

C.E. Stewart. Through Persia in disguise Part II. Near the Turkoman area 1880-1882.

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Colonel Stewart: English officer, who, after army duty in India, served several times as political agent and high ranking British envoy to Persia.

While traveling through northern Persia in 1881, disguised as an Armenian merchant, he met O'Donovan, who did not identify him as an Englishman. Stewart was not as well informed than O'Donovan about the Turkmen, his focus being on Persian affairs, On Turkmen his information is mostly second hand, since he never lived nor travelled with any Turkmen tribe.

His report is rather dry with some similarities in style with a telephone repertory.

Page 369: Nomad Aimak tribes around Herat (Aimak= nomad). None is Turkmen.

Page 388: The fat tailed sheep is eminently fit for living in a desert land...it does not require grass and can live on sagebrush and tamarisks shrub, the fat in the tail being used as reserve for bad times.

(Note: The tail was appreciated by Turkmen gourmets)

Page 398: Nadir Shah, the last great Shah of Persia, was a Turkmen from the Afshar tribe.

Page 399-400: «... During the troubles that followed the death of Nadir shah, Merv was attacked by Begge Jan, called also Amir Masum, the Amir of Bokhara, in 1788. Since that date there has properly been no such town there...».

«...The Merv country still exists, but there is nothing worthy of the name of town there...»

After 1784 it belonged to Bokhara for some years and the Salor and Saryk Turkmen encamped on it.

It was subsequently taken by the Khan of Khiva, whose tax officials were found living in a poor village when the place was visited by Abbott early 1840, but it was still occupied by the Saryks and Salors.

Some Tekes began to settle in the area of Merv around 1830.

(Note: The Saryks proudly claimed to be offsprings of the more prestigious and ancient Salor tribe. This should perhaps have stopped some self-styled on-line-rug-experts to claim a fully invented expulsion / destruction of the Salors by the Saryks, to explain the rarity of extant classical Salor rugs. In fact there are many reports of these two tribes sharing the same abodes).

(Note: These few Tekes were apparently well accepted by the Saryk and Salor majority).

The Tejen or Heri rood: The river flows through the plain of Herat. After passing near the Afghan fortress of Ghurian, it turns northward and from Toman Agua to Sarakhs, forming the boundary between Persia and Afghanistan.

The Salor encampment at Saracks is destroyed in 1832 by Abbas Mirza, crown prince of Persia, on his way to Afghanistan. A small Persian garrison is maintained on the western bank in a tiny fort to control the Turkmen. but Persian farmers don't dare settling the area which is too close to Turkmen raiders.

Beyond Sarakhs both banks of the Tejen are Turkmen.

The Salor tribe does not number more than 5000 yurts.

Many of the inhabitants (Salors) were killed (in 1832) ...other were dispersed by Abbas Mirza through locations near the Persian border.

According to Stewart, after a while many Salor left these settlements and moved to Teke territory, « whether with their consent or not is not known ».

Tekes coming from the Tejen area « ... finally drove the Saryks and Salors (out of Merv and) up the Murgab to Yolatan and Pendj-deh around 1857. ... »

In 1860 a Persian army was disastrously defeated by these (now Merv-) Tekes.

(Note: We know from O'Donovan and others that the Tekes from the low Tejen migrated mainly to Sarakhs (left empty by the Salors after 1832), before being forced to leave the area by the Persians around 1856 and as a consequence they expelled the Saryks and Salors from Merv, who in turn moved up the Murgab expelling the Jemshidi., but that there was still a sizable Salor population living in Sarakhs, with Persian consent, in 1880. Therefore we can reasonably suppose that the Salors, dispersed by Abbas Mirza in 1832, had progressively resettled the area of Saracks with Persian consent, this time.)

Page 401: Turkmen tribes according to Stewart's informations:

Akhal Tekes: 25 000 yurts in the Daman-i-kuh ('Skirt of the hills'), the northern piedmont of the Kopet dagh range. A region Irrigated by a large number of small, partially subterranean streams,.

Merv Tekes: 40 000 yurts in the Murgab oasis and a few still on the low Tejen rivers.

Salors: 5000 yurts, some around Sarakhs, but also in Merv (O'Donovan speaks of about 170 yurts in Merv), and especially in Yolatan and in Pendj-deh on the Murgab river.

Saryks: at Yolatan and Pendj-deh. 7000 yurts

Ersari: on the banks of the Amu darya 75 000 yurts.

In addition other Turkmen of which the author has no detail knowledge:

Yomuds near Caspian Sea and Atterek river

Chodors near Caspian Sea and Khiva.

Göklans near the Atterek (and Giurgen) river.

Karas in the desert beyond the Murgab(?)

Allelis: near Andkhai in Afghanistan (East of Amu darya), and also in Abiverd and Khaka (Southeast of Akhal Teke area) in Persia.

Neither the Kara- nor the Alleli tribes are powerful or warlike.

Page 402: «...*The Tekes manufacture carpets that cannot be surpassed or equaled in Persia and are similar to the ancient Persian carpets which fetch so large a price...*», «...*aniline dyes which are ruining the Persian carpets have not yet reached the Turkomans...*», «... *they (the Turkmen) have mills worked by water power ... and they are clever in manufacturing false Persian coins, their felts... are far superior to any made in Persia...* »

Page 403: The presence of the Russians across the Atterek and their closing of the slave markets in Khiva and Bokhara, as well as the liberation of Khivan slaves, has much reduced slave hunting, except near Meshed (Khorassan),

(Note: In 1881 pockets of un-russified Turkmen still exist in Merv,, Sarakhs, Yolatan and Pendj-deh areas, which have not yet fully stopped man-hunting, but have probably difficulties for finding customers).

Page 405: The Persian governor of Meshed settles Akhal Tekes flying the Russians on the Persian side in deserted villages.

(Note: Some people never learn from experience).

«...*the Turkomans who never repair any buildings, were living among the ruins of the houses, some in regular yurts made of felt, others in tent made of mats...* »

«...*A very handsome carpet was spread for me...*». Follows another (banal) description of a yurt.

Page 407: Horse covers: «...*They are never stabled but picketed out in the open. The greatest care is taken of them and they are well clothed... First a thick felt body covering is put on. Over this an immense piece of felt is fastened covering the horse's ear and his whole body down to his hocks...*».

Page 408 «... *at two long days of march from Kushid khan kala, (the new Merv fortress being built by the Merv Teke), is situated a settlement of the Salor Turkomans, called Yolatan where there are some 4000 yurts from that tribe, and a very imperfect dam over the Murgab, and five marches further up the Murgab, beyond the junction with the Kuskh stream is situated the chief settlement of the Saryk tribe, called Pendj-deh, consisting of 7000 yurts, within the Afghan territory.... From the last watered area of the Tejen to the first irrigation chanel of the Murgab there are 85 miles of desert without any drinkable water..* »

(Note: Pendj-deh was conquered by Russia in 1885, after a battle at the Kush-Murgab junction, in which the Russian and their new Turkmen allies (Merv Tekes and Pendj-deh Saryks) killed about 700 Afghan troops, this battle very nearly caused and Anglo-Russian war).

Steward confirms that in 1881 the Saryk still resented their eviction from Merv, but would be more or less on speaking terms with the Merv Tekes .