                   | 5,897                | 47,248               | 890,609         | 62,527          | 22,165                      | 2,643            | 2,934            | 2,513                       |
| Khamseh                      | 5               | 162                     | 4,768                | 31,715               | 320,204         | 541,897         | 297                         | 301              | 100              | 8,926                       |
| Qaradāgh                     | 6               | 955                     | 4,676                | 31,350               | 488,200         | 46,560          | 22,024                      | 1,076            | 2,054            | 2,427                       |
| Mamasani                     | 4               | 170                     | 3,356                | 20,112               | 55,976          | 75,829          | 3,466                       | 3                | 46               | 2,613                       |
| Bahma'i                      | 29              | 361                     | 3,041                | 20,286               | 42,223          | 126,039         | 1,206                       | 0                | 32               | 7,537                       |
| Boyerahmad Olya              | 22              | 446                     | 2,970                | 20,396               | 107,864         | 96,544          | 3,692                       | 14               | 196              | 4,719                       |
| Tay'yebi                     | 18              | 324                     | 2,693                | 17,438               | 27,245          | 85,694          | 2,310                       | 0                | 40               | 4,970                       |
| Kord                         | 39              | 39                      | 2,559                | 18,478               | 134,011         | 211,125         | 2,089                       | 3                | 620              | 5,994                       |
| Jebāl Bārezi                 | 6               | 528                     | 2,475                | 13,840               | 39,928          | 151,830         | 2,244                       | 22               | 85               | 2,730                       |
| Zallaki                      | 24              | 311                     | 2,272                | 13,263               | 31,155          | 51,560          | 1,783                       | 1                | 38               | 3,907                       |
| Jalāli                       | 10              | 279                     | 2,238                | 15,796               | 206,703         | 38,748          | 7,227                       | 27               | 207              | 1,813                       |
| Baluch                       | 17              | 213                     | 2,236                | 12,308               | 38,853          | 152,905         | 607                         | 1,571            | 12               | 1,678                       |
| Afshar                       | 26              | 251                     | 2,074                | 12,121               | 61,519          | 140,457         | 567                         | 0                | 22               | 976                         |

Table 2. The number of households and population sizes of nomadic tribes of provinces by summer and winter quarters – 1987

| Provinces                   | Summer quarter |            | Winter quarter |            |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|
|                             | households     | population | households     | population |
| Total                       | 180,223        | 1,152,099  | 180,223        | 1,152,099  |
| East Azerbāijān             | 11,419         | 85,835     | 11,031         | 82,673     |
| West Azerbāijān             | 7,599          | 61,645     | 7,964          | 64,721     |
| Isfāhān                     | 7,884          | 53,042     | 861            | 5,109      |
| Ilām                        | 8,572          | 62,982     | 10,029         | 73,294     |
| Kermānshāhān                | 7,674          | 51,992     | 7,016          | 47,491     |
| Bushehr                     | 0              | 0          | 2,837          | 18,601     |
| Tehrān                      | 1,260          | 8,479      | 938            | 7,035      |
| Chāhār Māhāl and Bakhtiyāri | 21,045         | 136,691    | 6,623          | 41,115     |
| Khorāsān                    | 9,077          | 50,643     | 6,713          | 35,927     |
| Khuzistān                   | 6,277          | 40,523     | 28,051         | 184,885    |
| Zanjān                      | 1,093          | 7,650      | 1,035          | 7,204      |
| Semnān                      | 1,688          | 10,447     | 2,409          | 14,689     |
| Sistān and Bluchestān       | 16,533         | 80,704     | 17,509         | 86,148     |
| Fārs                        | 23,708         | 155,315    | 27,232         | 179,014    |
| Kermān                      | 19,097         | 106,430    | 18,108         | 100,605    |
| Boyer Ahmad and Kohkiluyeh  | 17,383         | 111,768    | 15,616         | 100,680    |
| Gilān                       | 378            | 2,660      | 457            | 3,175      |
| Lorestān                    | 17,186         | 109,136    | 12,461         | 78,299     |
| Markazi                     | 354            | 2,682      | 357            | 2,717      |
| Māzandarān                  | 557            | 3,714      | 1,601          | 10,648     |
| Hormozgān                   | 277            | 1,567      | 1,236          | 7,179      |
| Hamadān                     | 1,162          | 8,194      | 139            | 890        |

which the livestock can graze, the tribes must move from place to place with the change of the season.

#### 4.2. The nomadic tribal household

The nomadic tribal household is defined as any household that belongs to a tribe and migrates between summer and winter dwellings.

#### 4.3. Tribal migration

Tribal migration is the moving of tribal households from one place to another, usually with all members of the household, luggage, house equipment, and portable shelters (tents) with the objective of exploiting pastures to graze their livestock. The move is periodic and each tribe, clan, or sub-clan moves en masse. The length of

the route does not affect the manner in which the migration is undertaken. The distances can vary between a few kilometers to more than 500 kilometers.

#### 4.4. Route of migration

The route of the migration is defined as the path the tribe or clan takes when moving between summer and winter dwellings. The migration can start or end, or both, at a village.

#### 4.5. Summer quarters

The geographical area in which the tribe lives during part of or the entire summer is referred to as the summer dwelling.

#### 4.6. Winter dwelling

The geographical area in which the tribe

lives during part of or the entire winter is referred to as the winter dwelling. It should be noted that the climatic conditions and temperature do not determine which dwellings are used during the summer and which dwellings are used during the winter. In certain cases, the summer dwellings for some clans are the same as the winter dwellings for other clans.

#### *4.7. Clans and tribes*

A tribe consists of several clans who are united through consanguinity, family ties, social, or political reasons and reside in a geographic area known to be the domain of the tribe. The most common ties that link the clans are marriage and consanguinity. A tribal member first identifies himself with his clan and can trace his genealogy many generations back. There are what are known as "independent clans" which have no tribal affiliation.

#### *4.8. Statistical population*

The statistical population of interest to the census consists of all nomadic tribal households throughout Iran. A unit or member of this population is the nomadic tribal household and its common attributes are: tribal ties, pastoral livelihood, and migration between summer and winter quarters.

It should be noted that sedentary tribes were not covered by the census.

#### *4.9. Statistical unit*

In the census, the statistical unit is the smallest sub-clan. On the one hand, the sub-clan is a sub-population of the nomadic tribal population, and on the other hand, consists of nomadic households.

#### *4.10. Statistical frame*

In sample surveys, the statistical frame con-

sists of a list of all statistical units of the population from which some units are selected and enumerated (the sample) and the results are generalized to the entire population. After the second stage of the census, i.e., the full enumeration of nomadic households in Iran, sample surveys may be carried out for any future study on the life of the nomadic camps gathered from the first phase of the census and finalized during the second phase. This process creates a statistical frame for a survey in the future.

### **5. Executive Organization and Methodology**

To prepare for the first phase, a preliminary investigation was conducted throughout the entire country between February and late April 1985. This was in addition to the pilot census of the Bābādi clan of Bakhtiyāri tribe and Negin-Tāji sub-clan of the Boyer Ahmadi tribe conducted during July-August 1984. Every *ostan* (province) was visited by a group consisting of an expert and an assistant expert. Kurdistan, Yazd, and Gilan *ostans* were excluded. The group made use of available documents procured through previous correspondence with local authorities in the area.

Local experts estimated the numbers of the various clans and these estimates were recorded on four different forms. Form 1 was for tribes whose migration was limited within the territory of a given province. Form 2 was for tribes whose summer quarters only were in the given province. Form 3 was completed for tribes whose winter quarters were in the given area. The local experts themselves were registered on form 4.

The information recorded in the forms gave a general list of tribes, clans, and independent tribes throughout the country, separately for the 21 provinces without any reference to their structure and other

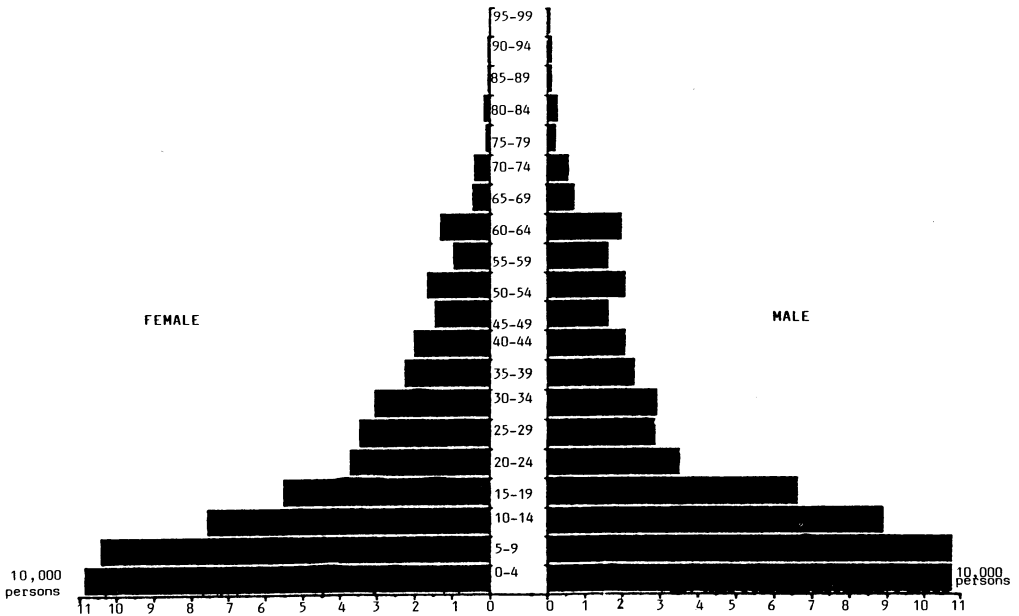


Fig. 2. Age pyramid of the population of nomadic tribes of Iran, 1987

characteristics. These forms were used for dividing the country into separate tribal enumeration districts (ED). These enumerations were also used as the basis for the application by the Statistical Centre's staff.

Each ED might be a whole province or an area larger than a province so as to cover the entire region traversed by a particular tribe so that both summer and winter quarters were included, in full, in the ED. The aggregated EDs encompassed the entire country.

Depending on the workload, one, two, or in some cases, three research groups were assigned to each ED to execute the first stage.

Each research group consisted of two experts, an assistant expert, and a tribal guide. The group was led by one of the experts. One expert was from the SCI and the other was from the local authority. The tribal guide was also appointed by local authorities.

Some groups had a specialist in nomadism whose job was to determine the tribal

social structure. All members of the research groups attended a training seminar which was held at the SCI. Each group received a file containing the following documents:

- \* list of the names of tribes and related clans,
- \* statistics and charts of relevant tribes and clans,
- \* lists obtained from the 1353 (1974) census of nomadic households by the SCI,
- \* forms 1 through 4 completed by the SCI teams during the preliminary study of tribes from February-April 1984 in the 21 provinces,
- \* rural maps of the EDs in a scale of 1 : 100,000,
- \* books and reports available on tribes of certain EDs.

In addition, each research group collected and studied many publications from different sources on tribes in their EDs (research publications, etc.).



Table 3. *Agricultural holding of nomadic tribes of Iran by type of activity, 1987*

| Type of holding                  | Total   | Animal husbandry | Animal husbandry and farming | Animal husbandry and gardening | Animal husbandry farming and gardening | Others |
|----------------------------------|---------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--------|
| Total                            | 186,604 | 87,512           | 67,892                       | 2,898                          | 18,906                                 | 9,396  |
| Personal                         | 173,253 | 81,696           | 67,204                       | 2,859                          | 18,528                                 | 2,966  |
| Joint with other nomadic holders | 6,699   | 910              | 488                          | 25                             | 276                                    | 5,000  |
| Joint with non-nomadic holders   | 4,323   | 2,577            | 200                          | 14                             | 102                                    | 1,430  |
| Belonging to non-nomadic holders | 2,329   | 2,329            | 0                            | 0                              | 0                                      | 0      |

Briefly, the objective of the execution of the first stage of the census of tribes was the preparation of three main documents:

- i. A diagram of the social structure and organization of tribes and independent clans.
- ii. Form 1, the clan questionnaire.
- iii. Drawing the places of nomadic camps in summer and winter quarters on the rural map of the ED.

## 6. Diagram of Social Structure and Organization of Tribes and Independent Clans

The first step which was taken by the research group for identification of nomadic tribes was the preparation of the diagram of the tribes' social structure and organization. Without this diagram, confusion could result and tribes could be omitted. The research group had to construct this diagram by completing and using the documents mentioned earlier and establishing direct contact with the members of the clans.

It was evident that this job had been done during a reasonable span of time and through sufficient interviews with clan members, whose responses were compared and coordinated. All the clans of a tribe were recorded and included in the diagram.

For every sub-clan which did not have any nomadic households, it was sufficient to mention their names and location, but omitting their branches. On the other hand, the branches of all the sub-clans that had nomadic households were depicted down to the lowest hierarchical level.

For example, the position of Babadi grand clan in Bakhtiari tribe and its divisions are shown here. This diagram has been supplied by the author from the local research.

## 7. Phase II: Enumeration

The preliminary arrangements for the socio-economic enumeration of the nomadic tribes in Iran were made after the completion of the first phase. The major activities performed for the second phase in early 1987 are discussed below.

### 7.1. *Preparing the folder for the enumeration crew*

To conduct the census, the enumeration crews are assigned within the district executive organization. Each enumeration crew is composed of: one crew leader, two enumerators, one verifier, and two drivers who provide transportation in the field. The enumeration of 600 households is considered the average workload for an enumeration crew. The folder for the enumeration crew was provided using the data obtained from implementation of the first phase of the census. In connection with the social organization of sub-clans, the limitation within which each enumeration crew operated was determined with the use of a tribal map.

### 7.2. *Preparing Form 142*

Form 142 is the census folder for each smallest sub-clan. Characteristics of the smallest sub-clans were printed on the folder, using the data included in form 1 of the first phase. The data cover the names of the tribe or independent clan, names and characteristics of division prior to tribe, name of tribe, names and characteristics of divisions following tribe and characteristics of divisions following tribe down to the smallest nomadic sub-clans, name and father's name of the sub-clan head, number of the smallest sub-clan households, name and geographical address of the summer and winter quarters according to the last administrative divisions corresponding

with the location of the sub-clans on the map. In addition, names and addresses of the clan knowledgeable persons (potential respondents) have been written on form 142.

Considering the work load designed for each enumeration crew, a certain number of forms 142 together with the social organization chart of the relevant sub-clans were given to the enumeration crew to conduct the census.

The implementation of the census began simultaneously in all tribal regions throughout the country in July 1987. Each enumeration crew worked in its own area to enumerate the households of each sub-clan within the specified period. Sub-clans that were found but not earlier identified by the first phase were enumerated and information gathered on them so that their enumeration would be complete for both the first phase and the later phases.

In this way, all nomadic sub-clans were brought under the complete census coverage. Both summer and winter quarters were enumerated to prevent the under coverage of clans who, for some reason, had not migrated to the summer quarters.

After the data collection, the data were edited and processed by computer.

## 8. Census Results

Information on the following variables was collected in the Census of the Nomadic Tribes.

### 8.1. Population

The number of households and population of each tribe and independent clan, the provinces, in which the summer and winter quarters of each independent clan and tribe are located, population of the total country tribes by single ages, age groups, literacy

status, population under education by the highest educational certificate received, activity status, marital status, number of household members, number of literate household members, and number of household members currently attending some form of schooling. All data are presented by sex and age groups.

### 8.2. Agriculture

This includes types of livestock by tribe and independent clan, changes in the number of livestock of various types, the number owned by each household, by duration of settlement in summer and winter quarters, average number of sheep and goats in the last summer and winter quarters, payments for use of pastures, grazing in harvested lands, and manual feeding in the last summer and winter quarters, average annual production of livestock products per head of each type of livestock, distribution of households by classified numbers of livestock and number of various types of livestock in holdings, by type of holding.

Data on area and type of agricultural holdings in summer and winter quarters were also included.

### 8.3. Facilities and trade

Included in this category is the number of households that have access to and use various facilities, such as, a vehicle, radio, lantern, sewing machine, gas stove, oil burning light and heater, and type of main fuel used as well as the major media of trade between the households.

### 8.4. Handcrafts

Included in this category is the handcrafts made by the households. Since any household may produce handcrafts of one type

or more, the same household might be repeated several times with regard to the types of handicrafts produced. Thus, there is no point in adding up the figures in the columns.

In addition to the information on types of household handicrafts, data on the handicrafts produced, by purpose of production, have also been presented.

## **9. Summary**

In the 1366 (1987) census, 96 tribes, 547 independent clans, consisting of 180,223 households, giving a population of

1,152,099 persons, were enumerated. The sex ratio was about 108. Moreover, the results of the tribal census indicate that there were 186,604 agricultural holdings of which 46.9% were engaged in animal husbandry and farming 1.6% were engaged in animal husbandry and horticulture, and 10.1% practiced animal husbandry, farming, and horticulture. Of the total nomadic households, 93.6% lived in tents their entire stay at the summer quarters, whereas 52% lived the whole period of their settlement in winter quarters in buildings and 41.8% in tents.

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Diagram of the social structure of Bakhtiari tribe

