

**Anthropology.** — *Contributions to the anthropology of the Near-East.*  
V: *Kurds, Circassians and Persians.* By C. U. ARIËNS KAPPERS.

(Communicated at the meeting of April 25, 1931).

Of the names written in the title of this paper, only the first two — the Kurds and Circassians — may be considered as racial names. This does not of course involve that the groups they indicate at the present time are pure representatives of such races, or that they are the only representatives of their race. At best it means that racial characteristics may be still revealed by those groups.

The last name indicates a geographical and national group. If, and in how far, it is possible to disentangle its constituents will be discussed below.

For this a study of the first mentioned races may precede.

At the present time most Kurds live in Kurdistan, a territory belonging partly to Persia, partly to Turkey, lying approximately between the 35° and 40° N. lat., including the Ararat slopes, and extending West to the Antitaurus in Middle Turkey, and East to Hamadan in Persia (i.e. approximately between the 37° and 47° E. long). Besides, a large Kurdish colony, originating from S.E. Turkey (the Kommagene, Diarbekr and Mardin) is settled in Damascus. It is this colony that I examined, with Mr. MIRZO, a student of the American University of Beirut, and a Kurd himself, to whom I wish to express my thanks for his great help.

The literature about the anthropology of the Kurds is somewhat contradictory, as appears from the various data concerning their cephalic index.

POLAK <sup>1)</sup>, describes them as a Nordic race. DUHOUSSET <sup>2)</sup>, who measured five Kurds, found them to be brachycephalic (86.2).

CHANTRE <sup>3)</sup>, who examined 332 Kurds (272 males and 60 females) from Kurdistan

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<sup>1)</sup> POLAK. *Persien. Das Land und seine Bewohner.* Brockhaus, Leipzig 1865. p. 18.

<sup>2)</sup> DUHOUSSET. *Études sur les populations de la Perse.* Paris, 1863. Quoted from KHANIKOFF. The original not being at my disposal, I cannot say where the Kurds measured by DUHOUSSET lived.

<sup>3)</sup> CHANTRE. *Recherches anthropologiques en Asie occidentale.* Arch. du Musée d'histoire nat. de Lyon, Tome IV, 1895. See also CHANTRE: *Aperçu sur les caractères ethniques des Ansariés et des Kurdes.* Bull. Soc. d'Anthrop. de Lyon, Tome I, 1881—1882, p. 165 and CHANTRE: *Rapport sur une mission scientifique dans l'Asie occidentale et spécialement dans les régions de l'Ararat et du Caucase.* Arch. des missions scientifiques et littéraires, 3ième série, Tome X, 1883. In this paper (p. 40) CHANTRE emphasizes the variations in the Kurdish index, according to the people amongst whom they live.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. CLAUDE GAILLARD of the Muséum des Sciences Naturelles de Lyon for the loan of these valuable papers.

and Caucasia, found an average index of 78.53 (with variations from 70.04 to 86.4) for the males. A similar male average (78.48) was found by NASSOSSOF<sup>1)</sup> with 25 Kurds from Transcaucasia (Airiga). IWANOWSKY<sup>2)</sup> gave them an average l.w. index of 77.6.

Also VON LUSCHAN<sup>3)</sup> stated a prevailing mesocephaly. With 115 adult males from Karakush he found an index varying from 71.3 to 78.5; with 28 females from Nemrud Dag 72.3—78.3, and in Sendshirli the Kurdish index varied from 74.4—80.9. Whereas all these authors, except DUHOUSSET, agree in giving the Kurds an average mesocephalic index, PITTARD<sup>4)</sup> gives them an index of 86.49, without stating which Kurds he measured. Such a high index, however, was found by CHANTRE only exceptionally, with 5 Kurds from Batoum (88.1) and 5 Kurds from Lake Urmiah (86.68). In Damascus I measured only 8 Kurds with an index higher than 86.

CHANTRE (1895) is the only author who expressed all his Kurdish indices in a frequency curve. I reproduce his curve, putting my own frequency curve of 106 male Kurds, measured at Damascus, underneath it. As with the Armenians (see my first contribution) our results agree.

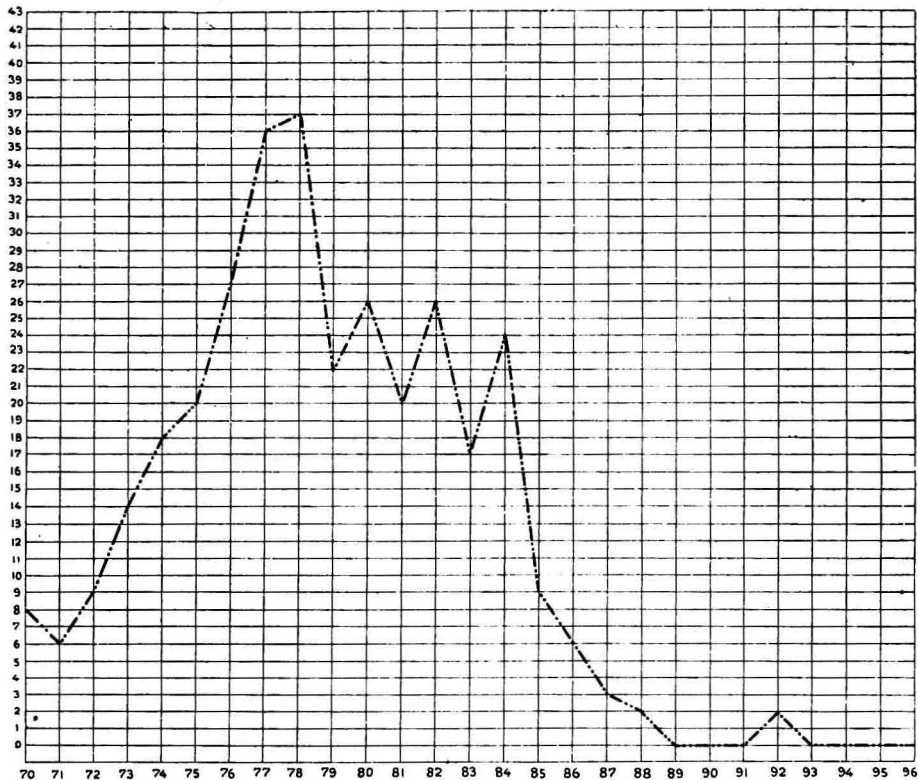


Fig. 1. Frequency curve of 332 Kurds (272 ♂ and 60 ♀) by CHANTRE.

1) NASSOSSOF. *Comptes rendus Soc. d'Anthr. de Moscou*, 1890; quoted from CHANTRE, (1895, p. 102), the original not being at my disposal.

2) Quoted by R. MARTIN: *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie*, 1ste Ausgabe, p. 672.

3) VON LUSCHAN. *Völker, Rassen, Sprachen*, Berlin 1923, p. 91.

4) PITTARD. *Race and History*, London 1926, p. 366.

In CHANTRE's Kurdish curve as well as in mine the highest top is found at 78, but in both curves there is a large group, following on this typical

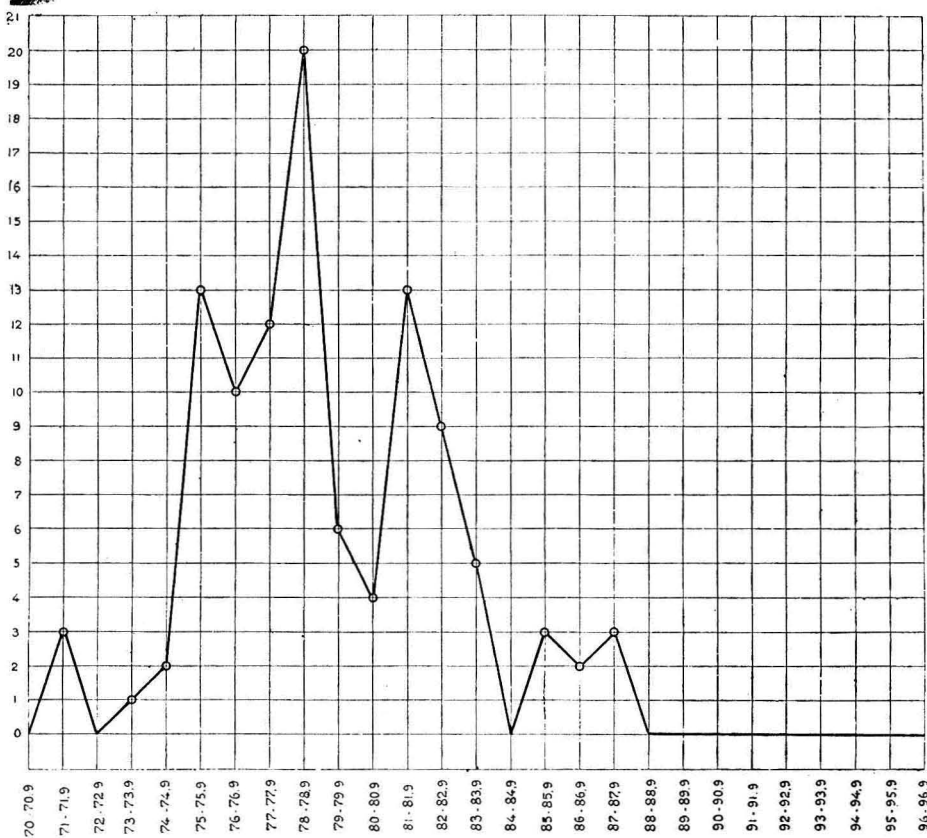


Fig. 2. Frequency curve of 106 male Kurds from Damascus.

top, between 81 and 83,9 (or 84 in CHANTRE's curve). We further agree that an index figure higher than 84 is an exception with this people (see above).

While the most typical top is at 78—78,9 in both curves, the character of the additional higher index group is more pronounced in my curve than in CHANTRE's, the additional elevation in my curve lying between 81 and 82,9. As all the individuals registered in my curve were males, this extra top cannot be due to sexual difference.

It is evident that both curves — CHANTRE's as well as mine — indicate the presence of another race mixed with the Kurds, a subbrachycephalic race with an index varying in CHANTRE's curve between 80 and 84, in my curve between 81 and 82,9 chiefly <sup>1)</sup>.

<sup>1)</sup> The 83.87 index was found by CHANTRE specially with the Bilikani Kurds, that live near Erivan in the Caucasus. CHANTRE is again inclined to consider this as a result of compression but the northern location of this group is strongly in favor of Georgian influence.

The index of this additional race suggests that the Kurds are mixed with another Caucasian group, probably with the western Caucasians <sup>1)</sup>. GIUFFRIDA RUGGERI's <sup>2)</sup> *Homo indo-europaeus brachimorphus*, especially HADDONS *Homo Georgianus* <sup>3)</sup>.

This Georgian (or Kartvelian) race is split up in various groups, but with all of them indices between 81 and 84 prevail. So with 17 Ossetes CHANTRE <sup>4)</sup> found an average index of 83.1; with 12 Georgian Mingrelians 83.2. Similar figures are registered by KHANIKOFF (83.7) and by VON ERCKERT <sup>5)</sup>. To the same group the Circassians or Tscherkesses belong.

Of this group I measured 54 adult males. Their average measurements and indices are:

Group	l.	w.	h.	l. w. i.	w. h. i.	l. h. i.
All Circassians	18.58	15.5	13.03	83.42	84.06	70.12

If, however, I exclude the Circassians whose l.w. index was 87 or more <sup>6)</sup>, the average measurements and indices are :

Group	l.	w.	h.	l. w. i.	w. h. i.	l. h. i.
Pure Circassians	18.83	15.45	13.07	82.05	84.6	69.41

A similar average l.w. index (slightly lower) is found with the 30 Circassians registered by VON ERCKERT.

The curve of all my Circassians, superposed on my Kurdish frequency curve (fig. 3) shows that the greatest frequency of the index with the Circassians coincides with the additional group in my Kurdish curve and makes it probable that the present Kurds may contain a large contingent of this or of another related subbrachycephalic Caucasian Indo-European race, thus explaining the controversies in literature concerning the l.w. index of the Kurds, the original stock of which — as was rightly pointed out by VON LUSCHAN — has to be considered as a mesocephalic race.

<sup>1)</sup> In the Eastern Caucasus, with the Tschetschenses and Lesghians a higher index occurs. These groups are more mixed with Mongol blood.

<sup>2)</sup> GIUFFRIDA RUGGERI. Schema di classificazione degli Hominidae attuali. Arch. per l'Antrop. e. l'Ethnol. Vol. 42, 1912, p. 136.

<sup>3)</sup> HADDON. The races of man. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1924, p. 86.

<sup>4)</sup> CHANTRE. Mission scientifique dans l'Asie occidentale et spécialement dans les régions de l'Ararat et du Caucase (l.c. p. 44 and 54).

<sup>5)</sup> C.f. also VON ERCKERT. Kopfmessungen Kaukasischer Völker. Archiv. f. Anthropologie Bnd. 18, 1890 (p. 263, and 297), Bnd. 19, 1891. (p. 55, p. 211, and p. 331).

<sup>6)</sup> I found these high indices only with ten men of the Circassian colony at Jeni-Chehr near Aleppo and suspect Turkish admixture.

The Circassians (or Tscherkesses), however, belong to the subbrachycephalic Caucasian race. Many of them have fair hair and blue eyes, two features also more frequently found with my subbrachycephalic than with my mesocephalic Kurds.

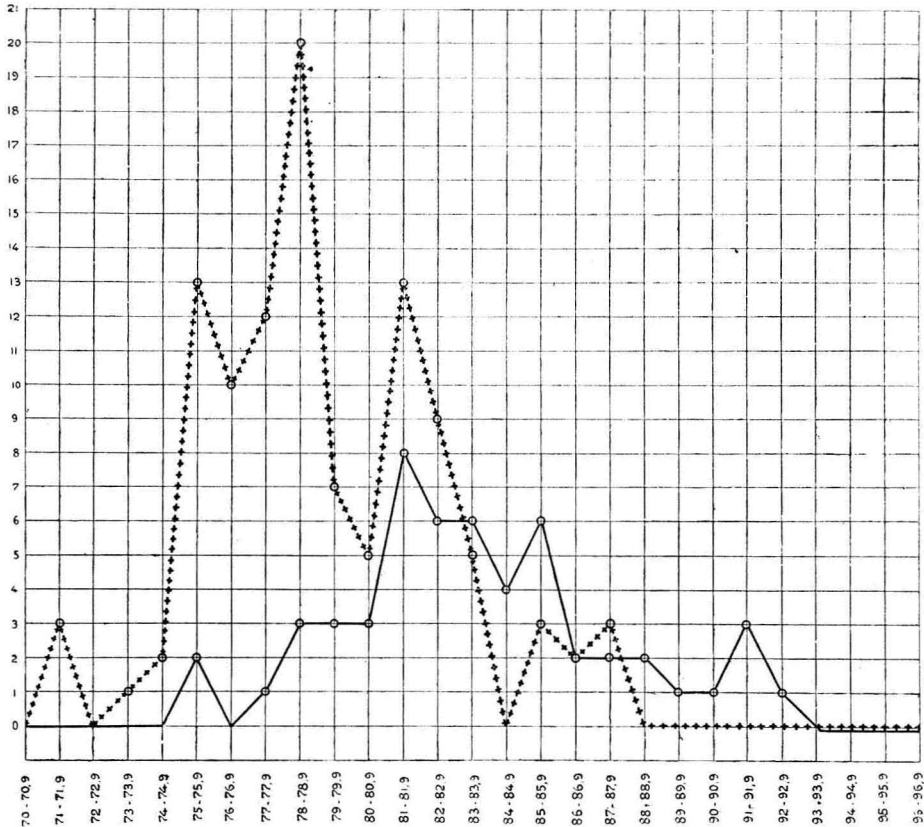


Fig. 3. Superposition of the frequency curves of 106 ♂ Kurds (crossed curve), and of 54 ♂ Circassians (continuous curve).

Approaching with these data the anthropology of Persia, I should start by emphasizing that two thirds of the 165 Persians enlisted in my dossier came from that region of Persia that lies North of the line Hamadan-Ispahan. One third only came from more Southern parts of Persia, from S.W. as well as from S.E. Persia.

In Chusistan, S.E. from Bassorah (in Mesopotamia) and in Laristan, East of the Persian gulf, the population is said to contain many Arabic elements. Hence the name Arabistan, sometimes given to this region.

This is not strange since this part of Persia continues gradually in Mesopotamia without a separation by such high mountainous ranges as occur more North. Also the Persian gulf provides an easy means of intercourse between Laristan and Arabia proper <sup>1)</sup>. Among this Semitic population there may be Adnan Arabs as well as Kohtan Arabs.

<sup>1)</sup> It is an interesting fact that water that gives the sharpest geographical distinctions, so frequently causes an anthropological expansion and intermixture. This factor apparently

I leave the Semitic constituents (also the Persian Jews, studied by WEISSENBERG), and also the Mongol elements out of consideration here, being the least important numerically.

Of the 165 Persians enlisted in my dossier, 9 males and 41 females were measured in Persia by Miss ELEONOR BLISH for Prof. HARALD KRISCHNER of the American University at Beirut, who kindly put these figures at my disposal. I am much indebted to Miss BLISH and Prof. KRISCHNER for their help.

The remaining Persians I measured at Beirut with the help of Persian members of the staff and Persian students, always controlling the Persian origin of my material.

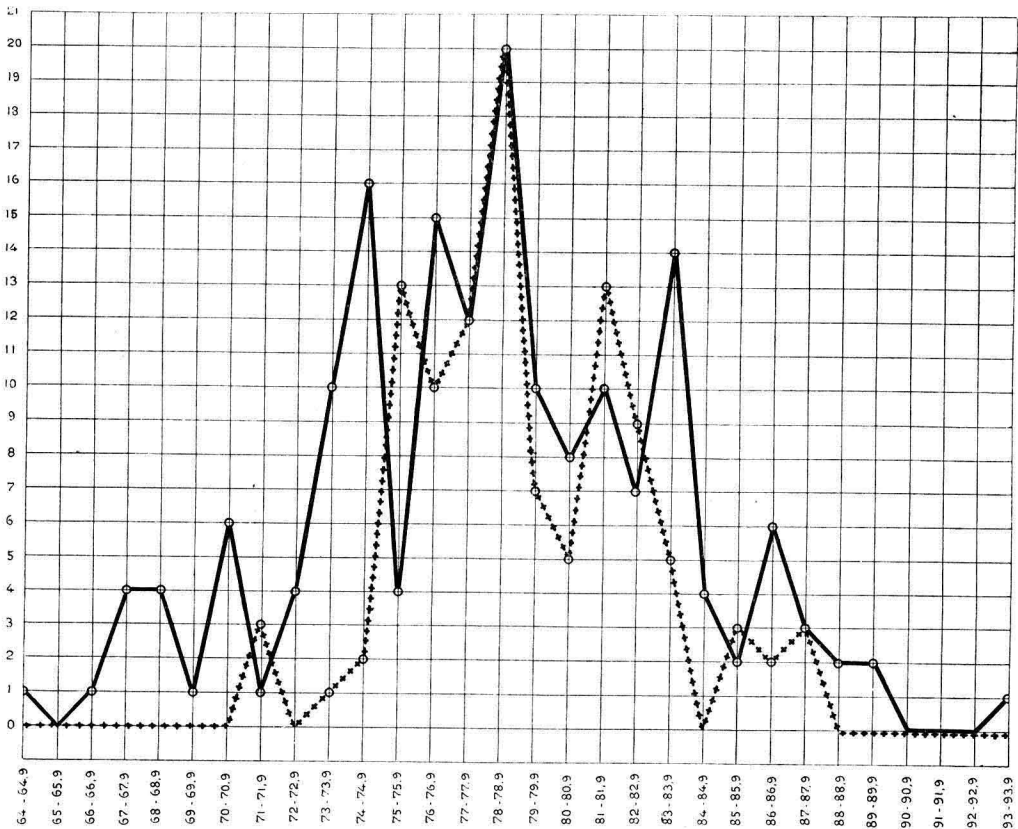


Fig. 4. Continuous line: curve of 165 Persians; crossed line: curve of 106 Kurds.

was of still more importance in ancient times, when traffic by water was more easy than traffic by land. The same is observed with the spread of the Phoenicians and Greek round the Mediterranean.

Mountainous ranges, on the other hand, frequently are sharp anthropological boundaries, the best example being the Karakorum and Hindoo-Koosh, North of which hyperbrachycephalic Mongols and South of which the mesocephalic Indo-afghans live. (cf. also UJFALVY, l.c. infra p. 52, and RIPLEY l.c. infra p. 452: "from either side purity of types of very different sort increases to the watershed which lies between them.")

I am especially indebted to Mr. ZAYNE NUR-ED-DIN and Mr. DOWLATSHAHI for their help.

Though all the people enlisted in my dossier called themselves Persians, the superposition of my Persian and Kurdish curves (fig. 4) shows that the typical Kurdish top (78—78,9) returns with the Persians in a striking way.

Also the subbrachycephalic Caucasian race is present again with the Persians, as appears from the elevations at 81—81,9 and 83—83,9, this index occurring also with the Georgians and Tscherkesses.

The 86—86,9 top of the Persian curve may be caused by Armenian and Armenoid influence<sup>1)</sup>, especially by the Armenian group of 86,53 ( $\pm 1,49$ ; cf. my second contribution).

The Northern origin of the subbrachycephalic Caucasian and hyperbrachycephalic Armenoids may explain the fact that these indices were specially evident with my Persians, originating from places North of the line Hamadan — Isphahan, whereas South of that line only 9 % of the individuals measured had an index higher than 81<sup>2)</sup>.

Now considering the left hand side of my Persian frequency curve we see that there are a great many subdolichocephalics in it as is shown by the high elevation at 74—74,9 and some lower ones at 67—68,9 and 70.

These elevations, chiefly caused by Southern-Persians, indicate another component of the population: the Indo-Afghan component, while in the North a Turkoman element may contribute to the 74—74,9 elevation.

Personally I only examined six adult men, who called themselves Turkomans, tall Indo-European looking people. Their measurements and indices are so characteristic that I cannot omit giving them here:

Turkomans	length	width	height	l. w. i.	w. h. i.	l. h. i.
No. 1 . . .	20.0	14.5	13.2	72.5	91.0	66.0
No. 2 . . .	19.1	14.1	12.9	73.8	91.5	67.5
No. 3 . . .	19.6	14.0	13.2	71.4	94.3	67.3
No. 4 . . .	19.0	14.4	13.2	76.3	91.7	69.5
No. 5 . . .	19.0	14.0	12.0	73.7	85.7	63.1
No. 6 . . .	18.6	14.7	12.2	79.0	83.0	65.6
Average . . .	19.22	14.28	12.78	74.45	89.53	67.3

<sup>1)</sup> As already mentioned in my first contribution Abbas the Great (1605) established an Armenian colony at Isphahan, some members of which have kept their Armenian characteristics though many have obtained a mesocephalic index, depending probably on marriages with other races.

<sup>2)</sup> These came from Kermandshah and Sijraz, i.e. from the South-West. Those above 84 may due to Mesopotamian influence (Kohtan Arab influence), while some higher indices (87—89) may be due to Bakhtyari influence (see below).



The data concerning the Turkomans are contradictory. DUHOUSSET, who measured one male Turkoman from Khiwa, found an index of 79.1.

JAVORSKY <sup>1)</sup>, who measured 59 individuals, found very similar figures: an average length of the head of 19.3, an average width of 14.6, thus making an average l.w.i. of 75.6 (ranging from 68.69 to 81.76).

DENIKER <sup>2)</sup> gives the Transcaspian Turkomans an average of 77.9 (23 individuals).

Whereas these authors agree that the Transcaspian Turkomans are mesocephalic, RIPLEY <sup>3)</sup>, following UJFALVY <sup>4)</sup> gives them a very high brachycephalic index (85—89) and considers them to be an alpine race.

Apparently the divergence of opinion between DUHOUSSET, JAVORSKY, DENIKER, and myself, on one hand, and UJFALVY, on the other, depends on what race should be considered as the actual Turkoman race.

Turkmenia proper is only a small part of Russian Turkestan, viz. that part that lies between the Caspian and Aral seas, bordering on Persia. If, however, the name Turkomans be applied to the population of whole Russian Turkistan, extending as far east as Chinese Turkestan, as some anthropologists do, it would include also the Uzbeks, Kiptchaks and even the Kirghese that are reported to be highly brachycephalic (ind. 84—85), the Kirghese being, moreover, evidently Mongols.

The different character of many so-called Turkomans has already been stated by KHANIKOFF <sup>5)</sup> and DUHOUSSET (l.c.), the former giving the Turkomans of Persia an average index of 82.

If DENIKER and JAVORSKY are right, as the figures I found with my six Turkomans suggest, then the Turkomans proper are meso- or dolichocephalic and then the Northern elements in the dolichocephalic top of my Persian curve may include people of Turkoman origin, belonging perhaps, to the Khodjar (or Qojar) and Afshar Turkomans living in North-East Persia and from which also some of the former rulers of Persia descended.

Leaving aside the rather contradictory data concerning the Turkomans, there is no doubt that the majority of the high 73—74.9 top in my Persian curve is caused by Indo-Afghans, to which also a part of the population of Loristan may be added. For the Afghans DE QUATREFAGES and HAMY <sup>6)</sup> found an index of 73.15 a figure also stated by HOUSSAY <sup>7)</sup> with some Loris (73.57). As the main index of the Hindoos proper, according to

<sup>1)</sup> JAVORSKY. Mil. Acad. Anthropol. Soc. of Petrograd 1895 Vol. II, p. 145, quoted from RIPLEY and DUDLEY BUXTON, 1897. See also JAVORSKY p. 193, where this index of 75.6 is given as an average of 191 measurements.

<sup>2)</sup> DENIKER. Les peuples et races de la terre. p. 669. Paris, 1900.

<sup>3)</sup> RIPLEY. The peoples of Europe, London, 1907 p. 416 a.f.

<sup>4)</sup> UJFALVY. Les Aryens au Nord et au Sud de l'Indou-Kouch, 1896 (Quoted from RIPLEY, the original not being at my disposal).

<sup>5)</sup> KHANIKOFF. Mémoire sur l'Ethnographie de la Perse. Martinet, Paris, 1866.

<sup>6)</sup> Crania ethnica. Quoted from HOUSSAY, the original not being at my disposal.

<sup>7)</sup> HOUSSAY. Les peuples actuels de la Perse. Bull. Soc. d'Anthrop. de Lyon, Tome 6, 1887, p. 101.



HOUSSAY is between 72,28 and 74,78, according to DUHOUSSET 74,5, the conclusion that these groups belong together is likely to be true.

Whether the Hadjemis (index 77.77) and Tadjiks may be a branch of this group, as is asserted by CHANTRE (1895, p. 174), I dare not say, but there may be a close relation between the dolichocephalic Turkomans and the Djemchidis Afghans; DENIKER l.c. p. 438), the more so as the Turkomans I measured also had a distinct Indo-European type.

Another group of the same race may be the Zoroastrian Persians from Farsistan, formerly very numerous in S. Persia, where they were described by KHANIKOFF. (l.c.).

Personally I only have the measurements and indices of two Persians from Fars. They are 14.7 by 19.2, i.e. 76.6 for a male, and 14.4 by 18.3, i.e. 78.8 for a female <sup>1</sup>).

So much concerning the racial analysis of the Persians which is not at all complete, but still may add a little to our knowledge of the anthropology of this country where hitherto so few researches have been made <sup>2</sup>).

I cannot omit entering here upon another question, viz. the question of the origin of the Druses, since recently HITTl in a very interesting paper <sup>3</sup>) advanced a number of historical and linguistic arguments opening the possibility that the Druses might be related to the Persians or to the Kurds. As far as concerns the Kurds, anthropology, however, gives no arguments for this supposition, as the ultrabrachycephalic relations of the Druses are very rarely met with amongst the Kurds and certainly are not typical of this race (see above).

Besides the word "Persians" is a geographical expression, unless one would consider the Farsis as the real Persians, descending perhaps from the ancient Perses.

The index with the Persian Farsis, however, being dolicho- or mesocephalic, and the one with the Bombay Farsis being subbrachycephalic, I cannot see an anthropological relation here.

Taking the expression Persians in the widest or geographical sense there is only one small top in my Persian curve with a hyperbrachycephalic index, but the index of this top (86—86.9) is so typically Armenoid that there is a great probability that this elevation is caused by Armenian influence, easily explained by the immigration of this people into Persia, already favored by Abbas the Great.

<sup>1</sup>) It is well known that most Farsis left Persia after the decline of the Sassanids, migrating to India. The Farsi in Bombay, however, are not at all dolichocephalic, but have an index of about 82, according to DENIKER (l.c. p. 672). Also von LUSCHAN (l.c. p. 111) stated that the index of the Indian Farsis is different.

<sup>2</sup>) The data given in DE MORGANs great work on Persia have more ethnological than anthropological value (Mission scientifique en Perse; 1894).

<sup>3</sup>) PH. K. HITTl. The origin of the Druse people and religion with extracts of their sacred writings. Columbia University Oriental studies, Vol. 28, 1928. I am greatly indebted to Mr. SULAYMAN ABU IZZ-ED-DIN of Beirut for calling my attention to Dr. HITTl's paper.

Curiously this top coincides (see my superposed Persian and Druses curves in fig. 5) with a group amongst the Druses, which I also consider as Armenoid or —if the Armenoid type is the Hittite type — as Hittite.

About half of the Druses, however, have a higher index than 86.9. Whether this be due to the inbreeding amongst the Druses, combined with

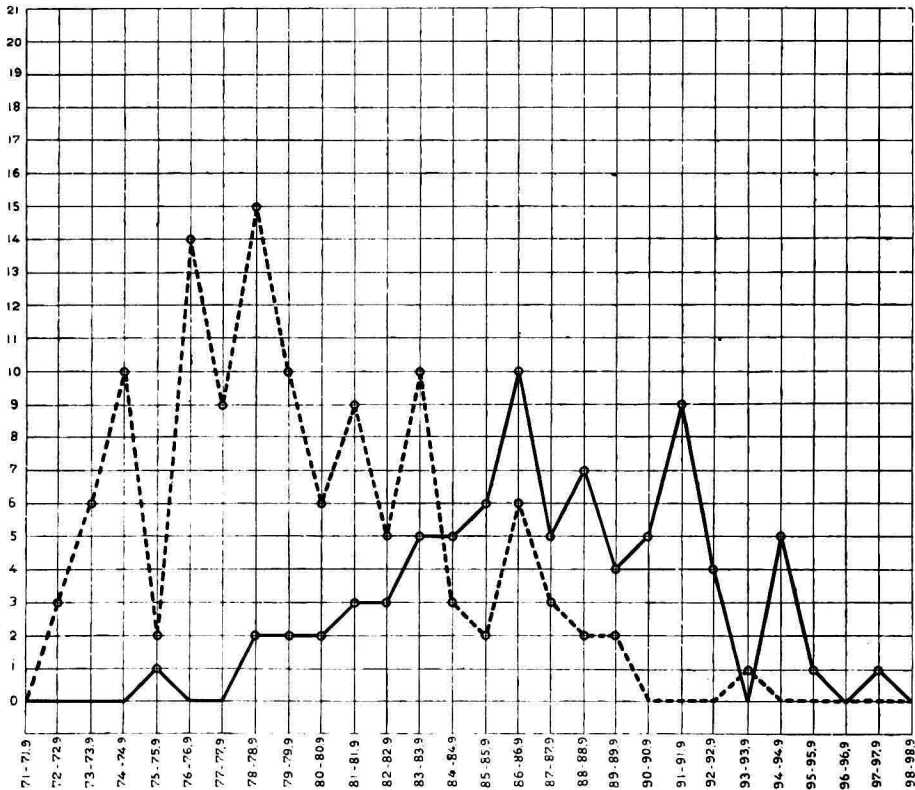


Fig. 5. Frequency curves of 116 ♂ Persians (broken line) and of 84 ♂ Druses (continuous line).

the hereditary dominance of brachycephaly, or with external influences exercised on the skull in the first years of childhood, I leave out of consideration here. So much is sure that the other elevations in my Druse curve represent indices (88—91.9) occurring only with 5 % of my Persian curve (fig. 5). These ultrabrachycephalic Persians came from various places, but those from Kermanshah may have been Bakhtyari, with which DUHOUSSET, who measured four of them, found an average index of 89 (KHANIKOFF l.c. p. 138). Also GAUTHIER (quoted by CHANTRE, 1895, p. 136), who measured nine Bakhtyari, found an average l.w. index of 89.32<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>1</sup>) DENIKER, l.c. p. 486 gives them an average index of 84.5 and seems to group them together with the Loris as does KEANE (l.c. p. 279). There are, however, meso- and brachycephalic Loris, and the latter may be Loristan Bakhtyari.

HOUSSEY, who measured only three Bakhtyari, found an average index of 83.7.

The Bakthiyari are a short (length 1.67 M.) mountainous population in West-Persia (Loristan), South of Kurdistan. They mostly speak Kurdish, but are not to be considered as Kurds. Excellent pictures of this people are given by DUNLOP.<sup>1)</sup>

The fact that several of the present Lebanese Druses may have had ancestors in Iraq on the border of Persia is no argument for their Persian descent, as especially Iraq even now contains many Kohtan Arabs, among them highly hyperbrachycephalic individuals. And where VON LUSCHAN states in his Huxley memorial lecture on the early inhabitants of Western Asia that of fifty nine skulls of adult male Druses measured by him, "not a single man fell — as regards his cephalic index — within the range of the real Arab" <sup>2)</sup>, he apparently considers here only the Adnan Arabs, not the highly brachycephalic Kohtan Arabs, so numerous in Iraq.

Unhappily the bloodindex of these Kohtan Arabs is unknown hitherto. If, however, it is the same as with the "Moslim Arabs" examined by PARR it would be 1.59 i.e. the same index as found by PARR for the Druses, while, with his Persians, PARR found an index of 1.35.

Whatever may be the truth about the Kohtan bloodindex, anthropology hitherto does not afford any argument in favor of a specific Persian relation of the Druses <sup>3)</sup> unless one would be inclined to consider the Bakthiyari as their relatives, for which, however, more researches would be necessary.

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<sup>1)</sup> H. DUNLOP. *Perzië voorheen en thans*. Firma Erven Bohn, Haarlem, 1912, p. 566—568.

<sup>2)</sup> Which of the main Arab groups is the "real one", the Northern mesocephalic phoenico — palmyrene Adnan Arabs, or the Southern brachycephalic (Iraqquian and Yemenite) Arabs, is a matter of appreciation. Contrary to VON LUSCHAN, the Arab tradition considers the Yemenite group (el ariba) as the more "real" one and not the Adnan group (el must'ariba, i.e. those who came later) C.f. HOUTSMA, ARNOLD, BOSSET and HARTMANN *Encyclopaedia of the Islam*, Part I; Brill, Leiden; Harrassowitz, Leipzig, 1913.

<sup>3)</sup> Linguistic arguments are of little value in anthropology. Many examples may be quoted of racially different peoples using even the same speech. Besides Persian expressions occurring with a people whose ancestors lived in Iraq about 1000—1300 A.D. would not be strange considering the Persian influence on Iraq before that time (during the Sassanide empire) and the union of Persian and Mesopotamian territory under the caliphate of Baghddad, under which the Druse sect originated.