

Who Are the Qashqai People?

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Writing about the Qashqai tribe in the strict sense of the word and from a sociological perspective will be so difficult for Iranian and foreign researchers who are not familiar with this tribe for several reasons that the most important ones are: 1- mixed origins of different ethnical groups, 2- different characteristics and cultures of various tribes and 3- heterogeneous distribution and asymmetric geographical dispersion.

This tribe was born of conflict and rivalry. In better words, the existence of the Qashqai tribe was based on a series of historical events; the most significant one of them was the rise to power of the Shahilou family that ruled over the Qashqai tribe consist of different tribes, from its formation until the establishment of Islamic Republic. The purpose of this article is to give a more realistic introduction of the Qashqai tribe in the territory of Iran who have been friends with for years under the nationalist leadership have played a role in political and social developments in Iran.

Keywords: Iran, Qashqai, Tribe, Migration, Settlement

Pedigree and background of the Qashqai tribe

Historians and writers aren't were aware of any written document that could fully describe the origin of the Qashqai confederation. They don't know the previous location of these people, the date of their migration to the southwest of Iran, or when they first formed a union of tribal groups. They only describe that the people who formed this tribal confederation had a variety of geographical, tribal, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds in the middle of the 18th century. Even though they can't determine such backgrounds and their origins with the Qashqai places and history. Some Qashqai people are probably immigrants of the 11th century from Turkish tribes in central Asia who migrated to Iran, whereas many others probably come from Turkish tribes related to Genghis Khan. When he led the migration of a large group of Mongols to central Asia in the 13th century, some groups splatted up and moved southwest into current Turkmenistan territory and then beyond Iran (Huang, 2009:10).

Domorini writes: some pundits consider the Qashqai to be Mongols who migrated from Turkestan during Genghis Khan's leadership and settled in Fars during Nader Shah's period. Without any claim and most likely the Qashqai are descendants of an ancient tribe in Asian Turkey (east of Turkey) called the Khalaj who lived in Ajam, Iraq, in the south of Saveh. A part of this big tribe was divided into different sections and spread around the Fars region (Domorini, 2011: 5). It's clear that the Qashqai's migration wasn't uniform, and not all its tribes were Turk from the beginning, or even if they were, they wouldn't have been known as the Qashqai. The Shahilou family, as Turkish-speaking Oghuz, forming a small part of the tribe's coalition, migrated to Iran from Central Asia in the 11th century and settled in Fars, and as time past they formed the Qashqai tribe. Before them, some tribes and groups of Lors, Persians, Kurds, Arabs, and other tribes had settled in the area from ancient times (Beck: 2017: 5).

It can be said that the clear and independent identity of the Qashqai tribe can be recognizable from the late Safavi Era, but the beginning of their political strength should be considered from the Qajar dynasty (Bodon, 2016: 20).

The political and social life of the Qashqai in the past

The Qashqai, as one of the tribes involved in the social and political developments of Iran, have been nomadic from the beginning until their sedentary life started since Pahlavi's leadership, especially the second Pahlavi. Nomadic Qashqai people are settled in two vast areas in the Zagros mountain range in the south; In winter quarters (or tropical season in Fars); in Fall and Winter, they migrate to low altitudes in the south and southwest, and in summer quarters (or cold in Persian) they migrate to higher altitudes in northern Fars, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad and some parts of Isfahan. Unlike some other nomads in Iran, they don't cross international borders or don't have access to them. Each of their winter or summer environmental areas has suitable pastures for their livestock. Nomads get full benefits of all seasons and avoid difficult environmental conditions by migrating twice a year from a region to another in search of pastures, better weather conditions, and taking advantage of green roads of the migration route. Their winter pastures are hot, humid, salty, and free of vegetation during the summer. Their summer pastures are full of snow, rain, and wind during the winter. Migrations occur every six months and take three months, and the area of this migration covers two to six hundred kilometers (Fazeli, YazdanPanah, 2020: 7).

Therefore, nomadism should be defined as a kind of human lifestyle for a group of homeless people who migrate from one biological area to another along with their livestock, belongings, and family members by means of vehicles proportional to their time (which were mostly animals like horses, camels, donkeys and mules in the past and vehicles like cars in the present). In addition to their own special tribal social life, the Qashqai also had their own social and

political structures. Despite the villagers who had no right to choose and had to be subordinated by major or minor owners, and it made them oppressed, nomads could dodge the constant obedience of politicians or owners, and in case of disagreement with their managers, they could easily join other powerful rival tribes. This nomadic life, in terms of political structure and based on tribal hierarchy, financially rely upon one livestock economy, and their lifestyle is based on migration.

Many domestic and foreign researchers and writers who have focused on tribes and nomads in Iran have considered tribes as fixed structures, and when it comes to tribes and nomads, it's inferred that they are primitive human beings who are far away from civilization, but the fact is that tribes and nomads have their own special political and social organizations that could participate in local and national levels and sometimes merged with international forces. In the meantime, some anthropological approaches have considered tribal society equivalent to primitive, isolated, and apart from each other who have no tendency to change and resist it. Patriciacron is one of the authors who have such a view about tribes as one of the constituents of a clan. According to him, the tribe is a kind of society that is formed and organized based on family relationships, gender, and age... The tribe is a primitive society that has a biological organization that has been given to it by nature (Ahmadi, 2017: 39).

Nasiri Tayebi believes that the social organization of the Qashqai tribe, like other tribes, is based on the emphasis on blood ties and it's a general community which is made up of different components, and there are blood ties among people in low levels whereas, at a higher level these ties are in the form of ethnic and political treaties and ties. In fact, the construction of the Qashqai tribe from top to bottom is il, Tayfih, Tireh, Bonco, Baylih, and Oba (Nasiri Tayebi, 2009: 22).

There are different definitions of tribe, clan, and family, some of which don't adapt to Iranian society. Some only express some aspects of the Iranian society and ignore the other aspects. In Latin contexts, two terms are used for the tribe, clan, and family, each of which represents primitive life: Nomad and the other Tribe (French), Tribe (English). The first refers to those nomads whose way of life and civilization is based on a kind of nomadic life that relies on frequent and seasonal movements. The second term refers to a group that lives in a certain land with an independent political and social system based on a kinship system that has some parts (Tabibi, 2001: 135).

The definitions above have used the livelihood and socio-political aspects as characteristics of nomads and tribes and considered tribe as an essential part of nomadic life, and considered kinship system as its basis. However, the tribe and tribal society are beyond the nomadic system, while other factors are involved in creating a tribe. A tribe can't be identified simply by migration, migration route, tribal path, and livestock. There is no doubt that family relationships have an important role in determining relationships among members of a tribe or clan, but

only the existence of kinship ties doesn't create a tribe. For example, when we talk about the Qashqai tribe, we refer to a large tribal union with different tribes and clans that not all of them have formed a tribe by kinship; each of them has a separate and different racial and cultural identity.

Throughout the history of Iran, the principle of kinship not only has had an important role in inter-tribal relationships, but also members of the upper urban classes have always referred to their ancestry and lineage (like merchants or clerics). They even had consanguineous marriages to increase their influence and power at the local and national levels. So, in addition to differentiating between the components of a tribe, much more important factors should be mentioned in the formation of tribes and clans. On this basis, we can distinguish between tribe, family, and clan in terms of existential origin and the factors involved in their formation. The tribe is a subset of the nomadic population of a large area or country that in a specific geographical area, based on the construction of special tribal categories and awareness of everybody of this construction, have shared history, language, and culture and are spread all around a grassland in the same neighborhood and according to a specific solar calendar migrate to summer and winter quarters (Safinejad, 2016: 338).

The tribe had its own organizations. In fact, the tribe was an executive collection with its own intellectual framework in which political and military treaties and agreements had appropriate results. Groups could gain identity and special positions by joining the tribe and became almost equal in terms of position structure to the groups that had backgrounds. In other words, in the process of forming a tribe, a new and extra family was born. In the guise and political view, the tribe was a collection of tribes or annexation of tribes or groups that could gain tribal characteristic and enhance their strength. Thus the formation of a tribe was a top-down and bottom-up process. Individuals and groups couldn't become parts of the tribe without having membership of a Tayfih. There were similar conditions for Tayfih because clans were created by making connections with tribal leaders (Beck, 2017: 202). The tribe, which is composed of different families, is led by Ilkhan. In fact, Ilkhan had the supreme rule of the tribe and was selected and chosen from the first-class leaders. The vice president of the Qashqai tribe, who is in fact, in charge of administration and supervision of things related to the tribe is called IlBeigi. Tayfih is a political and social unit among the nomads and is the most important social framework of the tribe. Tayfih consists of a group that usually has distant or close relationships and reaches a common relative background in some or several generations. The family consists of several clans. The leadership of a tribe or several tribes depends on the population, belongs to a Khan or sheriff who is appointed by Ilkhan (Abut, 2019: 254). It should be taken into account that some families like Amla didn't have a sheriff or Khan, they were directly ruled by Ilkhan, but now with the economic and political developments in Iran, Qashqai people's lives have had fundamental changes.

The new life of the Qashqai

The change in the political and social life of the Qashqai is influenced by fundamental changes in contemporary Iran, especially since the constitutional period. In fact, since the constitutional period, efforts have been made by the central government, intellectuals, and politicians to change the political and social tribal system in Iran. These efforts have been accompanied by many ups and downs. According to some authors, apart from all efforts made by the central government, like; housing and settlements, land reformation, nomads education, military service, the first changes in the political and social structure of tribes and nomads involving the Qashqai is affected by two main factors; genesis of oil and development of communication and technological tools in Iran and among Qashqai people. The Discovery of oil in areas dominated by tribes and nomads and territories influenced by foreigners such as British people caused fundamental changes in the political nature and tribal conflicts. However, the Qashqai was influenced beforehand due to the trade exchanges of the British colonial government in the south of Iran, but the Discovery of oil, apart from international communications, brought the Qashqai into great national trades. On the other hand development of communication tools like; newspapers, telegraph, and radio changed the ethnic nature in Iran that, for example, in the political area linked the Qashqai with Iranian nationalism. On the basis of these new technologies, many tribal leader forces appeared in alignment with political forces, especially clerics and intellectuals, as nationalists and active forces in the constitutional revolution and nationalization movement of the oil industry. Newspaper and telegraph were the first two media tools that tribal people gained access to. These tools specifically included tribal leaders, and by means of them, they could communicate with the Iranian and foreign elites in the short term and thus be nationally influential by it. Newspaper and telegraph, however, mostly influenced the tribal elites; radio was popular among the tribal people. Having radio was initially limited to wealthier groups, but the people of the tribe became aware of the world outside by hearing the news and talking about it. They sometimes spent some hours listening to different stories and news at their night gatherings after getting rid of daily routines. Perhaps in those days, they didn't think that advanced technologies like; television, computer, satellite, and the internet would come into their lives in the future. It may not be possible to make an accurate and official estimate of the Qashqai population, but they inhabit several provinces (Fars, Isfahan, Bushehr, Kohgiluyeh, and Boyer-Ahmad, Khuzestan, Chaharmahal Bakhtiari), in three forms; nomadic, rural, and urban. Based on this division, three economic conditions can be plotted for them in the new period of their lives.

The first economic part of the Qashqai is mentioned according to their nomadic life division. This group makes their living through nomadic life and herding. Most of them are still dependent on migrating on summer and winter routes with their livestock. Their main products are; meat, wool, dairy, and knitting.

In the second part, since after land reformation, some of these people have acquired cultivable lands, they cultivate agricultural products for their and the market's needs and fodder needed for their livestock. Some of this group's people have gained the ability for seasonal residence in their grasslands and pastures for post-migration seasons and by building houses more durable than tents, can reside longer and after completion of their agricultural activities mitigate by car or other transportation systems. By this, their migration route has become easier, and they link themselves and their activity to the market in two sectors of livestock and agriculture. This population has been able to adapt well to tribal, rural, or even urban lifestyles.

Until the last few decades, most nomads were dependent on camels or other animals like; donkeys, mules, and horses for transporting tents and other household appliances between summer and winter quarters. In two or three decades after the revolution, most of the people sold their draught animals. They transfer their animals by vehicles because of their reliance on motor vehicles. Although using such vehicles is increasingly expensive, but it offers many benefits, also the tendency to use draught animals in winter and summer or even keeping these animals was really arduous. It was very expensive, even for those who were able to hire a shepherd. Nomadic families came to an agreement with lorry owners of the surrounding cities for transferring their products to seasonal grasslands twice a year. Before, herds and animals and families used to follow the same plan and paths, but now animals are usually separated from the family for a part of the spring. This change, in the way of migration, causes wider changes, for example, not accompanying all family members, including women and girls to the herd has caused some changes in the way dairy is produced, delay in dairy production is until people and animals gather again in the summer pastures. Taking care of lambs and goats while migrating is another problem because they can't go along with adult animals without special supervision. Now the children who used to take care of small animals during the spring migration no longer migrate with the herd due to being engaged with formal education. However, increasing access to fast transportation has facilitated economic diversity for the nomads. As long as at least one person travels quickly from one place to another, family members can do different activities at the same time; for example, a family member can irrigate orchards and crops at a certain time and then return home on time by their motor vehicle to choose sheep for grazing or even selling and send to the market by a rented or personal truck or people can harvest the forage produced in summer lands and transfer to winter pastures while other family members can manage the animals in their short-term absence. Traveling to the city to do governmental affairs won't be difficult and time-consuming for members of the Qashqai tribal community. After the Islamic revolution, the new government considered protective policies for the nomads. Natural resources and rural reconstruction organizations planted many seeds along the main paths to improve vegetation. They also installed special boards for specific purposes. National officials chose places where most nomads camped at nights during their

migration in a way they could strengthen their herds and draught animals for the next day's trip without attacking and damaging people's grazing and agricultural lands. According to local reports, these programs have apparently been successful in reducing pressure on other grazing sources and numerous migratory conflicts. The new government also provided low-interest or no-interest loans to nomads. Modern veterinary had an important role in empowering nomads in keeping animals and other irreversible diseases that had caused a large number of herds to die. Regional veterinary clinics were established by the government's budget, and specialists were sent to pastures to distribute drugs and cure livestock. One of the most obvious results of the increasing use of modern veterinary care has been reducing the use of ritual and symbolic measures by nomads to achieve these goals. Until 1980 most of the people recourse to vows and spells to protect and take care of their animals. In 1990 many of these rituals became obsolete or were implemented just with the people who still believed in their effectiveness. In 1988 many high-price rams were decorated with beads made of wood. However, the nomads sometimes said that these beads just remind them of the old Qashqai customs and don't protect their animals in reality (Beck, 2001: 11). In the third part, the Qashqai mostly pursue jobs like; government employees, workers, and private employees. A group of this population has maintained a part of their livestock and agriculture by intermediaries and keeping in touch with their relatives. However, all three demographic and economic sectors consider themselves Qashqai. Julia Huang, the author of the book 'Tribeswomen of Iran': weaving memory among Qashqai Nomads, the fourth economic and population section adds, and that is people outside the borders of Iran. In the fourth and final part, a number of Qashqai people live outside Iran, which includes employees (some in professional jobs and more in the private sector), workers, university students, and tribal leaders. Most Qashqai people in this sector try to obtain a job and educational opportunities in the host countries, and there are some people who try to get welfare services of the host country as refugees to be able to protect themselves. They study and follow their history and culture, and speak Turkish to their children to let them gain information about the history and culture of their ancestors gradually. They decorate their houses with Qashqai handicrafts and other symbolic things like; Miniature models of former tents woven of goat hair and make a close relationship with other Qashqai people abroad. Some Qashqai people travel to Iran regularly to renew the covenant with their cultural and social connections (Huang, 2009 :).

Many social scientists such as, Appaduari show that many contemporary people tend to search for their identity and social commitments along with different aspects compared with what they used to be, therefore traditional communities that were experiencing a different lifestyle, reveal a new way of defining identity and being, in the new experience and seek to strengthen it. Most of the groups that had traditional communities like Amr Ili in the past consider a return for themselves and are trying to attach a kind of collective identity determination. This return can be considered as a kind of resistance and reaction

to new living conditions which occur under the influence of internal factors and potentials of that community. On the one hand, powerful waves of cultural homogenization, integration, and national combination still go on and, on the other hand, have put parallel others in front of them. Besides, the internal elements of a group's cultural content are in a way that contains potentials that can be ignored. This is why some people in a group tend to look for a new identity. New forms of identity retrieval among tribal groups shouldn't be considered as a tribal affair. Some tribes like the Qashqai, who have now lost many of their tribal components, can't completely fit in the previous form of a tribe. They have settled in cities. Many members of the tribe are no longer concerned about livestock, ride routes, pastures, and livestock-based living elements. For the members residing in cities, referring to the identity based on the group's name has been important, and they are trying to retrieve cultural contents. For instance, nowadays, the Qashqai, with the freedom of cyberspace, can be a very good example to analyze this issue.

What exists in the Qashqai tribe, among other tribes and clans, as one of the elements of an internal dynamism is the nostalgic and sad view to the tribal territory, in the form of music, poetry, and sad historical narratives. Qashqai music has a sad and tragic aspect which makes homelessness of the centuries and ups and downs in the past alive in each tribal individual's mind. The charming Qashqai nature, the summer quarters, and the tribal routes make such attractions for the tribal people that they will not forget under any circumstances. Depending on the nature and its changes can be seen in Qashqai customs, their proverbs, and feelings (Shafiee, 1380: 79).

After the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the Qashqai has turned to cultural identity, especially in the last decades. By referring to social media, on Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, and other websites, we can see thousands of similar or contradictory groups. Some of these groups are cultural and social, and some of them are historical and political. Since the living and migrating territories of the Qashqai, unlike other Iranian tribes like Kurds, Azeri, Baluchis, and Arabs, have nothing to do with borderlines, it's less influenced by other countries policies, but there are some people who try to keep in touch with Turkey by emphasizing on Turkish language and sometimes they are invited to some conferences and seminars by Turkey, but we can't attribute a small number of people to the whole tribal community. In recent years some anti-Iranian groups have tried to show an anti-Iranian ethnocentrism face with the focus on advertising. By abusing the semi-centralized and traditional structure of Iranian governments such as; Safavi and Qajar, they believe their country hasn't had a specific name, and it was governed as a Federal territory. They also believe that the way of naming has reflected the character of the country. It means the official-political expression 'forbidden countries' was used for this land, and the name of the ruling dynasty was also added to it, for example, 'Safavi forbidden countries' or 'Qajar forbidden countries.' It is obvious the purpose of such a claim is to introduce Iran as an

unorganized country and denying the existence of a country with a cultural, civic, and political identity. However, in the historical part of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* or its mythical section, Iran is mentioned as a country and even Iranian people as a nation (Nouraei, 2015: 80, 81).

Also, some foreign countries are holding different seminars claiming to preserve indigenous, linguistic, and ethnic identities of Iran, in defense of pluralism, as a solution to preserve this diversity, in the direction of anti-Iran. Special scholarships are awarded to selected students. They even offer doctoral degrees from their universities to let these people have the necessary prestige to promote and propagate their views by returning to their country and to be accepted. Hamid Ahmadi had a deep look at the issue of foreign intervention in his book 'ethnic and ethnicity in Iran' with the title of international sources and encouraging ethnic identity in Iran. In his opinion, the dimension of ethnic nationalism (regional policies, both at the international level and relations between the governments of the region) can be analyzed in the realm of political actions as well as political thoughts. The role of foreign governments in the realm of political and real actions, is important in promoting and encouraging ethnic nationalism and conflicts. In the realm of ideas and thoughts, which is related to the current research, there was an international political space of discourse in the early 20th century that the ideology of nationalism and the right to self-determination provided strong motivations for many linguistic and religious minorities. Influenced by this space, the intellectuals and political elites of these groups considered a sort of distinct ethnic identity for themselves, and so for the first time, they entitled the groups which they belong to have a position of a nation with a specific government (Ahmadi, 2017: 178).

The role of the Qashqai in national politics of Iran

in some historical texts about the Qashqai, their first political role is considered in the battle with the Portuguese on Hormoz island led by one of the Iranian commanders named Imam Gholi Khan although this man is certainly one of the Gorji generals, not a Qashqai but since the Qashqai is a confederation of different tribes, it's not unexpected that some Qashqai tribes were among forces participating in this war. At the same time with the reign of Nader Shah Afshar, the Qashqai became a strong tribe or clan, and they united in a way that they participated in the conquest of India and occupation of Delhi and the plunder of jewelry worth millions of dollars (including the famous Thakhte Tavous jewelry) (Douglas, 1988: 211).

Following the conflicts with Nader Shah Afshar that had disastrous outcomes for them, Ismail Khan, the leader of the Qashqai, became blind in both eyes, and his brother was brutally slaughtered. After this, the Qashqai was forced to migrate to Daregaz (Mohammad Abad) Kalat Naderi and Sarakhs in Khorasan. Their stay in Khorasan was unpleasant because the winters there were hard and exhausting,

and they were surrounded everywhere by Turkmen who outnumbered the Qashqai and were hostile to them. When Karim Khan Zand came to power, Ismail Khan Qashqai and some others introduced themselves as heirs and relatives of Jani Agha Qashqai and asked to return from Khorasan and revive their ancestral land in vardasht and Semirom (Oberling, 2014: 32, 33). In the Qajar era, although the power of the Qashqai was limited to Fars and its tribal area, due to the tribal nature of the Qajar government, they were obliged to provide military forces for the government. Having a military force called Foje Qashqai participated in the battle against the Russians under the leadership of Abbas Mirza (Azar, 1990: 208). A part of the Qashqai policy has clearly been to fight against foreign forces. However, until before the constitution, tribal forces like the Qashqai had their own tribal functions according to tribal characteristics of the Qajar government but first, with the development of communication and technological tools like Telegraph and then with the emergence of oil in the south of Iran, the Qashqai enter the field of Iranian national politics more effectively than before. Their role in supporting the constitutional revolution and the nationalization of the oil industry, Islamic revolution is quite evident.

Conclusion

The Qashqai, as one of the influential tribes in Iran, consists of different tribes and clans such as Lors, Kurds, Baluchis, and so on. This has led it to be referred to as a tribal confederation. This tribal society that lived a nomadic life based on livestock and herding economy with migrating twice a year has now completely changed their lifestyle, and a large population of them have settled in different cities of Iran. Their settlement means a change in their social and economic nature in different urban parts. Although their tribal identity is almost gone, a large part of their population still considers themselves as "Qashqai," and this means standing alongside other minor Iranian subcultures like Bakhtiari, Shirazi, Isfahani, Boyer Ahmadi, and so on. However, some works by local authors believe in ancient history for the Qashqai with external efforts and necessarily ethnocentrism. None of these works have scientific validity. Their goal is in line with Pan-Turkism tendencies to unite all Turks. Some also consider the word tribe or nation for them due to lack of knowledge about different cultures and tribes within the Qashqai, which is wrong. Ethnicity is based on principles such as first common race, that is, blood origin, and how they came into being, language, common culture, or in the end, even specific territory. Considering the race, the Qashqai is made of different tribes like; Lor, Turk, Arab and Baluch, whose language has eventually become Turkish. Hence, they are different not only racially but also linguistically, but now the Turkish language dominates them. Also, despite common and similar customs, some tribes have fundamental cultural differences. According to the background of all tribes living in Iran the historical claim of a land is completely baseless for example, Tehran as the capital of Iran,

is one of the most colorful and diverse ethnic cities in Iran in which, populations of all Iranian tribes live.

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