

The Imperial Frontier: Tribal Dynamics and Oil in Qajar Persia, 1901-1910

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Abstract

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By using the *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, I elucidate the complex tribal dynamics of the Bakhtiyari and the Arab tribes of the Khuzestan province during the early twentieth century. Particularly, these tribes were by and large influenced by the oil prospecting and drilling under the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate. My research questions concern: how the Bakhtiyari and Arab tribes were impacted by the British Oil Syndicate exploration into their territory, what the tribal affiliations with Britain and the Oil Syndicate were, and how these political dynamics changed for tribes after oil was discovered at Masjid-i Suleiman. The Oil Syndicate initially received a concession from the Qajar government, but relied much more so on tribal accommodations and treaties. In addressing my research questions, I have found that there was a contention between the Bakhtiyari and the British company, and a diplomatic relationship with Sheikh Khazal of Mohammerah (or today's Khorramshahr) and Britain. By relying on Sheikh Khazal's diplomatic skills with the Bakhtiyari tribe, the British Oil Syndicate penetrated further into the southwest Persia, up towards Bakhtiyari territory. I argue that the Oil Syndicate's presence initiated this grab of power between the tribes and the rise of Reza Khan, ultimately leading to the loss of sovereignty of the Arab tribes of Khuzestan, and the rise of a few Bakhtiyari elites.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Throughout the history of the modern Middle East, the metropole of dominated the historical narrative. When we think of Iran, we think of Tehran, Shi'ism, and Persians. But these simplifications belie the cultural and ethnic diversity that permeates the region. Indeed, even in the present day, control over the narrative in Iran seems to neglect the relevance of peripheral characters in Iran's historical theater. As a result, this has impacted the dynamics between tribes¹ and the state of Iran. In the region of southwest Iran, which this study focuses on, Arab tribes had become a marginalized group and gained minority status. While they had and continue to claim their sovereignty over the southwest region, Arabs of the separatist movement see the central government of Iran as the usurper. This was not always the case. The minority status of Arabs in the state of Iran has its roots in the early twentieth century. I argue that oil exploration of Persia by the British owned company, the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate, led to this process of marginalization among Arab tribes. The Oil Syndicate was present in southwest Persia because of a concession received from the Qajar Empire, in order to survey and drill for oil. Secondly, the Arab tribes of Arabistan² (known to the central government as Khuzestan) under Sheikh Khazal were powerful in their own right, because the central government had difficulty in controlling the region. As evidence, the British Oil Syndicate sought to negotiate with these tribes rather than the Qajar Empire. Throughout the late

¹ Arab tribes are still a part of modern day Iran; however, under the nation-state system, they had become minorities too.

² Arab tribes included the Bani-Kaab (known throughout the primary sources as "Beni Cha'b"), the Muhaysin, Bani-Lam, Anafijah, Bani-Torof (known throughout the primary sources as "Beni Truf") and so on, to name some. The primary sources seem to focus on the Kaab and Muhaysin.

nineteenth and early twentieth century, the British sought to maintain ties with Sheikh Khazal, instead of the central government, while seeking oil in the territory of the Bakhtiyari tribe.

Khazal was the primary diplomat when it came to establishing solid relations between the Bakhtiyari and the British D'Arcy Oil Syndicate. By legitimizing the Sheikh, the British had less difficulty in penetrating the southwest of Persia. However, this relationship between Britain and the Sheikh would soon crumble because of the rise of Reza Khan as the Shah of Iran, a process that begun in 1921 and then came to full fruition by 1925. The British then sought to create a solid relationship with this newly founded central government.

Throughout the twentieth century as traditional colonialism declined, European powers continued to cast their influence into the Middle East in the form of the mandate system. The mandate system would eventually create an environment ripe for the realization of nationalism for Middle Eastern peoples. However, in the case of Iran, it meant that the British would seek to establish a connection with Reza Khan during the interwar period. The historical narrative of the Middle East and imperialism have consequently led to the lack of inclusion of tribal histories. This is evident because the dominant political narrative, whether it be Britain or political majorities in the Middle East, tend to embolden particular histories, e.g. the inherent Persianness of Iran despite having several minorities in Iran proper who shaped its history. In the context of tribes in southwest Iran, this meant potential alienation or abuse as the nation-state became the landscape for political dominance, such as instituting a national language, and associating the state with only a particular ethnicity. Throughout the history of Iran, this becomes obvious in the example of the Persianification of Iran despite its populations of Arabs, Baluchis, and Afghans, to name a few who tend to be tangentially

mentioned in its main historical narrative.

My research concerns these tribal narratives, particularly that of the Bakhtiari along the Zagros Mountains, and the Arab tribes in the city of Mohammerah,³ throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. I will show how these tribal narratives have come to shape the history of Iran, as the Bakhtiari went from having little political power, to eventually coming to the forefront during the Constitutional Revolution of 1909 and beyond.⁴ Furthermore, I argue that the relationship between the Bakhtiari and the Arab tribal leader Sheikh Khazal of the city of Mohammerah was vital to establishing the British Oil Syndicate's concessionary power. Khazal's leadership and his diplomacy among Arab tribes and the Bakhtiari were a dominant force during the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century, but Arab tribes of Mohammerah (and the province Khuzestan proper) lost their sovereignty by 1924, once Reza Khan took over the port city, which ultimately led to their minority status.

By using the *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf* of Cambridge, I seek to elucidate the perceptions of the British D'Arcy Oil Syndicate as well as the residential officer who were present in the Persian Gulf. Particularly, many of the diaries I have used are written by Percy Cox, the Political Resident Officer. These perceptions of the Bakhtiari and the Arab tribes evident in these diaries were often couched in terms of imperial grandeur and orientalist language. This is important to note because these sources do not offer a deep understanding of tribes on the surface. Rather, when reading against the grain, I have detailed the relationships

³ The rise of Reza Khan led to the name change of Mohammerah to Khorramshahr.

⁴ Although the Constitutional Revolution went on from 1905-1911, the Bakhtiari were not involved in the movement until 1909.

between tribes and their collaborative behavior with the British Oil Syndicate. While on one hand, the Persian Gulf diaries would suggest that the British officers imbued a “tribal” logic with the people they encountered. This is because the British wanted to protect their interests in India, and by doing so, they thought that the most authentic way of preserving their interests was to support Sheikdoms throughout the Persian Gulf. Because of these long-standing relationships between tribes and the British, the British offered the Sheikh of Mohammerah the throne of Kuwait. However, this rationale belies the complexity of tribes in the region, as many tribes had long standing relations with one another, and even intermingled politically. It is clear in the history of the Bakhtiyari tribe and the Arabs tribes of Khuzestan.

As well, geography is a fundamental lens when analyzing the relationship between these two distinct tribal forces, the Bakhtiyari and the Arab tribes of Khuzestan, and the metropole of Tehran. For instance, the area of the Zagros Mountains was a territory of the Bakhtiyari. Scholars argued that it is natural to find tribes from the Middle East settling in mountainous regions, as such an area is a frontier zone that incites a foreboding feeling to outsiders, and potentially strengthens their survivability. This insularity incited issues with the metropole of Tehran, as Tehran sought to maintain control over the Zagros Mountains. However, some of the elites Bakhtiyari would rise to prominent political positions during the Pahlavi regime of Reza Khan,⁵ and after the fall of Mossadegh. Thus, throughout the twentieth century, certain Bakhtiyari tribal members gained powerful positions under the new

⁵ According to Stephanie Cronin, Reza Khan wanted to extend his authority “peacefully the reach of his army, initially to the towns of the south and then throughout the tribal territories.” However, in 1922, Reza Khan reduced the Bakhtiyari Khans to “a condition of impotence” through “fanning the flames of an endemic internecine discord” and producing “with the ruling families a chronic and debilitating, almost fratricidal, strife.” Reza Khan only relied on a small minority of Khans to control the tribes, and to obtain the Khuzestan province under his authority. Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921-1941* (London: Routledge, 2007), 47.

regime, yet the Arab tribes of Khuzestan witnessed a loss of their political power and sovereignty.

There are two regions I will be focusing on. First, I will discuss the port city of Khorramshahr (known as Mohammerah during the early twentieth century) in the southwestern part of Persia and the Arab tribes associated with the city, and slightly east of the city. Second, I will detail the relationship between the Bakhtiyari, who reside along the Zagros Mountains slightly east of Mohammerah, in the context of Mohammerah's relationship with the British, and the metropole of Tehran. Tribes that tend to have less dominion of the main political narrative often live on the geographic periphery as the hinterland provides a distant locale from the metropole, and such insularity affords tribes an ability to combat against the encroachment of outsiders. As such, the Zagros Mountains created a unique boundary between the metropole and the port city of Khorramshahr.

I argue that the insularity of the tribe along the mountain range can be contrasted with the Arab tribes in the coastal region: because of the cosmopolitanism of the coastal region, the Arab tribes were amenable to British exploration for oil resources throughout Persia. Specifically, Sheikh Khazal of the port city of Mohammerah coordinated and corroborated with the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate as British interests sought oil in Persia. Meanwhile, the Bakhtiyari were by and large opposed to Britain's search for oil. Often this led to Sheikh Khazal negotiating between the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate and the tribal forces when problems had arisen. In the end, Khazal would be a recipient of an award bestowed by Britain, as he sought to protect the laying of a pipeline from Masjid-i Sulemain to the Abadan oil refinery in 1910. At the same time, the British presence was what galvanized a few elite Bakhtiyari to

political prominence, such as their influence on the Constitutional Revolution of 1909, and positions of power in the new government founded under Reza Khan.

Historiography

The literature of the Middle East, and more particularly the frontier history of Iran, has used both “tribe” and “minority” as terminology within the body of scholarship. While the term “minority” describes social phenomena in juxtaposition to a dominant narrative, the term “tribe,” shows the experience of lineal ties. After much thinking, I began to question if either of these words were useful in analyzing and contextualizing the history of the Bakhtiyari and the Arab tribes of Khuzestan. Is the concept of the “minority” a helpful description of historical phenomena, when groups of people did not define themselves as a “minority”? By imposing the term of “minority” on historical experience, would we not be subjecting the past to our own experience in the present? Perhaps, the same could be said of the term “tribe,” another explanation of social division in a society when communities could become tied together through economic, political, linguistic, cultural, or blood relations. On the one hand, tribes throughout southwest Persia did not necessarily have a cohesive unit, like Bakhtiyari, and relied on other tribes to band together when issues arose. On the other hand, I have found that the description of tribe in explaining social linkages among people around the Persian coastal and mountainous hinterlands is relevant when analyzing the history of southwest Persia prior to the Pahlavi dynasty. Distinguishing the terminology of “minority” and “tribe” emphasizes the changing power positions of tribes in the region. The Arab tribes were once sovereign and a thorn in the side of the central government of Persia (the Qajar Empire). Due to the historical change in leadership of the central government that culminated in 1925, this

led to the minority status of Arabs. Another aspect I found intriguing about the concept of tribe, which is found lacking in the definition of minority, is the recognition of a leader, and as such, it is an important descriptor when looking at the Bakhtiyari and the Arab tribes' encounters with one another, the metropole of Tehran, and the British Oil Syndicate. For example, Arash Khazeni's *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (2009) shows the importance of the Bakhtiyari as a tribal confederacy on the periphery of Qajar Iran, as the Bakhtiyari narrative unfolds and witnesses infrastructural development, such as the paving of roads through their homeland, and oil exploration.⁶ And while I have decided to use the concept of "tribe" when describing pre-1925 history of Iran, I find that historical processes have led to the minority status of the Arab tribes in the province of Khuzestan.

The discourse on minorities clearly links itself to the past experiences of ethnic groups. Current research places the minority status of peoples in a given nation-state in the context of history, as it has become a more widely recognized historical narrative of the Middle East. As a result, I have found that the minority status of tribes, like Arabs of Khuzestan, resulted from the historical experience and consequence they faced with the presence of the British Oil Syndicate along with the change of the political structure of Qajar Persia into modern day Iran. While the main historiography of the Bakhtiyari and the Arab tribes does not use the term "minority" when describing the historical events of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, post 1925 history and anthropological scholarship does.

This is evident in Rasmus Christian Elling's *Minorities in Iran: Nationalism and*

⁶ Arash Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 3.

Ethnicity after Khomeini, as he shows how the history of Khuzestan, “home to Iran’s single most important source of income, the oil industry,” led to the minority status of the province as the “Pahlavi state consolidated its power by including Arabistan in the new provincial unit of Khuzestan, by renaming cities and uprooting traditional power structures and by implementing policies and practices that discriminated against the local Arabs.”⁷ Although I would argue that the conceptualization of “minorities” and “majorities” is another product of the nation-state system. After all, governments sought to settle tribes among their modern nation-states, while oil began to undermine ruling coalitions and “new systems of political control” emerged through corporate power.⁸

According to Benedict Anderson in his renowned *Imagined Communities*, “nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” on the basis of a unified, or homogenous, culture, language, and descent.⁹ Through this process, a nation-state arises as a geopolitically and culturally based entity. And by this principle, as Elling notes, nationalism is “deeply embedded in our way of seeing the post-Westphalian world as “naturally” divided into sovereign nation-states that give order to chaos and define social relations.”¹⁰ Ethnic nationalism marginalizes other social and political entities that exist in the confines of a nation.

I seek to distinguish these two groups of tribes, the Bakhtiyari tribe and the several Arab tribes, and their historical experience and contention with the Tehrani metropole and the

⁷ Rasmus Christian Elling, *Minorities in Iran: Nationalism and Ethnicity after Khomeini* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 38.

⁸ Miriam Cooke, *Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 50, 52.

⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 7.

¹⁰ Elling, *Minorities in Iran*, 7.

British imperial frontier. I have particularly found that in the discussion of the Bakhtiyari tribe throughout the historiography, there is a difficulty in analyzing their experience. The Bakhtiyari Khans were concentrated in Khuzestan, the southwest of Persia, and dominated the Shustar, Ram Hormuz, and Behbahan areas prior to the twentieth century, where Ram Hormuz was the winter grazing grounds for these nomads.¹¹ The Bakhtiyari can be starkly contrasted to the hybrid culture of coastal town of Mohammerah, where various Arab tribes, like the Cha'b or Muhaysin (as there are various offshoots), are clearly engaging in a cosmopolitan culture. However, the Bakhtiyari as a group were not tied to a particular town in same way as Arab tribes of Mohammerah.

As the historian Gene R. Garthwaite explains, the “nature of pastoralism and of tribal socio-economic organization- as in the case of the Bakhtiyari- militates against the *sui generis* formation of tribal confederations,” “change is the constant in Bakhtiyari-state relations and in Bakhtiyari structures as well.”¹² The Bakhtiyari tribe attained “customary grazing rights and migration routes and were governed by an array of local rulers, including the paramount chieftains of the confederation (*ilkhan; ilbayg*), the hereditary tribal chieftains (*khan*), the headmen of the subtribes and clans (*kadkhuda; kalantar*), the “white beards” and camp elders (*rish safid*).”¹³ Meanwhile the coastal tribes’ system of government consisted of chieftains (*sheikhs*) within the Khuzestan province, also referred to as Arabistan, who governed “with the consent, implied if not expressed, of the elders of various tribes” because the

¹¹ Gene Garthwaite, *The Bakhtiyari Khans: Tribal Disunity in Iran, 1880-1915*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, 1969, (Los Angeles: University of California, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing), 99.

¹² Gene R. Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1983), 4, 12.

¹³ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 4.

administration of Khuzestan was divided among Arab tribes into five confederations, and each had its own *sheikh*.¹⁴

The Persian Gulf is said to be a region of “rich diversity” and cosmopolitanism that belies “any notion of the region as peripheral to world history until the advent of the oil era.”¹⁵ While the Gulf has a cosmopolitan culture, as it comes into contact with different countries and cultures throughout history, the region could be described as having a unifying culture. When considering a body of water surrounded by land as a region that has its own culture, one can “make sense of the empirical observations across millennia that the coast peoples of the Indian Ocean shared a greater cultural identity with one another than they did with the hinterland inhabitants of their own landmasses.”¹⁶ The seafarers of the Persian Gulf were in contact with peoples around the coastal region. In his scholarship, M. Redha Bhacker argues that the Indian Ocean is culturally unifying, despite having been “characterized as including culturally distinct entities” as “the underlying impression that the Indian Ocean has its own distinct identity and sphere of influence.” With Bhacker’s rationale, the same could be said of the coastal cities around the Persian Gulf.

The rich cosmopolitanism of the port city of Mohammerah, or modern-day Khorramshahr, stands in contrast to the hinterland of the Zagros Mountains. As Lawrence G. Potter notes, “historians of contemporary times who choose to focus on the ocean, or on any one of its coastal regions, have to confront the problem of where the coast ends and the

¹⁴ Shahbaz Sahahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening up of South-West Persia 1880-1914, A Study in Imperialism and Economic Dependence* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 5.

¹⁵ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Book Review: The Persian Gulf in History,” in *Middle East Policy Council* (Washington Winter 2009), <http://www.mepc.org/create-content/book-review/persian-gulf-history>.

¹⁶ M. Redha Bhacker, “The Cultural Unity of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean: A Longue Duree Historical Perspective,” in *The Persian Gulf in History* edited by Lawrence G. Potter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 164.

hinterland begins and how much of the hinterland is relevant to an understanding of the coast and the ocean.”¹⁷ While I do agree there is a distinction in the history of the port city of Mohammerah and the Zagros Mountains, I argue that the histories of both the Arab tribes of the port city and the tribal forces along the mountain range are inextricably intertwined, as the port city sought to maintain dominion and power over the latter. Thus, I illuminate the existence of Bakhtiyari and Arab settlements in the Iranian coastal region as well as the hinterland, while oil production was a recent development that catalyzed an already existent contention between these tribal entities and the metropole of Iran.¹⁸ Thus, I argue that the British presence effected the co-existence of tribes, as well as the corroboration, or lack thereof, with the D’Arcy Oil Syndicate shaped the historical trajectory of these tribes in Iran.

¹⁷ Lawrence G. Potter, “Introduction,” in *The Persian Gulf in History*, edited by Lawrence G. Potter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7.

¹⁸ Shahnaz Razieh Nadjmabadi, “The Arab Presence on the Iranian Coast of the Persian Gulf,” in *The Persian Gulf in History* edited by Lawrence G. Potter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 129.

Chapter 2

The Imperial Frontier of Southwest Persia, and the Sheikh of Mohammerah

The relationship between the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate and the Sheikh of Mohammerah would shape the history of tribes in Khuzestan. However, the British presence in southwest Persia began prior to the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate. The exploration of southwest Persia and up the Karun River was predicated on cultivating a relationship with the Sheikh, and utilizing him as a chief diplomat with the Bakhtiyari. In 1899, the British firm the Tigris and Euphrates Steam Navigation Company, a British firm, decided to embark upon the restoration of a road across Persia's Zagros Mountains, allowing for passage to the metropole of Tehran through Bakhtiyari country.¹⁹ Previously, the mountains were impassable, giving the Bakhtiyari political autonomy until 1898 when the Qajar Empire decided to grant a concession to the Tigris and Euphrates Steam Navigation Company, also known as the Lynch Brothers firm, for building a road between Isfahan and the Karun River. Consequently, this allowed for the expansion of the imperial frontier through the tribal hinterland as the Lynch Brothers laid the groundwork for vested oil interests. The Lynch Company and the British Government perceived this as a modern imperial project through the establishment of paved roads so that free trade would be possible.²⁰

British interests in the Gulf preceded the D'Arcy Concession of 1901, as well as the burgeoning oil interests of the mid-nineteenth century. The initial interest in the Gulf was a result of market competition of the seventeenth century when the English East India Company

¹⁹ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 75.

²⁰ Ibid.

sought a trade link with Iran, and thereafter English factories popped up among cities in Iran. The Company firstly established its Persia Agency at Jask on Persia's Makran Coast in 1616, and would expand its influence on Shiraz and Isfahan.²¹ Essentially, the Persian Gulf represented, prior to oil, an imperial frontier, and as such, a strategic point where Britain could enact its rivalry with France, Portugal, and the Netherlands.²² In 1622, the Persia Agent of the East India Company aided Shah 'Abbas of Persia to evict the Portuguese from Gombroon, which was eighty-five miles from the Persia Agency at Jask.²³ Afterwards, the Company set up their commercial headquarters at Bandar Abbas, but after declining Persian trade, they were forced to close their factory, and transfer to Basra.²⁴ The Qajar tribal and dynastic history has its roots in Persia's eighteenth-century political culture, as it "was still dominated by tribal elites and politics, but the context shifted throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to end with failed constitutionalism and the emergence of a new dynasty in 1926 that would unequivocally transform Iran's ancient political culture."²⁵

One could say that the imperial frontier of the British met the Ottoman-Qajar frontier. After all, the British encountered regional dominions on the periphery of the sovereign states. However, these regions remained autonomous, despite either the Ottoman or Qajar Empires' desire to bring the periphery into their dominion. Along the coast in the port city of Mohammerah and the Zagros Mountains, the central government found control challenging as these peripheries were a "highly porous expanse" due to "the peoples inhabiting" to shift "as

²¹ James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 43.

²² JE Peterson, "Britain and the Gulf: at the Periphery of Empire," in *The Persian Gulf in History* edited by Lawrence G. Potter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 278, 279.

²³ Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj*, 43.

²⁴ Peterson, "Britain and the Gulf: at the Periphery of Empire," 279.

²⁵ Gene R. Garthwaite, *The Persians* (Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 191.

it continued to be a place of perpetual motion, of separation as well as crossing and mixing.”²⁶

However, British companies were not the only ones interested in expanding their influence into the territory of southwest Persia. Prior to the Reuter Concession, the Persian Government granted a contract to M. Salavan, an Austrian, who sought to build a railway and mine; however, no work was undertaken, and this allowed French, Prussian, and English interests to accept the contract.²⁷ Although this contract was canceled, it was followed by the D’Arcy Concession, which gave the British entrepreneurs a 60-year right to oil exploration in most of the Qajar Empire, except where there were Russian objections, and in return, the Empire acquired 16 percent of the net profit, and 20,000 shares of 1 pound sterling each and 20,000 pounds’ sterling in cash.²⁸ As a result, the D’Arcy Oil Syndicate depended on labor of both nomadic and sedentary tribes, which consequently allowed “the British imperialists of having, by their activities, thwarted the development of the productive forces of Khuzistan, as a result of the main parts of that region” had come to depend on the Syndicate for work.²⁹

Throughout British correspondence, it is evident that Sheikhs, Khans, and political leaders proved to be important to the Syndicate, as it sought to expand its influence beyond the city of Mohammerah. Therefore, the local tribal leaders were pivotal players either against the imperial subjugation of tribes and pockets of confrontation that clashed with British oil interests. Particularly, these anti-imperial sentiments were present among the Bakhtiyari.

²⁶ Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Boderlands: Making a Boundary, 1943-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); 1.

²⁷ L.E. Fretchling, “The Reuter Concession in Persia,” in *The Economic History of Iran, 1880-1914*, edited by Charles Issawi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 178.

²⁸ Hooshang Amirahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran under the Qajars: Society, Politics, Economics and Foreign Relations, 1796 – 1926* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 163.

²⁹ Z.Z. Abdullaev, “Promyshlennost I zaroshdenie rabochego klassa Irana v kontse XIX-nachale XX,” in *The Economic History of Iran, 1880-1914*, edited by Charles Issawi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 48.

However, Sheikh Khazal, also known as Sardar Arfa, upheld the interest of Britain. For instance, in October 1905 Minister of Foreign Affairs Mushir al-Dawla³⁰ ordered Salar Muazzam, the Governor-General of Khuzestan, through Karguzar, a Persian Foreign Office Agent to assist the Lynch Brothers in recovering advances.³¹ Thereafter, Sir Arnold Wilson,³² an agent of the Lynch Company, said he was robbed on boat by two soldiers, and told Salar Muazzam that the robbers weren't soldiers but Cossacks, and that they would be punished. When groups established themselves as contrary to the British, Sheikh Khazal took it upon himself through diplomacy to overcome the concern, and acted as an intermediary. When the Cossacks robbed an agent of the Lynch brothers, Khazal promised to speak to Salar about it, and settle the issue.³³ Khazal would prove to be a core interlocutor between British company and tribal forces in the Khuzestan province.

Sheikh Khazal, as both diplomat and tribal leader of prominent importance, was integral in dealing with the deep contention between the metropole and the coastal region of Khuzestan. Mohammerah was the home of Arab tribes, such as the Cha'b, Beni Truf, and Muhaysin,³⁴ who had sought to maintain their independence from the central government of

³⁰ Mushir al-Dawla (1873-1935) was a Minister in St. Petersburg in 1902, Minister for Foreign Affairs in October 1907, Minister of Justice from 1908 to 1909, Prime Minister in 1915, Minister for War from 1917 to 1918, and lastly, Prime Minister in 1920 and 1922 to 1923. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 693.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sir Arnold Wilson (1884-1990) was Lieutenant of the Indian Army detachment in Ahwaz, a province in Persia, from 1907 to 1909, and was acting consul in Muhammara from 1909 to 1911. He would go on as a British Commissioner of the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission from 1913 to 1914, assistant political officer in Basra from 1915 to 1917, deputy chief political officer in Basra from 1917 to 1918, acting civil commissioner and political resident in the Persian Gulf from 1918 to 1920. Joint general manager in Muhammara of Strick Scott & Co; 1921 and for APOC, 1923-24, and finally, managing director of the D'Arcy Exploration Company from 1926 to 1932. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 696

³³ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1*, "Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 5th March 1905, Mohammerah (From 19th to 25th February), AP Trevor, Captain, First Assistant for Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 46" (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 149, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

³⁴ It is important to note that there are several different Arab tribes of and near Mohammerah of who lived in the Khuzestan province. Sheikh Khazal particularly belonged to the Muhaysin tribe. According to the political

Persia. They felt pressure from both the Ottoman and Qajar empires; the Arab tribes fell on the side of the Persian government, and therefore were required to pay revenue to Tehran. Prior, the Cha'b Sheikhs of these Arab tribes, with their headquarters at Fellahieh, east of Mohammerah, were supposedly powerful, but as the Qajar Empire took control of the coastal town of Mohammerah, the empire designated a chief from the Muhaysin tribe in charge of all Cha'b tribes.³⁵ Furthermore, Sheikh Khazal surmounted the Qajar grips over the region and as pivotal political player for the expansion of the imperial frontier into the coastal hinterland. Khazal ascended as the Sheikh in June of 1897 after his brother, Sheikh Mizal, was assassinated, and according to some, Khazal was suspected of conspiring against his brother.³⁶ Khazal sought to keep the Sheikhs of Mohammerah on his side despite the tax demands of Tehran. As Khazal kept "the Sheikhs by him in Mohammerah," and Fellahieh became a "sort of Arab Republic, paying taxes, to Khazal," Khazal became a more powerful successor than his predecessor, Mizal, and was thusly "less amenable to Persian influence, in as much as he is more secure in his dealings with the tribes."³⁷

Khazal was one in a line of sheikhs of Mohammerah, who sought to maintain the region, like his predecessors from the Qajar Empire, or neighboring raiding tribes. When nomadic tribes, like the Bakhtiyari, were unsettled and raided other parts of the region, Khazal established himself as the key diplomat among warring tribes. This was in large part due to

diarities of the Persian Gulf, the Muhaysin tribe and the Kaab tribe were allies when there was tribal conflict, particularly during a point of conflict with the Beni Truf. *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, "Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 30th June 1907 Mohammerah (From 16th to 22nd June 1907) JH Bill, First Assistant, Political Resident, Persian Gulf; 238, 239," (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990.); 247, 248, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

³⁵ Whigham, *The Persian Problem*, 109.

³⁶ Shahnavaaz, *Britain and the Opening up of South-West Persia, 1880-1914*, 145.

³⁷ Whigham, *The Persian Problem*, 111.

the fact that there was a tension between the sedentary tribes and nomadic ones. Prior to Khazal's ascendance as Sheikh of Mohammerah, other tribes responded to the Bakhtiyari power by seeking to weaken their standing. In May of 1888, Nizam os-Saltaneh and Sa'd ol'Molk, "the newly-appointed governor of Bushehr" marched into the Bakhtiyari against Imam Quli Khan and "into Arabistan, or Khuzistan, in an attempt to impose authority of the Central Government and to seize" Sheikh Mizal Khan of Mohammerah."³⁸ The British, at this point, were concerned for the stability of Arabistan, because, according Consul P.J.C. Robertson of the Foreign Office, if the Persian metropole acquired

direct authority over the Arabs of Arabistan, and substitute Persian governors over the hereditary Chiefs of Mohammerah, our [British] influence and political power in these parts would be inconveniently affected. Sheikh Mizal Khan, like his father, Hajji Jabir Khan, has always placed his information and authority at the disposal of this agency [the Consulate at Basrah], and he would at once, if called upon, hold himself and his tribe at the orders of the British Government. While he is the Chief, the position and resources of Muhammerah are potentially under British control for the extension of commerce or other purposes; and it is possibly a knowledge of this that has at the present juncture occasioned the desire of the Persian Government to depose him.³⁹

Similar to his predecessor, Sheikh Mizal, Khazal was fundamental for both the British Government, and the Oil Syndicate, but appeared to be a formidable opponent to the metropole of Tehran. Contention between Khazal and the Persian Government continued throughout the early 1900s. Khazal's contention with the metropole of Tehran was clear in his reaction to Belgian custom officials arriving to the city. Accordingly, the establishment of the

³⁸ Garthwaite, *The Bakhtiyari Khans*, 133.

³⁹ Ibid.

Belgian custom officials throughout Persia was essentially a power grab of the metropole over the periphery, as the empire allowed custom officials to set up along the coast, in such cities as Bushire, Lingah, and Bunder Abbas. Yet, the Sheikh collected “the customs as of yore and remaining practically supreme in his own sphere.”

But in the beginning of 1902 a Belgian official was told to go to Mohammerah and inspect the ground of future operations. He came up with a great flourish of trumpets, backed by the entire Persian Navy in the shape of the gunboat *Persepolis*. He also talked rather proudly and intimate that unless the Sheikh immediately handed over the customs the Governor-General of Arabistan, who is the Shah’s own son, would come with an army and teach the Arabs a lesson. The *Persepolis* anchored in the river off Mohammerah, ready to blow the town to pieces if opposition were shown. But the Belgian had reckoned without his host. The Arabs, who are armed almost to a man, resented to the utmost this attempt to foist a foreign authority on them. It is not merely that the various chiefs have been accustomed to levy dues at different points along the Karun by a method not unlike the likin barriers of China and object not unnaturally to losing this source of income; but on general principles they are prepared to resist the establishment of a system by which they will not only suffer financially but maybe robbed of some part of that freedom from restraint which the Arab prizes so highly.⁴⁰

As Tehran allowed the Belgian official to come in, Sheikh Khazal stood as an opponent to the encroachment of Tehran. Because the Persian Governor of Arabistan was incapable of forcing the Sheikh to the terms in which the metropole sought, the collection of custom revenue; Tehran had to use more diplomatic means with the Sheikh.⁴¹ The Sheikh had a “strong personality and marked friendship with the British Government” which did not allay

⁴⁰ HJ Whigham, *The Persian Problem: an Examination of the Rival Positions of Russia and Great Britain in Persia with some Account of the Persian Gulf and the Bagdad Railway* (London: Isbister, 1903); 112, 113, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924027822679>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

“the distrust which was aroused alike in Turkey and in Persia by his growing influence.”⁴²

Thus, Sheikh Khazal only ascended in power, in such positions as governor of all of Khuzestan, because the Governor-General Sirdar Mukarrem sought to elevate the status of Khazal.⁴³ Additionally, Khazal’s relationship with Britain played a pivotal role in the D’Arcy Oil Concession into the Bakhtiyari territory. Since Khazal was a pivotal negotiator that had British Oil Syndicate interest in mind, he culled any threat to the D’Arcy Oil Concession in the Bakhtiyari land. So, when the D’Arcy and Bakhtiyari agreement negotiations were still an issue throughout 1907, Khazal worked toward an agreement, while the Qajar Empire proved to be a thorn in the side of the Bakhtiyari.

Despite the Qajar Empire having issues with the concession between the Bakhtiyari and the D’Arcy Syndicate, “on the ground that the scope of the contract includes some territory which would appear to belong to the Persian Government,”⁴⁴ Khazal maintained his status among Arab tribes and the Oil Syndicate as an influential interlocutor. Furthermore, Khazal’s collaboration with the company impacted the Bakhtiyari tribes’ interest in politics, as Khazal was a main piece in the puzzle to the British drilling oil in the region. Without Khazal’s assistance, his attitude as both a diplomat and resilience to the opposition of the D’Arcy Oil Concession would have been a difficult endeavor to reach negotiations with the Bakhtiyari and to secure the drilling site, which was necessary when searching and finding oil at Masjid-i Suleiman.

⁴² Iraq and Gertrude Bell's *The Arab of Mesopotamia*, 78

⁴³ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 5th May 1907 Mohammerah (From 21st to 27th April 1907) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 165,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 174, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138..>

⁴⁴ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 111.

Chapter 3

The D'Arcy Oil Concession, and the Bakhtiyari Tribe



Fig. 1. William Knox D'Arcy.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *First Oil- 1901-1908*, BP, accessed on April 18th, 2017, <http://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/about-bp/our-history/first-oil.html>.

When the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate wanted to drill for oil in Bakhtiyari territory in 1905, it was imperative for the Company to come to an agreement with the Bakhtiyari prior to surveying along the Zagros Mountains. While Sheikh Khazal was not among those who signed the agreement, he would continually smooth relations between the Bakhtiyari and the Company. Tribal dynamics were consequently affected by the presence of the Syndicate among the Bakhtiyari, which led to its fractionalization among the Bakhtiyari, such as the usurpation of power positions of *ilkhani* and *ilbegi* in the confederacy. Furthermore, the central government of Persia was not privy to these relations as it lacked sovereignty over tribal territory. However, I argue that imperial interests in oil relied more on tribal collaboration than approval from the Qajar Empire.

Oil was not discovered by Britain, nor did concessionary interest in oil begin with the D'Arcy Concession. Before the D'Arcy Concession in Persia, oil seepages were used in the region for centuries. Some of the pivotal uses of oil included the caulking of boats, and the binding of bricks. Even “in ancient religion, the inflammable seepage-gases of Susiana or Khuzistan played a part, and their sites were marked by temples of the fire-venerating faithful.”⁴⁶ However, for those outside of the region, they were not interested in Persian oil until after the geological study entitled “On Geology of Portions of the Turco-Persian Frontier and of the Districts Adjoining” by W.K. Loftus.⁴⁷ In part as a member of a joint Commission appointed by the English, Russian, Turkish, and Persian Governments, Loftus’ goal sought to demark the Ottoman-Iranian frontier from 1849 to 1852.⁴⁸ W.K. Loftus’ publication is telling

⁴⁶ Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 11.

⁴⁷ R.W. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company, Volume 1: The Developing Years, 1901-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 24.

⁴⁸ William Kennett Loftus, “On the Geology of portions of the Turco-Persian Frontier, and of the Districts

because it underlines a moment in time where interests were to delineate territory. As Loftus explains in great detail, the Ottoman and Persian empires stretched 250 miles from Mohammerah and near Mendali. While this explanation of the frontier is interesting, his remarks toward the people belie an imperialist mindset. He calls this area, Mohammerah to Mendali, an “arid and deserted waste, infested by plundering Arabs and Kurds,” but presumably “capable for the most part of extensive cultivation.”⁴⁹



Fig. 2. Oil Springs along the Mendali Ridge, 1902.⁵⁰

Adjoining,” Communicated from the Foreign Office, by order of the Earl of Clarendon, June 21, 1854, in *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, No. 11, January 1855; 247, doi: 10.1144/GSL.JGS.1855.011.01-02.33.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 248.

⁵⁰ *Oil Locally in the pre-British Era*, SOAS University of London, accessed April 18th, 2017, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/bakhtiari-kuch/oil/pre-british/>.

As a scientist member the August 1855 Geological Society in London, Loftus had oversight over the Persian-Turkish Frontier Commission of 1848 and the opportunity to travel among the archaeological sites in the area, where he examined for indications of oil in the neighborhood of Masjid-i Suleiman, known to Europeans for its Parthian stone platform.⁵¹ Bitumen and naphtha⁵² springs occurred, known as a gypsiferous series, along the 700 miles along the range separating Persia and Turkey, and he claimed that these springs “extended from the Caucasus to Beloochistan.”⁵³

British mineral interests continued in southwest Persia with the Reuter Concession,⁵⁴ granted on 25 July 1872, which underlined in its contingencies in Article 11 “the exclusive and definite privilege to work, all over the Empire, the mines of coal, iron, copper, petroleum etc.”⁵⁵ along with “monopolies in the construction of railways and canals and the rights to the exploitation of uncultivated lands to a British subject, Julius de Reuter, for a down payment of 40,000 pounds.”⁵⁶ These concessions lapsed with its cancellation on 10 November 1873. Described by Lord Curzon as the notorious Reuter agreement “that literally took away the breath of Europe and handed over the entire resources of Persia to foreign hands for a period of seventy years,”⁵⁷ the concession was cancelled under widespread protest. However, the

⁵¹ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*,

⁵² Naphtha consists of hydrocarbons which are capable of being distilled into petroleum, while bitumen is a black viscous mixture of hydrocarbons obtained naturally or a residue from petroleum distillation, used for road surfacing and roofing.

⁵³ Loftus, “On the Geology of portions of the Turko-Persian Frontier, and of the Districts Adjoining,” 265, 266.

⁵⁴ “In 1872, and again in 1889, Baron Julius de Reuter, founder of the Reuters news agency, had obtained Persian concessions that provided, among other things, for development of oil. But both concessions generated great protest within Persia and considerable opposition from Imperial Russia, as well as much waste in haphazard and unsuccessful efforts to find oil. Both ended by being terminated.” Yergin, *The Prize*, 119.

⁵⁵ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 24.

⁵⁶ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 75.

⁵⁷ Charles Issawi, “Reuter Concession,” in *The Economic History of Iran: 1900-1914*, edited by Charles Issawi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 177.

Reuter Concession was followed by other foreign concessions that promised to bring modern development to Iran in the late Qajar period.

While the Reuter Concession ultimately was an unsuccessful venture, in 1884 the Dutch firm Hotz & Co. of Bushire⁵⁸ obtained a petroleum concession near Dalaki. However, “the small scale [drilling] operations undertaken were quite unsuccessful.”⁵⁹ Accordingly, as of 1903, there had been “the three or four abortive endeavors already made by foreign capitalists to exploit the naphtha belt which [ran] north-west and south-east from Kurdistan to the Persian Gulf and beyond to Beluchistan and India, roughly speaking, parallel to the rich Caucasian oil-bed,” according to HJ Whigham, a Scottish writer who traveled in the Persian Gulf.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the operations of the Persian Mining Corporation “with a capital of a million sterling, [had] light-heartedly undertook to develop the entire mineral wealth of Persia.”⁶¹ By 1873, de Reuter’s oil venture was unfruitful, and became canceled. In turn, he acquired a second concession for sixty years, empowering him to establish the Imperial Bank of Persia and the Persian Bank Mining Rights Corporation. As a result, de Reuter would have “the exclusive and definite privilege of working throughout the Empire, the iron, copper and lead, mercury, coal, petroleum, manganese, borax and asbestos mines belonging to the State, and which had not been previously ceded to others.”⁶²

However, the Corporation plunged into failure and was liquidated on July 21, 1901. Apparently, because of the deep “want of success” of this corporation, they overlooked the imperative for large amount of capital for such a business venture. As Whigham stated, “the

⁵⁸ Bushire is a coastal city south of Mohammerah.

⁵⁹ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 24.

⁶⁰ Whigham, *The Persian Problem*, 261.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 25, 26.

lack of success were manifold” with two specific events worth mentioning.⁶³ Since the efforts of a corporation were diffused over a large area, “the individual operations were of so varying a nature as almost to preclude success from the very start.” The second issue was thus transportation. Transportation was not well developed and particularly difficult throughout Persia. As a consequence of overlooking transportation, the cost of importing expensive machinery for mineral extraction led to failure. At this point, there was little progress finding oil.



Fig. 3. George Reynolds, left, at Masjid-i Suleiman.⁶⁴

⁶³ Whigham, *The Persian Problem*, 262.

⁶⁴ *First Oil- 1901-1908*, BP, accessed on April 18th, 2017, <http://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/about-bp/our-history/first-oil.html>.

By the 1890s, a French geologist began to publish reports, based upon his extensive research in Persia that emphasized the potential for oil in the region. Because the geologist's work gained acclaim among interested parties, the D'Arcy Concession came to fruition. William Knox D'Arcy, a millionaire, was supposedly courted by General Kitabgi, who encouraged D'Arcy to invest in a seemingly successful business venture, which would lead to "a source of riches incalculable as to extension."⁶⁵ On May 28, 1901, Tehran granted D'Arcy "special rights for prospection, exploration, exploitation, transport, and sales of the following product: natural gas, petroleum, asphalt, and mineral waxes."⁶⁶ By granting D'Arcy his concession, this required expertise in finance, technically experienced engineers, and an understanding of Persia's environment in order to complete a project.

Since D'Arcy lacked such expertise, as a mere investor, he sought his acquaintances and advisers for consultation so that the business venture would be profitable as he wanted to "make a profitable return on his capital by forming a company to exploit his concession."⁶⁷ D'Arcy picked Alfred T. Marriott for securing the concession and George Bernard Reynolds,⁶⁸ a self-taught geologist.⁶⁹ He also depended on the distinguished oil technologist Dr. Boverton Redwood for technical advice.⁷⁰ According to Whigham, D'Arcy avoided the

⁶⁵ Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: the Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 119.

⁶⁶ Ali Morteza Samsam Bakhtiari, "OPEC'S Evolving Role: D'Arcy Concession Centennial and OPEC Today - an Historical Perspective," in *Oil & Gas Journal*, Volume 99, Issue 28, July 9, 2011, <http://www.ogj.com/articles/print/volume-99/issue-28/special-report/opecs-evolving-role-darcy-concession-centennial-and-opec-today-an-historical-perspective.html>.

⁶⁷ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 48.

⁶⁸ George Bernard Reynolds (d. 1928) was a graduate of the Royal Indian Engineering College. He went on to become employed in Sumatra oilfields. He is well known for having been engaged by William Knox D'Arcy in 1901 to drill for oil in Persia, and then striking oil on the 26th of May in 1908 at Masjid i-Suleiman. Thenceforward, he was fields general manager from 1908 to 1909, and 1910. Ibid, 694.

⁶⁹ Bakhtiari, "OPEC'S Evolving Role: D'Arcy Concession Centennial and OPEC Today - an Historical Perspective," <http://www.ogj.com/articles/print/volume-99/issue-28/special-report/opecs-evolving-role-darcy-concession-centennial-and-opec-today-an-historical-perspective.html>.

⁷⁰ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 48.

errors of de Reuter by confining himself to one district and one class of mining, and above all else, he focused on the question of transport which other ventures had not and thus failed.⁷¹

The D'Arcy Concession consequently had an impact on the Bakhtiyari tribe, and the Arab tribes of Mohammerah.

Oil was first found in commercial quantities in the Khuzistan province in southern Iran at Masjid-i Suleiman in 1908.⁷² The D'Arcy Oil Syndicate held exclusive rights to petroleum resources, and “set its sights on a tract of land in the territory of the Bakhtiyari tribes known as Maydan-i Naftun, ‘the field of oil.’”⁷³ After all, according to Whigham, “the scheme of Mr. D'Arcy is not lacking in boldness of conception” as he sought to “begin in the naphtha beds a little to the north of Kasr-i-Shirin”, and afterwards laying a pipeline “through Kurdistan and Luristan to Dizful, and then across the torrid plains of Arabistan to Mohammerah.”⁷⁴ However, the search for oil in Bakhtiyari country was predicated on the tribe's agreement to allow the Syndicate to search for petroleum. The D'Arcy Concession would consequently affect the Bakhtiyari tribe, by exploring for oil in the Bakhtiyari fields of southwestern Iran from 1905 to 1911. As the D'Arcy Syndicate searched for oil under the D'Arcy Concession at Masjid-i Suleiman, this transformed the Bakhtiyari because the tribe was forced into “departure from the customary land rights” as hopes for oil in southwest Iran cemented a policy that sought to “discipline the tribes and induce them to end their pastoral nomadic way of life” through assimilation and settlement of the tribe.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Whigham, *The Persian Problem*, 261.

⁷² A youtube video depicting the Oil Syndicate in action while in Persia:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWGKWC_sWn4.

⁷³ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 112.

⁷⁴ Whigham, *The Persian Problem*, 264.

⁷⁵ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 113, 114.

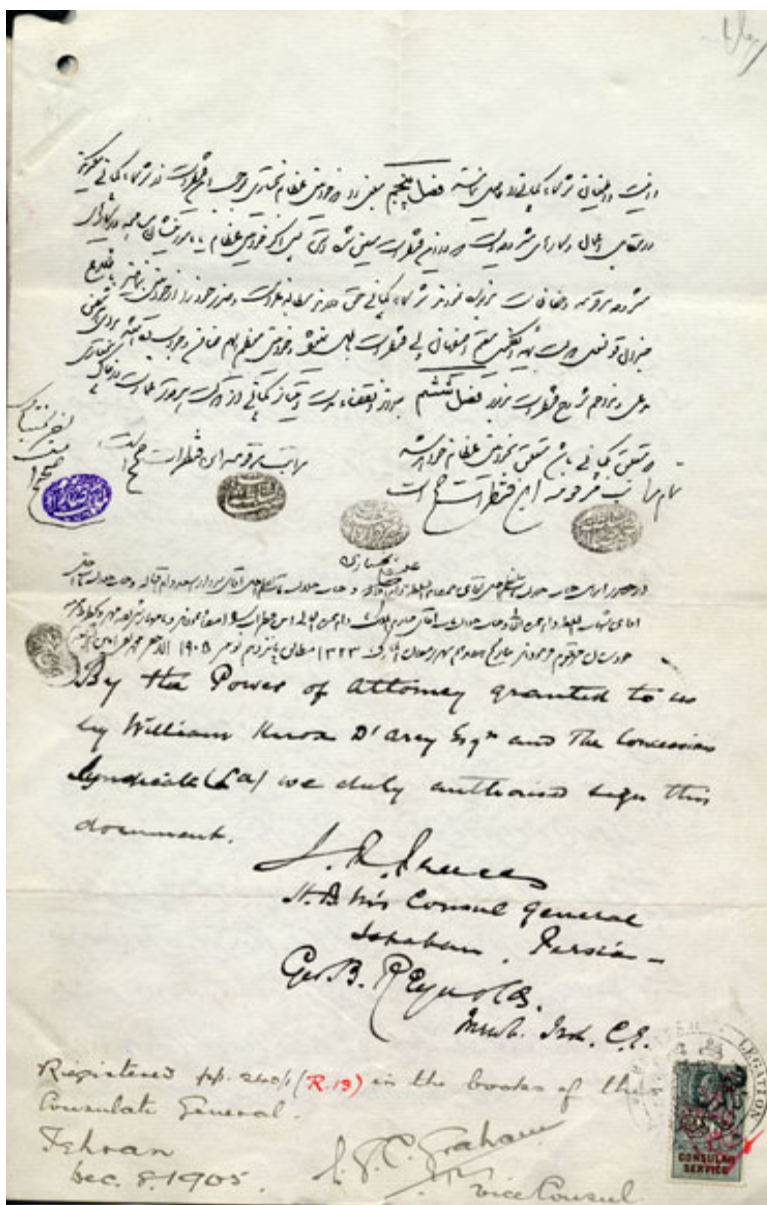


Fig. 4. First Bakhtiari Agreement, 8 December 1905.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The Earliest Oilmen and the Relationship to the Bakhtiari Khans, SOAS, University of London, accessed on April 18th, 2017, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/bakhtiari-kuch/oil/earliest-oilmen/>.

On September 25th, Reynolds and his assistant Bertie arrived to Mohammerah from Baghdad.⁷⁷ The purpose of which was to plan for “drillers’ quarters and dispensary, modifications to transport equipment, the hiring of mules, designing carts, cladding the derricks, the engagement of a Turkish surveyor, drawing up accounting procedures, and arranging for the reception of goods and men at Muhammara and Ahwaz with the local agent of Lynch Brothers”.⁷⁸ Reynolds left Mohammerah, leaving his assistant Bertie in charge on the coast. He went to negotiate with Bakhtiyari Khans on October 19, 1905. Apparently his enterprising abilities were due to the fact that not only was he an “engineer, geologist, manager, field representative, diplomat, linguist, and anthropologist,” but his ever “determination” despite the supposed “extorting tribesmen,” some would say, led to his ability to help J.R. Preece from the Foreign Office to settle the Bakhtiyari agreement.⁷⁹

The agreement was signed on November 15, 1905, by Samsam al-Saltanah, Shahab al-Saltanah Ilbaigi, Hajji ‘Ali Quli Khan, Nasir Khan Saram al-Mulk, J.R. Preece, and George Reynolds.⁸⁰ Ruling Khans sold the D’Arcy Syndicate the “permission to survey, drill, build roads, and lay pipelines in the winter quarters,” and the Bakhtiyari were to provide the land “at the fair price of the day,’ if arable, but at no cost if uncultivated.”⁸¹ Article one explained that the D’Arcy company had “the right to make all kinds of experiments, all kinds of actual investigations and (to use their) authority, and enquiries, in order to discover petroleum.”⁸²

⁷⁷ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 8th October 1905 Mohammerah (no date) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 180,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 283, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

⁷⁸ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 75.

⁷⁹ Yergin, *The Prize*, 127.

⁸⁰ Nezam Bagherzade and Caroline Mawer, *The Bakhtiari and the British: Oil in SW Persia*, SOAS, University of London, accessed on April 18th, 2017, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/bakhtiari-kuch/oil/commentary/>.

⁸¹ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 122.

⁸² Bagherzade and Mawer, *The Bakhtiari and the British: Oil in SW Persia*, SOAS, University of London,

The agreement also enforced guards on the roads and in towers, in which the Bakhtiyari khans would provide. Within a few months, there was disagreement among both the Bakhtiyari and the concessionary forces.



Fig. 5. The Bakhtiyari guard, with head guard in the center.⁸³

While the Bakhtiyari agreed to the new drilling site in the winter grazing pasture, the concessionary forces were perturbed by the lack of follow through because of what they

accessed on April 18th, 2017, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/bakhtiari-kuch/oil/commentary/>.

⁸³ Ibid.

perceived as “constant family feuds and tribal tensions, as well as what seemed the Bakhtiaris’ inveterate tendency toward extortion.”⁸⁴ Despite duly tribal animosity toward the foreigners, the Syndicate continued its search for resources. Reynolds assistant Bertie received orders back in Mohammerah and dispatched the machinery up the Karun River, as the Bakhtiyari Khans concluded the arrangement with the D’Arcy Concession Syndicate.⁸⁵ In January of 1906, unloaded haulage at Mohammerah amounting to a thousand tons to “sites over slippery mud and soft sand by the simplest of mule-drawn carts.”⁸⁶ However, the reason for this opposition was due to “the tribal rank and file” and “widespread disdain on the part of tribesmen for the foreign oil company,” a natural inclination toward foreign occupation of lands, and unequal distribution of assets that the foreign company pocketed.⁸⁷

Yet, Reynolds described a Bakhtiyari leader as a “man as full of intrigue as the egg of a nightingale is pregnant with music.”⁸⁸ The Syndicate complained because the Bakhtiyari did not provide the necessary guards, which threatened the drilling endeavor.⁸⁹ This was due to the fracturing among the Bakhtiyari tribe, as Samsam al-Saltanah was deposed from *ilkhani* post, and Sardar As’ad (Haji ‘Ali Quli Khan) ascended to the position.⁹⁰ Quli Khan had been designated in December, and he and the opposition, which consisted of Samsam al-Saltanah

⁸⁴ Yergin, *The Prize*, 129.

⁸⁵ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1.*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 26th November 1905 Mohammerah (From 12th to 18th November), PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, 219,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990; 322, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

⁸⁶ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 78.

⁸⁷ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 135.

⁸⁸ Yergin, *The Prize*, 129.

⁸⁹ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 109.

⁹⁰ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1.*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 7th January 1906 Mohammerah (From 24^h to 30th December 1905) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, 251,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990; 354, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

and Shahab al-Saltanah, while the latter “incurred heavy expenses within the confederation and in Tehran in their dispute over these important positions.”⁹¹ As a result, in January 1906, factional fighting between the Bakhtiyari Khans (including Ram Hormuz District) broke out, and the Ispahan road was closed off.⁹²

Because of this infighting, no one was paying the guards. While on the other hand, Quli Khan knew that the Bakhtiyari could have higher claims during previous negotiations with the D’Arcy Syndicate.⁹³ By February, the deputy governor of Ram Hormuz stopped the company surveyor from working as he was “disdained by many villagers”. Reynolds complained to the *ilbayg* in writing, and Khusraw Khan vehemently responded, “what have you to do with Soldiers and Guards, as to when they came and when they did not come, when they were present and when they were absent?”⁹⁴ With such issues continuing through February of 1906, Reynolds thought it may be necessary to meet with Hajji Khusraw Khan. During their conversation, Hajji Khusraw Khan made it clear that money must be paid to Hajji Quli Khan, if they were to continue guarding the Oil Syndicate’s operation.⁹⁵ Accordingly, Sheikh Khazal of Mohammerah (Sardar Arfa) and his secretary sought to preserve order in the Ram Hormuz border and to communicate with Hajji Khusraw Khan Bakhtiyari (Salar Arfa), and planned to “use his influence with the Khans in the interest of an amicable arrangement among themselves.”⁹⁶ However, the khans concerned themselves with

⁹¹ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 109.

⁹² *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 28th January 1906 Mohammerah (From 14th to 20th January 1906) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 271,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990; 374, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

⁹³ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 109.

⁹⁴ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 135, 136.

⁹⁵ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 80.

⁹⁶ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 25th February 1906 Mohammerah (From 11th to 17th February 1906) PZ Cox, Major, Political

losing their “quarterly guard installments” to their rivals.⁹⁷ Unsurprisingly throughout Percy Cox’s correspondence, it was believed that Sheikh Khazal deterred Khusraw Khan Bakhtiyari from garnering forces,⁹⁸ and would be able to arrange a reconciliation between Bakhtiyari Khans, with certainty for success.⁹⁹

Between the tribesmen, the insufficient guards, and the disturbances, the Agreement was reconsidered in Tehran, with the Khans present. Not only were the tribesmen and the Syndicate unhappy with the agreement, the Syndicate failed to secure Qajar Empire’s approval, and the central government insisted that the Khans had no right to even make an agreement in the first place.¹⁰⁰ However, Quli Khan explained that the tribesmen were “men unacquainted with business matters” and only agreed to the contingencies “out of regard for Preece ‘without realizing what they were undertaking.’”¹⁰¹ Samsam al-Saltanah was re-appointed *ilkhani* of the Bakhtiyaris with a new title of Nejef Quli, and Shehab-es-Saltanah *ilbegi* with the title of Sipahdar, with the consent from all the Khans for this decision in April of 1906,¹⁰² prior to Quli Khan’s complaint, as he “was buying his way into power in

Resident in the Persian Gulf; 290,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 393, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

⁹⁷ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 110.

⁹⁸ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 4th March 1906 Mohammerah (From 18th to 24th February 1906) (399/296) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 296,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 399, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

⁹⁹ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 11th March 1906, Mohammerah (From 24th February to March 3rd 1906), A.P. Trevor, Captain, for Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 300,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990; 403, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

¹⁰⁰ Stephanie Cronin, “The Politics of Debt: The Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Bakhtiyari Khans,” in *Middle Eastern Studies Journal*, Vol. 40, Issue 4, 2004, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00263200410001700293>.

¹⁰¹ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 80.

¹⁰² *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1904-1906, Vol 1*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending 22nd April 1906 Mohammerah (From 8th to 14th April 1906) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 335,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990; 438, <https://dlib-eastview-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/book/reader/64301/start>.

Tehran.”¹⁰³ This was a result of Samsam al-Saltanah contesting his brother’s appointment as *ilkhani*, as it was feared that “the Naphtha Company” would “pay money for guards directly to ‘Ali Quli Khan,” Samsam requested “that no money should be paid without sealed receipt of all the chiefs party to the agreement.”¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the Syndicate continued to conduct business with the tribes instead of the central government.

In many cases, Sheikh Khazal was the chief problem solver in reducing Bakhtiyari discontent with the Oil Syndicate, and other tribes in the region. For instance, the Bakhtiyari were gearing to raid the region of Behbahan, with Samsam and Shebab, *ilkhani* and *ilbegi*, respectively, having collected the large force of Bakhtiyari at Malamir, “threatening the Karun and Behbahan districts.”¹⁰⁵ Because Sheikh Khazal, with British interest in mind wanted to maintain order in the region, he sought to negotiate with Samsam and Shebab as they threatened the Behbahan district. Thereafter, Sheikh Khazal of Mohammerah supposedly received “a cordial telegram” on January 22nd from the Bakhtiyari Khans, according to PZ Cox, saying that Aziz-Ullah had arrived at Malamir, and all misunderstandings had been removed. The Bakhtiyari Khans asked that Haji Rais Tujjar, the Wazir and Agent to Khazal,¹⁰⁶ to meet them at Ram Hormuz where they expected to arrive on February 12th, to settle “(a) details of partnership in Behbehan, (b) claims of certain Arabs removed from Al Ragheiwa to be Bakhtiyari subjects and (c) the question of giving or not giving asylum to each

¹⁰³ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 80.

¹⁰⁴ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 132, 133.

¹⁰⁵ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 27th January 1907 Mohammerah (From 13th to 19th January 1907) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 31,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990, 40, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹⁰⁶ Gertrude Bell, *The Arab of Mesopotamia*, Basra: The Superintendent, Government Press, 1917, 78, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015010936097;view=1up;seq=11>.

other's subjects.”¹⁰⁷ Sheikh Khazal was interested in maintaining order, while the Bakhtiyari Khans wanted to extend their power vis-a-vis raiding or buying of land, “sedentary leaders opposed this expansion” and “this area their appeals were most often to sayyids in Shustar” or to the hereditary sheikhs of Mohammerah.¹⁰⁸

As such, Khazal appointed Haji Rais Tujjar as a negotiator in dealings with the Bakhtiyari. When these negotiations took place, it was thought that Samsam was less promising than his counterpart Shehab. However, Shehab at this point in 1907 was not on good terms with Samsam, and conversed with Khazal over the head of Samsam. Sheikh Khazal decided that Shehab would make a great partner in the Behbahan Government, and thus, Samsam would be Shehab's partner.¹⁰⁹ This strategic decision on the part of Khazal created a rift between Samsam and Shehab, as the former wanted to war with the other after the fact. Interestingly, animosity towards Samsam was not limited to inter and intra- tribal affairs. H.E Bradshaw, an engineer at Masjid-i Suleiman, complained about the laborers Samsam provided, stating that “a gang of tribesmen had attacked the workers and after ‘severely mauling several of them, persuaded all the rest of them to stop work’ and demand higher wages.”¹¹⁰

Despite this landscape of tribal politics, D'Arcy thought, with optimism, that he saw “no cause for alarm, as unreliable as the Bakhtiaris are, they are not such fools as to attempt to

¹⁰⁷ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 3rd February 1907 Mohammerah (From 20th to 26th January 1907) (47/38) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 38,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990, 47, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹⁰⁸ Garthwaite, *The Bakhtiyari Khans*, 147.

¹⁰⁹ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 7th April 1907 Mohammerah (From 17th to 23rd March 1907) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 122,” Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990, 131, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹¹⁰ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 137.

kill the goose that lays the golden egg.”¹¹¹ Perhaps this was due in part to the fact that Preece bribed Samsam and Shahab with 3% of the shares in the oil agreement as a “consideration for their [mutual] friendship.”¹¹² D’Arcy’s optimism was perhaps too early of a celebration in his success, as the D’Arcy and Bakhtiyari agreement negotiations were still an issue throughout 1907, and clashes among the Bakhtiyari were common. While the Oil Syndicate lobbied for the right of the stipulations written in the agreement while in Tehran, the Qajar government explained that its objection was “on the ground that the scope of the contract includes some territory which would appear to belong to the Persian Government.”¹¹³ The central government addressed the issue of the Bakhtiyari by removing Samsam as *ilkhani*. As a result, a rift formed between Samsam and Shehab, while Shehab’s brother Sarum el-Mulk was appointed to *ilbegi*.¹¹⁴ After the shah designated Shehab as *ilkhani*, Samsam ordered the guards to leave the oil field.¹¹⁵ As these clashes surfaced between Samsam and Shehab, Shehab made efforts amenable to the Oil Syndicate by restoring guards and repaying stolen goods. However, Reynolds thought that it would be best to move the drilling site from Mamatain to Masjid-i Suleiman.¹¹⁶ The Oil Syndicate had closed work at the Mamatin drilling site,¹¹⁷ and moved the site to the ancient fire temple of Masjid-i Suleiman with the

¹¹¹ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 81.

¹¹² Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 121.

¹¹³ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 111.

¹¹⁴ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 5th May 1907 Mohammerah (From 21st to 27th April 1907) PZ Cox, Major, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 165,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 174, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹¹⁵ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 111.

¹¹⁶ Laurence Lockhart, “The Emergence of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, 1901-1914,” in *The Economic History of Iran, 1880-1914*, edited by Charles Issawi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 317.

¹¹⁷ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1908-1909 Vol. 3*,

“Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 16th February 1908 Mohammerah (From 2nd to 8th February 1908) AP Trevor, Captain, First Assistant Resident (in charge current duties); 65,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 76,

Eighteenth Bengal Lancers from India as protection.¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, the Governor-General managed to restore peace between Samsam and Shehab, who were again *ilkhani* and *ilbegi* as before, respectively.¹¹⁹ Samsam's position as *ilkhani* was restored to him because of his standing with the Bakhtiyari tribe, "an arrangement with the Atabak, and the removal of Nizam al-Sultaneh from the governorship of Isfahan to that of Fars."¹²⁰ However, Samsam was a thorn in the side of the Oil Syndicate, as guards continued to not show up to the site under his position as paramount chief of the tribal confederacy. The Sheikh of Mohammerah even remarked that Bakhtiyari tribesmen were "so much out of hand" that he doubted whether the Khans could control them.¹²¹ Indeed, D.L.R. Lormier, the British vice-consul of Mohammerah,¹²² believed it would be necessary to bring British Indian troops to protect the oil fields, as Bakhtiyari autonomy meant very little.¹²³ By February of 1908, the Bakhtiyari Khans adamantly assured their commitment to the Sheikh of Mohammerah. Khazal responded by establishing his desire for harmonious relations in order to reach an agreement, and thus, he advised the Bakhtiyari to avoid quarrels among themselves as they were in danger of losing control of their tribe. The Sheikh therefore advocated for a common policy and understanding so that peace would be secured in the

<http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹¹⁸ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 146, 147.

¹¹⁹ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, "Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 7th July 1907 Mohammerah (From 23rd to 29th June 1907) JH Bill, First Assistant Resident, (In charge current duties); 246," (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 255,

<http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹²⁰ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 111.

¹²¹ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1907 Vol. 2*, "Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 27th October 1907 Mohammerah (From 13th to 19th October 1907) JH Bill, First Assistant Resident, (In charge current duties); 400," (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990); 409,

<http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹²² Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 111.

¹²³ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 142, 143.

Khuzestan province, so that they could prove to the central government that they would be capable of administrating over their own and neighboring districts.¹²⁴

While Sheikh Khazal sought amenable relations with the Bakhtiyari for his political agenda with the British,¹²⁵ it became inconsequential whether the Bakhtiyari guards showed up or not.¹²⁶ The Sheikh was thought as paramount in keeping tribes at ease in the region due to his political affiliation with the British and the D'Arcy Syndicate. As a result, the Sheikh continued to cajole intra tribal conflict between the Bakhtiyari and Arab tribes of Khuzestan in 1907. For instance, Shehab and Hajji Khusraw Khan pressed claims against the Sagwand tribe, as heightened tensions continued to rise across the Khuzestan region. These heightened tensions led the Governor-General of Khuzestan, a paramount chief above Sheikh Khazal, to imprison the sons of Fath-i-Lashkar and the Sagwand Khans, Fazil, Hassan Gida, and Khanjan at Burujird. Because of the Governor-General's actions, forces under Fath-i-Lashkar imprisoned the Governor-General. Governor-General, Sardar Mukarrem, was arrested by Fath-i-Lashkar, who sent a message to Dezful of his success, claiming that the Governor-General was a reactionary and sent him to Tehran to be dealt with by the Central Government.¹²⁷ Once again the Sheikh of Khuzestan came to the forefront, as he banded

¹²⁴ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1908-1909 Vol. 3*,

“Political Residency for the week ending the 16th February 1908 Mohammerah (From 2nd to 8th February 1908) AP Trevor, Captain, First Assistant Resident (in charge current duties); 65,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990.); 76,

<http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹²⁵ Sheikh Khazal was given the insignia of a Knight Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire by the British after the successful laying of pipeline at Abadan in 1911. Peter Mangold, *What the British Did: Two Centuries in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 38, 39.

¹²⁶ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 146.

¹²⁷ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1908-1909 Vol. 3*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 1st March 1908 Mohammerah (From 16th to 22nd February 1908) AP Trevor, Captain, for Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; 84,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990.); 95, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

together with the Bakhtiyari Khans to cull the threat present in Dezful emanating from Fath-i-Lashkar and his followers.¹²⁸ The Sheikh, the *ilkhani* and the *ilbegi* of the Bakhtiyari sent a joint telegram to the Governor-General of Arabistan, Luristan and Bakhtiyari. However, two companies of infantry and 16 gunners were unable to restore and preserve order in Shustar and Dezful. It seemed that the reason for difficulty with the Shustar region lied with the sayyids in the region claiming the land that the Bakhtiyari tribe had also claimed. In addition, the Oil Syndicate proceedings until 1907 in Mamatin led to increased tensions of ownership or vaqf.¹²⁹ As such, the Ilkani and Ilbegi explained that it would take 15,000 tomans for the year's expenses, in order to raise the necessary forces and restore order in Shustar and Dezful.¹³⁰

Interestingly, the Governor-General unable to send Sheikh Khazal, and the *ilkhani* and *ilbegi* the amount for salaries, he further elevated Sheikh Khazal by handing over Arabistan (Khuzestan) to Sheikh Khazal. This was however without the Bakhtiyari Khans, since the tribe was apparently behind on paying their taxes. The Sheikh explained that without the relationship with the Khans, Ilkhani and Ilbegi, and these other stipulations, it was impossible to guarantee the culling of unrest at Shustar and Dezful.¹³¹ The Oil Syndicate was an influence on the continual contention among the tribes in Khuzestan and nearby provinces.

However, the Syndicate found an ally in Khazal, and as a result, Britain gained control up the

¹²⁸ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1908-1909 Vol. 3* "Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 3rd May 1908 Mohammerah (From 19th to 25th April 1908) (163/152) AP Trevor, Captain, First Assistant Resident (in charge current duties); 152," (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990.); 163, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹²⁹ Garthwaite, *The Bakhtiyari Khans*, 195, 196.

¹³⁰ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1908-1909 Vol. 3* "Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 17th May 1908 Mohammerah (From 3rd to 9th May 1908) AP Trevor, Captain, First Assistant Resident (in charge current duties); 164," (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990.); 175, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Karun River, and provided assurances to the British, while Khazal sought to maintain amenable relations with the Bakhtiari. Britain managed to strike oil in Masjid-i Suleiman in 1908. As a result, Shustar and Dezful would be the battleground between the Bakhtiari and Khazal, and the Arab tribes of Khuzestan.¹³²



Fig. 6. The First Oil Well at Masjid-i Suleiman.¹³³

¹³² Shahnavaaz, *Britain and the Opening up of South-West Persia, 1880-1914*, 161.

¹³³ *Oil and the Bakhtiari*, SOAS University of London, accessed April 18th, 2017, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/bakhtiari-kuch/oil/>.

When the Oil Syndicate struck oil 1,200 feet under at Masjid-i Suleiman (or Maydan-i Naftun)¹³⁴ at 4:30 a.m. on the 26th of May in 1908, the Company planned construction of a pipeline to a new refinery at Abadan, approximately 100 miles south.¹³⁵ A little more than a week later, oil was discovered from another well at Masjid-i Suleiman.¹³⁶ Finding oil solved the financial predicament that D'Arcy faced, as funds were nearly exhausted, but with the copious flow of oil, the success led to the formation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) on April 14th, 1909.¹³⁷ By July of 1909, the Indian guards were dismissed, as the Syndicate sought assurance of “more direct control over the Bakhtiyari guards.”¹³⁸

Thus, Sheikh Khazal proved to be an integral player for the British Oil Syndicate in gaining resources in the Khuzestan region. His long-standing relationship with Britain allowed the British to essentially set-up shop in the region, as the company searched for sources. However, the relationship could be at best described as superficial. While the British on paper sought to uphold their relationship with the Sheikh, the interwar period would come to represent a change in policy with local tribes and their leaders, essentially dissolving such relations in order to cultivate stronger ties with Reza Khan.

¹³⁴ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1908-1909 Vol. 3*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 14th June 1908 Mohammerah (From 31st May to 6th June 1908) AP Trevor, Captain, First Assistant Resident (In charge current duties); 191,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990.); 202, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹³⁵ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 148.

¹³⁶ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf, 1908-1909 Vol. 3*, “Diary of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the week ending the 28th June 1908 Mohammerah (From 14th to 20th June 1908) AP Trevor, Captain, First Assistant Resident (In charge current duties); 204,” (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1990.); 215, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹³⁷ Lockhart, “The Emergence of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, 1901-1914,” 319.

¹³⁸ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 150.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The Fall of Sheikh Khazal, and the Rise of Bakhtiyari Elites

Internal politics of the Bakhtiyari, and intra tribal conflict dominated the diplomatic dynamics between the British Oil Syndicate and tribes, as creating a landscape for amenable oil drilling was of utmost importance. However, to say that the Bakhtiyari was a cohesive unit belies the complexity of the tribal structure. For instance, “alignments between the Bakhtiyari and the neighboring tribes” were important for the Bakhtiyari and Sheikh Khazal’s relations. Accordingly, there were three categories at play: landlords, tribal leaders, and political allies or enemies.¹³⁹ These relations were particularly important for the Oil Syndicate, as it sought to lay pipeline to the oil refinery in Abadan. After all, “on flank of Basra, across the Shatt, lay ‘Arabistan’ where its southern half existed an Arab population under the care of Shaykh of the Muhaysin tribe, “and under this administration [...] Muhammara at the Karun mouth had developed into a port and market of importance.”¹⁴⁰ As such, Sheikh Khazal was the progenitor for negotiations in the Khuzestan region, and the D’Arcy Oil Syndicate expected his allegiance and the maintenance of tribal chiefs within the province. Interestingly, the central government of Tehran was not a negotiator for oil development or the laying of pipeline. Indeed, it was Khazal, and while the “negotiations proved difficult,” Percy Cox saw the Sheikh as prudent since he expected that the Syndicate’s oil production “would eventually

¹³⁹ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, 129.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social, and Economic History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 13.

overshadow all other commercial” interests of the Qajar Empire.¹⁴¹

By 1911, the Syndicate constructed the pipeline leading to Abadan on the Shatt-al-Arab outlet to the Persian Gulf. The Abadan refinery was of strategic importance as it solidified Sheikh Khazal’s relationship with Britain. Furthermore, the advantageous oil resources found in Persia gave D’Arcy needed funds to create the APOC. The APOC, funded by Calouste Gulbenkian, would eventually buy shares of the Turkish Petroleum Company which would reform into the Iraq Petroleum Company, and struck oil at Kirkuk in 1927. The search for oil resources in Iraq influenced British diplomacy, in the sense that the APOC wanted to maintain relations between Sheikh Khazal and King Faisal of Iraq for the means of oil exploration. Iraq had become a place of interest in a mere few years after the development of the Abadan refinery, especially during World War I as the British forces were able to deliver large quantities of supplies.¹⁴² This was evident in British correspondence in 1919, which said that the “success of test wells being sunk at Naft Khaneh [in Iraq]” along with potential for discovering oil in the cities of Qasir-I-Shirin and Chiah Surkh, Persia (near Naft Khaneh).¹⁴³

Sheikh Khazal had a long-standing relationship with the British and the Oil Syndicate, as he was open to British interests. For instance, the Sheikh gave “the Company full way-leave for the pipe-line and sold them the land they required, on the understanding that it would revert to him when the concession expired.”¹⁴⁴ According to Gertrude Bell, if any

¹⁴¹ Mangold, *What the British Did*, 38.

¹⁴² Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 520.

¹⁴³ *Records of Iraq, 1914-1966. Volume 3. 1921-1924: Establishing the Kingdom*, “The Residency, Baghdad 22nd January 1924, 1,” edited by Jane Priestland (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 2001); 822, <http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=115>.

¹⁴⁴ Arnold Wilson, *S.W. Persia: A Political Officer’s Diary, 1907-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 93.

encroachment was made on the Sheikh's territory, the British government had a personal stake in solidifying his authority, and maintaining his interest and confidence if encroachment on the part of the Qajar Empire were to be an issue in Khuzestan.¹⁴⁵ However, the British would not uphold this bargain. This was in part due to the fact that when Percy Loraine arrived as Minister in December 1921, British policy toward southwest Iran "underwent a rapid and ruthlessly pragmatic evolution culminating, in 1923-24, in the abandonment of Britain's friends in southern Iran in favor of good relations with the central government."¹⁴⁶ When tensions rose between Sheikh Khazal and Tehran under the rising powerhouse of Reza Khan, the British withdrew their support, and allowed the Sheikh to be arrested in 1925.¹⁴⁷ Thus, tribal leaders like Sheikh Khazal "who failed to make the necessary shift with sufficient speed and decisiveness" had "risked being eliminated altogether as figures of national or even local significance."¹⁴⁸ As Reza Khan consolidated his power in southwest Persia, under his dynasty, the region once known as Arabistan had become officially Khuzestan. This erasure of culture did not stop with this alone. Rather the Pahlavi dynasty renamed cities and uprooted "traditional power structures and by implementing policies and practices that discriminated against the local Arabs."¹⁴⁹

While the Arab tribes of Khuzestan were marginalized by the time Reza Khan came to

¹⁴⁵ Bell, *The Arab of Mesopotamia*, 79.

¹⁴⁶ Stephanie Cronin, "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 42, Issue 3, 2009, accessed June 1, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/10.1080/00210860902907297>.

¹⁴⁷ *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf*, Vol. 7. 1922-1927, "No. 8 of 1925. Bushire Residency Diary for the Period 16th to 30th April 1925, F.B. Prideaux, Lieut.-Col. Political Resident of the Persian Gulf; 285," edited by (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 2001); 296,

<http://dlib.eastview.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/browse/books/1670?set=138>.

¹⁴⁸ Cronin, "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century," <http://dx.doi.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/10.1080/00210860902907297>

¹⁴⁹ Elling, *Minorities in Iran: Nationalism and Ethnicity after Khomeini*, 38.

power in Iran, the Bakhtiyari were vital in the events leading up to the nation-state of Iran. Some Bakhtiyari elites were vital to the Constitutional Revolution of 1909, a mere year after oil was struck in May 1908. Elite leaders among the Bakhtiyari would march on Isfahan and Tehran under the anti-royalist banner, rather “the discovery of oil provided the tribesmen with a new interest in national politics.”¹⁵⁰ Thus, when the Anglo-Persian oil fields were developed in southwestern Iran by the Oil Syndicate and the roads built along Bakhtiyari country through the Zagros Mountains by the Lynch Brothers Company, the Bakhtiyari tribe were hastened and incorporated “into an expanding world economy.”¹⁵¹ Reza Khan’s relationship with the Bakhtiyari was quite particular. Because of his “skill in manipulating political conflict of every kind, including intra-tribal conflict,” he was essentially seen as a pacifier of the countryside.¹⁵² Furthermore, Reza Khan aligned himself with Sardar Asad Bakhtiyari, who was his Minister of War and maneuvered “to assure his personal ascendancy over his rivals among the senior Khans of the Bakhtiyari confederation.”¹⁵³ The Bakhtiyari incorporation into the world economy and the political system of Iran, while a mere effect of the British presence and the search for oil in southwest Persia, shaped an opportunity for elites among a tribe from a once insular region to become prominent during the creation of the modern Iranian state.

¹⁵⁰ Bagherzade and Mawer, “The Bakhtiari and the British: Oil in SW Persia,” <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/bakhtiari-kuch/oil/commentary/>.

¹⁵¹ Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-century Iran*, 162.

¹⁵² Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, 23.

¹⁵³ Cronin, “Re-Interpreting Modern Iran,”

<http://dx.doi.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/10.1080/00210860902907297>.



Fig. 7. Map of Oil in Persia.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ This map shows the oil in Persia, as well as the pipeline that would eventually lead from Masjed-I Suleiman to the Abadan refinery to the south-west. Abadan was of strategic importance as a place for refining oil because of the Shatt-al-Arab outlet. *Oil and the Bakhtiari*, SOAS University of London, accessed April 18th, 2017, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/bakhtiari-kuch/oil/>.

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