

## **Iranian People: Iranian Ethnic Groups**

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### **Abstract**

*The world is a place containing various racial and lingual groups. So that as far as this issue is concerned there is no difference between developed and developing countries. As if, among all existing countries and islands in the world, about 160 countries have an increasing situation regarding race and culture. Iran is not an exception, because it can be called a multi-national or multi-racial community. The Persians are descendents of the Aryan (Indo-Iranian) tribes that began migrating from Central Asia into what is now Iran in the second millennium BC. The Persian language and other Iranian tongues emerged as these Aryan tribes split up into two major groups, the Persians and the Medes, and intermarried with peoples indigenous to the Iranian plateau such as the Elamites. The Persian people are part of the Iranian peoples who speak the modern Persian language and closely akin Iranian dialects and languages. The origin of the ethnic Iranian, Persian peoples are traced to the Ancient Iranian peoples, who were part of the ancient Indo-Iranians and themselves part of the greater Indo-European ethnic group.*

**Key words:** Indo-Iranian, Iranian people, Iranian languages, Ethnicities in Iran

### ***1. Introduction***

The Iranian plateau is a special geographical part of Asia continent containing Iran. Iran is located in the Middle East, between Turkey and Iraq on the west and Afghanistan and Pakistan on the east; it borders the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman in the south and Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, and Turkmenistan in the north. Library of Congress – Federal Size: Iran’s total area is nearly 1.65 million square kilometers, of which 1.64 million square kilometers—an area slightly larger than Alaska—is land mass. Land Boundaries: Iran is bounded by Afghanistan (936 kilometers), Armenia (35 kilometers), Azerbaijan proper (432 kilometers), Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan enclave (179 kilometers), Iraq (1,458 kilometers), Pakistan (909 kilometers), Turkey (499 kilometers), and Turkmenistan (992 kilometers).

Disputed Territory: Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) dispute sovereignty over three islands in the Persian Gulf that are occupied by Iran. Iran’s coastline includes 2,440 kilometers on the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman and 740 kilometers on the Caspian Sea. Iran has rugged mountain chains surrounding several basins collectively known as the Central Plateau, which has an average elevation of about 900 meters. East of the Central Plateau are two large desert regions, a salt desert in the north and a rock and sand desert in the south. There are lowland areas along the Caspian coast, in Khuzestan Province at the head of the Persian Gulf, and at several dispersed locations along the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman coasts. Principal Rivers: Iran has no major rivers. The only navigable river is the Karun, which is 830 kilometers long. Other rivers include the Safid Rud (1,000 kilometers), Kharkeh (700 kilometers), and Zayandeh Rud (400 kilometers).

In Achaemenian dynasty it was named Iria. It was the name of an Iranian tribe. This word was applied by Caucasian nation as Irvoun- Ir- Irou. Some words such as Arians, Aria, Iran and something like them are taken from that. Iran has been serving as an important bridge between the East and the West from many years ago and main highways were crossed there connecting the civilizations of two sides [1]. Iran has historically been a multinational empire dominated by Persians, not a nation-state, leading to a complex ethnic makeup in the modern Iranian state.

The Persians account for slightly more than half the population of 70,000,000, a smaller proportion than the Russians were in the Soviet Union. Arabs made up a sizable minority in Iran 3 percent of the total population in 1986. In November 1986, the government reported that the preliminary count in the fourth national census, which had been conducted during October, showed a total population of 48,181,463. The population of Iranian nationals, approximately 45.6 million, represented an increase of about 12 million over the 33.7 million enumerated in the 1976 census. This indicated that the Iranian population had grown at an annual rate of 3.6 percent between 1976 and 1986. A population increase in excess of 3.3 percent per year put Iran's population growth rate among the higher rates in the world at the time.

Iran has a heterogeneous population speaking a variety of Indo-Iranian, Semitic and Turkic languages. The largest language group consists of the speakers of Indo-Iranian languages, who in 1986 comprised about 70 percent of the population. The speakers of Indo-Iranian languages were not, however a homogeneous group. They include speakers of Persian, the official language of the country and its various dialects, speakers of Kirmanji, the term for related dialects spoken by the Kurds who live in the cities, towns and villages of western Iran and adjacent areas of Iraq and Turkey, speakers of Luri, the language of the Bakhtiari and Lurs who live in the Zagros and Baluchi, the language of the seminomadic people who live in southeastern Iran and adjacent areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The official language of Iran is Persian the Persian term for which is Farsi.

It is the language of government and public instruction and was the mother tongue of half of the population as of 1986 [9]. Persian is spoken as a second language by a large proportion of the rest. Many different dialects of Persian are spoken in various parts of the Central Plateau and people from each city can usually be identified by their speech. Some dialects, such as Gilaki and Mazandari, are distinct enough to be virtually unintelligible to a Persian speaker from Tehran or Shiraz. The Persians constitute the largest ethnic component in Iran. They predominate in the major urban areas of central and eastern Iran, in the cities of Tehran, Esfahan, Mashhad, Shiraz, Arak, Kashan, Kerman, Qom and Yazd, and in the villages of the Central Plateau. An estimated 50 to 60 percent of the population speaks Persian as a first language. By 2008 the main ethnic groups in Iran remained the Persians (65 percent).

Other groups were the Azerbaijani Turks (16 percent), Kurds (7 percent), Lurs (6 percent), Arabs (2 percent), Baluchis (2 percent), Turkmens (1 percent), Turkish tribal groups such as the Qashqai (1 percent) and non-Persian, non-Turkic groups such as Armenians, Assyrians and Georgians (less than 1 percent). The Persian language (Farsi) was said to be spoken by at least 65 percent of the population and as a second language by a large proportion of the remaining 35 percent. Other languages in use are Azeri Turkish and Turkic dialects, Kurdish, Luri, Arabic and Baluchi.

## ***2. Iranian people***

Indo-Iranian languages constitute the easternmost branch group of the Indo-European language family. They are among the best attested languages of this family having records that date back thousands of years. The ancestral Indo-European language is thought to have arisen around the southern part of the Urals. Somewhere between 4000-3500 BCE some speakers of this ancestral language moved east and south of the Caspian Sea into what is now Iran, and into what is now Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Eventually, the languages of these areas formed the Indo-Iranian Branch. There have been competing theories regarding the spread of the Indo-European languages.

The Indo-Iranian Branch of the Indo-European Language Family has traditionally been split into two sub-branches: the Indo-Aryan and the Iranian language groups. According to Ethnologue, there are 220 Indo-Aryan languages some of which had yet to be definitively classified. The number of people who speak many of them was unknown. Chances were that you had never heard of some of them although many of these languages have sizable populations of speakers. These languages were spoken primarily in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Scattered throughout central, southern, and eastern Iran are small groups speaking many different Indo-Iranian languages. In the southern part of the Central Plateau are such small nomadic and seminomadic tribes. Other tribes, related to groups in neighboring Afghanistan and nations formerly part of the Soviet Union are found in Khorasan.

Also in Khorasan are an estimated 25,000 Tajiks a settled farming people related to the Tajiks of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union (now in various central Asian republics including the appropriately named Tajikistan). Distinguishable but comparatively smaller Indo-Iranian-speaking minorities comprised the following tribally organized settled groups: the Hazareh, Barbai, Teimuri, Jamshidi, and Afghani in Khorasan, the Qadikolahi and Palavi in Mazandaran and the Sasani and Agajani in the Talesh region of Gilan. The origins and dispersal of farming and pastoral nomadism in southwestern Asia are complex and there is controversy about whether they were associated with cultural transmission or demic diffusion. In addition, the spread of these technological innovations has been associated with the dispersal of Dravidian and Indo-Iranian languages in southwestern Asia.

Intriguingly, the population of modern Iran, speaking a major Indo-European language Farsi, appears to have had little genetic influence from the Indo-Iranians [8]. It was possible that the pre-Indo-European population of Iran—effectively an eastern extension of the great civilizations of Mesopotamia, might have reached sufficient population densities to have swamped any genetic contribution from a small number of immigrating Indo-Iranians. If so, this might have been a case of language replacement through the elite-dominance model. Alternatively an Indo-Iranian language may have been the lingua franca of the steppe nomads and the surrounding settled populations facilitating communication between the two. Over time this language could have become the predominant language in Persia, reinforced and standardized by rulers such as Cyrus the Great and Darius in the mid-first millennium BCE [4].

The term Persia was adopted by all western languages through the Greeks and was used as an official name for Iran by the West until 1935. Due to that label, all Iranians were considered Persian. Also, many others who embraced the Persian language and culture are also often referred to as Persian as a part of the Persian civilization culturally and or linguistically. Geographic distribution of modern Iranian languages. Modern Persian green and other related Persian some descendant of Middle Persian like Lur. The origin of the ethnic Iranian peoples Persian peoples are traced to the Ancient Iranian peoples, who were part of the ancient Indo-Iranians and themselves part of the greater Indo-European linguistic family. The Ancient Iranian peoples arrived in parts of the Iranian plateau circa 1000 BCE.

Important Iranic tribes such as Old Persians Medes, Parthians, Bactrians, Scythians and the Avesta people used the name Arya Iranian, which was a collective definition, denoting peoples who were aware of belonging to a generally common ethnic stock, speaking very closely related languages, and mainly sharing a religious tradition that centered on the worship of Ahura Mazda. The Old Persians who were one of these ethnic Iranian groups were originally nomadic, pastoral people in the western Iranian plateau and by 850 BCE were calling themselves the Parsa and their constantly shifting territory Parsua for the most part localized around Persis Pars bounded on the west by Tigris river and on the south by the Persian Gulf. The first known written record of the term Persian is from Assyrian inscriptions of the 9th century BCE which mention both Parsuash and Parsua.

The Iranic Persians and Medes were initially dominated by the Assyrian Empire for much of the first three centuries after arriving in the region. However the Medes and Persians played a major role in the downfall of Assyria after it had been riven by internal civil war. These cognate words were taken from old Iranian Parsava and presumably meant border, borderland and were geographical designations for Iranian populations who referred to themselves as Aryans as an ethnic designation or showing the nobility. Nonetheless, Parsua and Parsuash were two different geographical locations, the latter referring to southwestern Iran, known in Old Persian as Pârsa Modern Fars. The Greeks who tended earlier to use names related to Median began in the 5th century to use adjectives such as Perses, Persica or Persis for Cyrus the Great's empire which is where the word Persian in English comes from. In the later parts of the Bible where this kingdom is frequently mentioned it is called Paras (Hebrew פָּרַס), or sometimes Paras ve Madai (פָּרַס וּמְדַי) i.e. Persia and Media.

As the Old Persians gained power, they developed the infrastructure to support their growing influence, including creation of a capital named Pasargadae and an opulent city named Persepolis. Starting around 550 BCE, from the region of Persis in southern Iran, encompassing the present Fars province the ancient Persians spread their language and culture to other parts of the Iranian plateau and assimilated and intermingled with local Iranic and 'indigenous non-Iranic' groups including the Elamites, Gutians and Manneans over time. Persians also interacted with other ancient civilizations in Europe and Africa.

The first Persian empire extended as far as the limits of the Greek city states where Persians and Athenians influenced each other in what is essentially a reciprocal cultural exchange [3]. At the same time, the Old Persians were part of the wider Ariya Iranian nation. Darius and Xerxes boast of belonging to a stock which they call Iranian. They proclaim themselves Iranian and "of Iranian stock, Ariya and Ariya čiča respectively, in inscriptions in which the Iranian countries come first in a list that is arranged in a new hierarchical and ethno-geographical order. Until the Parthian era, Iranian identity had an ethnic, linguistic and religious value, however it did not yet have a political import. The Parthian language, an important Iranian language, was spoken by the Parthians and is mutually intelligible with the Middle Persian language became an official language of the Parthian empire.

The Parthian language had an important influence in the modern Persian language as well as other Iranian languages. In the 1st century BCE, Strabo (c. 64 BCE–24 CE) would note a relationship between the various Iranian peoples and their languages. Ariana is extended so as to include some part of Persia, Media and the north of Bactria and Sogdiana. For these nations speak nearly the same language. He mentions the Cyrtians, the plausible ancestors of the modern Kurds as one of the Persian tribes. Cyrtians, the generally accepted progenitors of the Kurds and Lurs might already have been significantly scattered in the Zagros from Persis into Media.

During Sassanian Iran, a national culture, fully aware of being Iranian took shape and was partially motivated by the restoration and the revival of the wisdom of the sages of old, *dānāgān pēšēnīgān*. Other aspects of this national culture included the glorification of a great heroic past and an archaizing spirit. Throughout the period, the pre-Islamic Iranian identity reached its height in every aspect. Political, religious, cultural and even linguistic. In terms of linguistic, Middle Persian, which is the immediate ancestor of Modern Persian and variety of other Iranian dialects, became the official language of the empire and was greatly diffused amongst Iranians. The intermingling of Persians, Medes, Parthians, Bactrians and indigenous people of Iran including the Elamites gained more ground and a homogeneous Iranian identity was created to the extent that all were just called Iranians. Persians irrespective of clannish affiliations and regional linguistic or dialectal alterities.

The Elamite language may have survived as late as the early Islamic period. Ibn al-Nadim among other medieval historians, for instance, wrote that the Iranian languages are Fahlavi (Pahlavi), Dari, Khuzi, Persian and Suryani and Ibn Moqaffa noted that Khuzi was the unofficial language of the royalty of Persia, Khuz being the corrupted name for Elam. However the Elamite identity might have vanished already. Furthermore, the process of incomers' assimilation which had been started with the Greeks, continued in the face of Arab, Mongol and Turkic invasions and proceeded right up to Islamic times [2].

The name Persia was the official name of Iran in the Western world before 1935, but Persian people inside their country since the Sassanid period (226–651 CE) have called it Iran. Accordingly the term Persian was used in the Western world as the people inhabiting Iran, for instance, Ramsay MacDonald (1866–1937), the Prime-Minister of the United Kingdom and the British ambassador in Iran, Percy Loraine, used Persian and Persian people to talk about the Iranian people and government. On 21 March 1935, the ruler of the country, Reza Shah Pahlavi, issued a decree asking foreign delegates to use the term Iran in formal correspondence. From then on Iranian and Persian was applied interchangeably to the population of Iran. It is still historically being used to designate predominant population of the Iranian people living in Iranian cultural continent [6].

### 3. Ethnicity

While a categorization of a Persian ethnic group persists in the West, Persians have generally been a pan-national group often comprising regional people who often refer to themselves as 'Persians' and have also often used the term Iranian in the ethnic-cultural sense. As a pan-national group defining Persians as an ethnic group, at least in terms used in the West, is not inclusive since the ethnonym Persian includes several Iranian people including the speakers of Modern Persian. Some scholars, classify the speakers of Persian language as a single ethnic unit the Persians and exclude those Iranians who speak dialects of Persian or other Iranian dialects closely related to Persian. However this approach to ethnicity in Iran is erroneous, since the designation Iranian (Irani) as an ethnic term has been used by all these ethnic group in Iran, including the Persians irrespective of their origin.

### **3- 1. Azeri people**

Azerbaijani, also known as Azeri, is a Turkic language that is closely related to Turkish and influenced by Persian and Arabic. By far the largest Turkic-speaking group are the Azerbaijanis who account for over 85 percent of all Turkic speakers in Iran. Most of the Azerbaijanis are concentrated in the northwestern corner of the country where they form the majority population in an area between the Caspian Sea and Lake Urmia and from the Soviet now the independent states of Azerbaijan and Armenia border south to the latitude of Tehran [12]. Azerbaijani is structurally similar to the Turkish spoken in Turkey, but with a strikingly different accent. About half of all Iranian Azerbaijanis are urban.

Major Azerbaijani cities include Tabriz, Urmia, Ardabil, Zanjan, Khoy, and Maragheh. In addition an estimated one-third of the population of Tehran was Azerbaijani as of 1986 and there were sizable Azerbaijani minorities in other major cities, such as Hamadan, Karaj and Qazvin. The life styles of urban Azerbaijanis do not differ from those of Persians, and there is considerable intermarriage among the upper classes in cities of mixed populations. Similarly customs among Azerbaijani villagers do not appear to differ markedly from those of Persian villagers. The majority of Azerbaijanis like the majority of Persians are Shia Muslims. A tiny minority of Azerbaijanis are Bahais. By 2008 Azerbaijanis represented about 16 percent of the overall Iranian population [5].

Turkic-speaking peoples first appeared in the area that is present-day Azerbaijan in the 7th century. The region became Turkic speaking in the 11th century when it was invaded by the Turks. The area was invaded by Mongols in the 13th century but the invasion was short-lived. In the early 1800s Azerbaijan was divided between Persia and Russia. Following the fall of Imperial Russia Russian Azerbaijan became an independent nation until the Soviet Union reasserted control over the region. According to 2500-year-history of Iran Atropatgan inhabitants have been considered as Iranians and united with all of them. They are known as Iranian nation and we can not consider any new race for these people [11]. The race of people in Atropatgan has been the same as Iranians from the beginning.

Azerbaijan inhabitants (Atropatgan) are among the most original and the oldest Iranian families namely Aryan race. They have kept all Iranian characteristics in Achaemenidae, Arsacides and Sassanid dynasties and so far kept their ethnical nobility. Through history, particularly in the contemporary history Atropatgan has been the pioneer of progressing social and political movements and intellectual events in Iran. Therefore knowing them as non-Aryan on the view of ethnical characteristics is completely rejected. Moreover all of the documents indicate that they are Aryan. They are the reminders and grandchildren of Aryan and Parse Medes. All Kurds, Lors and Iranian races are their reminders. Atropatgan inhabitants are the real generation and heritors of their ancestors' race, namely Aryans [7].

### **3- 2. Kurds**

The Kurds speak a variety of closely related dialects, which in Iran are collectively called Kirmanji. The dialects are divided into northern and southern groups, and it is not uncommon for the Kurds living in adjoining mountain valleys to speak different dialects. There is a small body of Kurdish literature written in a modified Arabic script. Kurdish is more closely related to Persian than is Baluchi and also contains numerous Persian loanwords. In large Kurdish cities, the educated population speaks both Persian and Kurdish. There were approximately 4 million Kurds in Iran as of 1986. They were the third most important ethnic group in the country after the Persians and Azerbaijanis and accounted for about 9 percent of the total population. By 2008 Kurds represented some 7 percent of the total Iranian population.

They have historically been concentrated in the Zagros Mountain area along the western frontiers with Turkey and Iraq and adjacent to the Kurdish populations of both those countries. Kurds also lived in the Soviet Union and now in various independent nations and Syria. The Kurdish area of Iran includes most of West Azarbaijan, all of Kordestan, much of Bakhtaran formerly known as Kermanshahan and Ilam and parts of Lorestan. Historically the Kurds of Iran have been both urban and rural with as much as half the rural population practicing pastoral nomadism in different periods of history. By the mid-1970s fewer than 15 percent of all Kurds were nomadic.

In addition during the 1970s there was substantial migration of rural Kurds to such historic Kurdish cities as Bakhtaran known as Kermanshah until 1979 Sanandaj and Mahabad as well as to larger towns such as Baneh, Bijar, Ilam, Islamabad (known as Shahabad until 1979), Saqqez, Sar-e Pol-e Zahab and Sonqor. Educated Kurds also migrated to non-Kurdish cities such as Karaj, Tabriz and Tehran [15]. The majority of both rural and urban Kurds in West Azarbaijan and Kordestan practice Sunni Islam. There is more diversity of religious practice in southern Kurdish areas, especially in the Bakhtaran area where many villagers and townspeople follow Shia beliefs. Schismatic Islamic groups such as the Ahl-e Haqq and the Yazdis, both of which are considered heretical by orthodox Shias traditionally have had numerous adherents among the Kurds of the Bakhtaran region. A tiny minority of Kurds are adherents of Judaism.

### 3- 3. Lurs

In the central and southern Zagros live the Bakhtiaris and the Lurs two groups that speak Luri a language closely related to Persian. Linguists have identified two Luri dialects. Lur Buzurg, which is spoken by the Bakhtiari, Kuhgiluyeh and Mamasani tribes and Lur Kuchik which is spoken by the Lurs of Lorestan. Like the Persians the Bakhtiaris and Lurs are Shia Muslims. Historically each of the two groups was organized into several tribes. The tribal leaders or khans, especially those of the Bakhtiari tribes were involved in national politics and were considered part of the prerevolutionary elite. The Lurs closely related to the Bakhtiaris live in the Zagros to the northwest, west and southeast of the Bakhtiaris.

There were about 500,000 Lurs in Iran in the mid-1980s. The Lurs were divided into two main groups the Posht-e Kuhi and the Pish-e Kuhi. These two groups were subdivided into more than sixty tribes the most important of which include the Boir Ahmadi the Kuhgiluyeh, and the Mamasani. Historically the Lurs have included an urban segment based in the town of Khorramabad, the provincial capital of Lorestan. Prior to 1900, however the majority of Lurs were pastoral nomads [14]. Traditionally they were considered among the fiercest of Iranian tribes and had acquired an unsavory reputation on account of their habit of preying on both Lur and non-Lur villages. As of 2008 the Lur population in Iran was reportedly between 2-6 percent of the overall population. The close relation and flexibility of the term Bakhtiaris could account for the relatively large discrepancy.

### 3- 4. Bakhtiaris

In the central and southern Zagros live the Bakhtiaris and the Lurs, two groups that speak Luri a language closely related to Persian (Farsi). Linguists have identified two Luri dialects. Lur Buzurg which is spoken by the Bakhtiari, Kuhgiluyeh and Mamasani tribes and Lur Kuchik, which is spoken by the Lurs of Lorestan. Like the Persians the Bakhtiaris and Lurs are Shia Muslims. Historically each of the two groups was organized into several tribes. The tribal leaders or khans especially those of the Bakhtiari tribes were involved in national politics and were considered part of the prerevolutionary elite. The Bakhtiaris have been considered both a political and a tribal entity separate from other Lurs for at least two centuries.

They are concentrated in an area extending southward from Lorestan Province to Khuzestan Province and westward from Esfahan to within eighty kilometers of the present-day Iraqi border. A pastoral nomadic tribe called Bakhtiari can be traced back in Iranian history to as early as the fourteenth century but the important Bakhtiari tribal confederation dates only from the nineteenth century. Historically the Bakhtiaris were divided into two main tribal groups. The Chahar Lang were located in the northwest of the Bakhtiari country and until the middle of the nineteenth century retained the leadership of all the Bakhtiari tribes. The Haft Lang the southwestern group were more closely associated with modern Iranian politics than the Chahar Lang and in some instances have exercised significant influence.

### 3- 5. Qashqais

The Qashqais are the second largest Turkic group in Iran. The Qashqais are a confederation of several Turkic-speaking tribes that historically resided in Fars Province numbering about 250,000 people. They are pastoral nomads who move with their herds of sheep and goats between summer pastures in the higher elevations of the Zagros south of Shiraz and winter pastures at low elevations north of Shiraz. Their migration routes are considered to be among the longest and most difficult of all of Iran's pastoral tribes. The majority of Qashqais are Shias.

The Qashqai confederation emerged in the eighteenth century when Shiraz was the capital of the Zand dynasty. During the nineteenth century, the Qashqai confederation became one of the best organized and most powerful tribal confederations in Iran, including among its clients hundreds of villages and some non-Turkic-speaking tribes. Under the Qashqais' most notable leader, Khan Solat ad Doleh, their strength was great enough to defeat the British-led South Persia Rifles in 1918. Reza Shah's campaigns against them in the early 1930s were successful because the narrow pass on the route from their summer to winter pastures was blocked, and the tribe was starved into submission.

Solat and his son were imprisoned in Tehran, where Solat was subsequently murdered. Many Qashqais were then settled on land in their summer pastures, which averaged 2,500 meters above sea level. The Qashqais, like the Bakhtiari and other forcibly settled tribes returned to nomadic life upon Reza Shah's exile in 1941. Army and government officials were driven out of the area, but the Qashqais, reduced in numbers and disorganized after their settlement, were unable to regain their previous strength and independence. By the 1980s the terms Qashqai and Turk tended to be used interchangeably in Fars especially by non-Turkic speakers. Many Turkic groups however such as the urban Abivardis of Shiraz and their related village kin in nearby rural areas and the Baharlu, the Inalu, and other tribes were never part of the Qashqai confederation.

The Baharlu and Inalu tribes actually were part of the Khamseh confederacy created to counterbalance the Qashqais. Nevertheless, both Qashqai and non-Qashqai Turks in Fars recognize a common ethnic identity in relation to non-Turks. All of these Turks speak mutually intelligible dialects that are closely related to Azarbaijani. The total Turkic-speaking population of Fars was estimated to be about 500,000 in 1986. By 2008 the Qashqais population was reportedly 1 percent of the total Iranian population.

### **3- 6. Arabs**

Arabic and Assyrian are the two Semitic languages spoken in Iran. The Arabic dialects are spoken in Khuzestan and along the Persian Gulf coast. They are modern variants of the older Arabic that formed the base of the classical literary language and all the colloquial languages of the Arabic-speaking world. As a Semitic language Arabic is related to Hebrew, Syriac and Ethiopic. The conquering of Persia by the Arabs in 642 CE has been credited with bringing Islam to Iran. Islam subsequently became the predominant religion in Persia (now Iran) replacing a mix of Christianity, Judaism, Baha'ism and Zoroastrianism that had existed before. In 1986 there were an estimated 530,000 Arabs in Iran. A majority lived in Khuzestan where they constituted a significant ethnic minority. Most of the other Arabs lived along the Persian Gulf coastal plains, but there also were small scattered tribal groups living in central and eastern Iran. About 40 percent of the Arabs were urban, concentrated in such cities as Abadan, Ahvaz and Khorramshahr. Both the urban and the rural Arabs of Khuzestan are intermingled with the Persians, Turks and Lurs who also live in the province. The Khuzestan Arabs are Shias. While this physical and spiritual closeness has facilitated intermarriage between the Arabs and other Iranians, the Arabs have tended to regard themselves as separate from non-Arabs and have usually been so regarded by other Iranians. Among the Khuzestan Arabs there has been a sense of ethnic solidarity for many years [16].

### **3- 7. Baluchis**

The Baluchis who constitute the majority of the population in Baluchestan va Sistan also known as Sistan and Baluchestan numbered approximately 600,000 in Iran in the mid-1980s. They were part of a larger group that forms the majority of the population of Baluchistan Province in Pakistan and of some areas in southern Afghanistan. In Iran the Baluchis are concentrated in the Makran highlands, an area that stretches eastward along the Gulf of Oman coast to the Pakistan border and includes some of the most desolate country in the world. The Baluchis speak an Indo-Iranian language that is distantly related to Persian and more closely related to Pashtu one of the major languages of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Historically Baluchi has been only an oral language although educated Baluchis in Pakistan have developed a written script that employs the Arabic alphabet. Unlike the majority of Persians the majority of Baluchis are Sunni rather than Shia Muslims. This religious difference has been a source of tension especially in the ethnically mixed provincial capital of Zahedan. Religious tensions came more to the forefront following the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War.

### **3- 8. Turkmans**

The Turkmans are an ethnic minority who speak the Turkish language with the Eastern Oghoz accent. The same dialect is spoken in the Republic of Turkmenistan. They live in the Turkoman Sahra and in the Gorgan plains. The area is a fertile plain near the Iranian border with the Republic of Turkmenistan. It extends from the Atrak river in the north, to the Caspian Sea in the west, Quchan mountains to the east and the Gorgan river to the south. Iranian Turkmans have been living in Iran since 550 AD but they first began forming tribes from 750 AD onwards. They are the descendants of Central Asian Turks, who retained their ethnic identity during the Mongol invasion. Not all the nine Turkoman tribes live in Iran. The most important Iranian Turkoman tribes are Kuklans and Yamotes. The Kuklans have six branches, and live in the central and eastern Turkoman Sahra. The Yamotes have two large clans, the Atabai and Jaafarbai, and live to the west of Turkoman Sahra. There are also smaller tribes to the east of the region in a few villages .

### **3- 9. Mazandaran and Guilan**

Mazandaran and Guilan People of Mazandaran and Guilan who are settled in the Caspian seaside villages separated from the Persians in Alborz valleys by the northern climate condition of Alborz. They are original Iranians. Their difference with Persians is resulted from the separation on the side of Alborz and geographical climate condition and not for race. They have medium stature with dark and pale appearance, black eyes, black and thick hair and beard.

### **3- 10. Assyrian**

Arabic and Assyrian are the two Semitic languages spoken in Iran. The Assyrians are a Christian group that speaks modern dialects of Assyrian an Aramaic language that evolved from old Syriac. Language and religion provide a strong cohesive force and give the Assyrians a sense of identity with their coreligionists in Iraq in other parts of the Middle East and also in the United States. Most Assyrians adhere to the Assyrian Church of the East sometimes referred to as the Chaldean Church or Nestorian Church. Many theologians regard this church as the oldest in Christendom. In the nineteenth century Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries proselytized among the Assyrians and converted many of them.

There were about 32,000 Assyrians in Iran at the time of the 1986 census. Many of them emigrated after the Revolution in 1979 but at least 20,000 were estimated to be still living in Iran in 1987. The traditional home of the Assyrians in Iran was along the western shore of Lake Urmia. During World War I virtually the entire Assyrian population fled the area, which had become a battleground for opposing Russian and Turkish armies. Thousands of Assyrians perished on the overland flight through the Zagros to the safety of British-controlled Iraq. Eventually, many of the Iranian Assyrians settled among the Assyrian population of Iraq or emigrated to the United States. During the reign of Reza Shah Assyrians were invited back to Iran to repopulate their villages. A few thousand did return, but since the 1940s most young Assyrians had migrated to Tehran and other urban centers.

### **3- 11. Armenians**

Armenians, a non-Muslim minority that traditionally lived in northwestern Iran adjacent to the historic Armenian homeland located in were eastern Turkey and Soviet Armenia and subsequently the independant state of Armenia speak an Indo-European language that is distantly related to Persian. There were an estimated 300,000 Armenians in the country at the time of the Revolution in 1979. There was considerable emigration of Armenians from Iran since, although in 1986 the Armenian population was still estimated to be 250,000. Armenian forms its own independent branch of the Indo-European family. It has no close living relatives. It is thought to be most closely related to Greek. It is estimated that Armenian is spoken by about 6 million people worldwide Ethnologue. It is the official language of Armenia where it is spoken by some 3.5 million people.

It was used in Armenia in the schools and in the media. However, nearly half of Armenian speakers today live outside of Armenia. Armenians call their country Hayastan and their language Hayaren. The term Armenian is used to refer to three different languages:



Classical Armenian a fifth-century classical form of the language, maintained by the Armenian church Eastern Armenian spoken in present-day Armenia, Iran and India, and Western Armenian, which was spoken by Armenians in Anatolia Turkey, prior to the Armenian Genocide in Turkey in 1915-1916. The Armenian alphabet was invented by the missionary Mesrop Mashtots circa 400 CE. Originally it consisted of thirty-six letters six vowels and thirty consonants to which two letters were added in the 12th century. It shows the influence of Greek and Persian writing. From the early 1920s on Eastern Armenian was affected by two sets of Soviet-promoted orthographic reforms. In the past there were many Armenian villages, especially in the Esfahan area where several thousand Armenian families had been forcibly resettled in the early seventeenth century during the reign of the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas.

By the 1970s, the Armenians were predominantly urban. Approximately half lived in Tehran and there were sizable communities in Esfahan, Tabriz and other cities. The Armenians tended to be relatively well educated and maintained their own schools and Armenian-language newspapers. By 2008 non-Turkic groups such as Armenians, Assyrians and Georgians made up less than a percent combined of the total Iranian population. Two seats remained reserved for Armenians as an officially recognized minority group in the Iranian parliament or Majlis [10].

### **3- 12. Talysh**

Talysh of Iran are an Iranian people very limited and Sporadic living near Alborz Mountains in Iran especially in the south of Qazvin province. Talysh of Iran use the Tati language Iran is a group of northwestern Iranian dialects which are closely related to the Talysh language. Persian and Azeri are also spoken. Talysh of Iran are mainly Shia Muslims and about 300,000 population.

### **3- 13. Iranian Georgians**

Iranian Georgians are an ethnic group living in Iran. They are Twelver Shia Moslems. The Phereidnuli Georgian dialect is still spoken in Iran. The number of Georgians in Iran is estimated from 50,000 to over 100,000. According to Encyclopaedia Georgiana 1986 some 12,000-14,000 lived in rural Fereydan prior to 1985 but these numbers are obvious underestimations. The Georgian alphabet is also known to some in Fereyduhshahr. The Georgian language is still used by some people in Iran. The center of Georgians in Iran is Fereyduhshahr a small city 150 km to the west of Isfahan. The western part of Isfahan province is historically called Fereydan.

In this area there are 10 Georgian towns and villages around Fereyduhshahr. In this region the old Georgian identity is retained the best compared to other places in Iran. In many major Iranian cities such as Tehran, Esfahan, Karaj and Shiraz live Georgians too. In many other places such as Najafabad, Rahmatabad, Yazdanshahr and Amir Abad near Esfahan. In Mazandaran Province in northern Iran there are ethnic Georgians too. They live in the town of Behshahr and also in Behshahr county in Farah Abad and many other places which are usually called Gorji Mahalle. Most of them no longer speak the Georgian language but retain aspects of Georgian culture. Some argue that Iranian Georgians retain remnants of Christian traditions, but there is no evidence for this.

### **3- 14. Iranian Pashtuns**

There has been a long history of population movements between Afghan Pashtuns and Iranians. Iranian Pashtuns live in northeastern Iran primarily in South Khorasan Province to the east of Qaen near the Afghan border. Their native population not including refugees is 113,000 in Iran. A further number of Pashtuns also live among the Afghan refugees in Iran [13].

### ***Conclusion:***

Around 3000 BCE, the ancestors of Iranians first immigrated from their Central Asian homeland - where they lived with their Indian kin as one people - to the Iranian Plateau. There they came into contact with the already established civilisations such as the Kassites or the Elamites, the latter having over 2000 years of political presence in the plateau. Probably mostly through integration and taking advantage of the weakness of these civilisations because of their constant warfare with the empires of Mesopotamia, the Aryans came to dominate the society, although at the same time adopting much of the existing culture and social norms. The integration of

Aryans with the locals and the settlement of the tribes all around the plateau gave raise to the first Iranian civilisations. Throughout its long history people of Iran have intermarried with Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, Turks and other tribes. Today, most of the population have similar characteristics and obvious differences are rare. The worthy exceptions are the members of the semi-nomadic Turkman tribes who show clear Turko-Mongolian anatomies.

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