



## ASADĀBĀD (AFGHANISTAN)

**ASADĀBĀD** (or AS'ADĀBĀD), the official name of a small town in eastern Afghanistan. The town occupies a very favorable situation at the junction of the two main access routes to Nūrestān (the former Kafiristan) and Chitral, which run through the valleys of the Konar river and its principal right bank tributary, the Pēč river. It is the headquarters of the province of Konar (q.v.) or Konarhā.

In the nineteenth century the district was purely rural. It was an outpost of Islam and Paštō language, fronting on Kafiristan and protected by a fort against Kāfer raids. The name Čagān Sarāy, by which the whole district had been known since the 10th/16th century (*Bābur-nāma*, p. 212), survives today in the town's vernacular name Čāga Sarāy.

The potentiality of this site for urban business was not realized until the incorporation of Kafiristan into the Afghan kingdom in 1314/1896. Having been the Afghan army's main base in the war of conquest (see the references in S. Jones, *A Bibliography of Nurestan [Kafiristan] and the Kalash Kafirs of Chitral. Part 2: Selected Documents from the Secret and Political Records, 1885-1900*, Copenhagen, 1969 [*Hist. Filos. Medd. Dan. Vid. Selsk.* 43, 1]), it was chosen to replace Pašad (or Pašat) at 20 km to the southwest as the chief center of civil administration on the south flank of the eastern Hindu Kush. A bipolar town grew up consisting of the new spacious governmental section, established just above the confluence of the Konar and Pēč rivers, and the crowded old village of Kūz Čāga Sarāy, situated some distance away near the Jūy-e Sālār, a long irrigation canal which carries water from the Pēč down to



Narang. The headquarters of the provincial administrative departments, a twenty-bed hospital, and three educational institutions catering in 1355 Š./1976 for 1900 pupils, sustain the town's dominance over a hinterland of more than 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> with some 250,000 inhabitants.

These administrative functions generated a commercial activity whose growth has been tremendous. The bazaar, founded in 1326 Š./1947 and consisting of not more than 40 shops, was completely rebuilt in 1353 Š./1974, bringing the number of shops at that date to 186. This spectacular growth was due mainly to the opening of a network of motorable tracks in the surrounding area. The construction of major bridges over the Pēč (just above the confluence) and the Konar (at Dadūna, 10 km downstream), together with the presence of the region's only gasoline station, ensured that every user of the road would stop at Asadābād.

An attempt to introduce modern industry was made in 1346 Š./1967, when a small mechanized sawmill and joinery was established with French technical assistance at Tēša on the right bank of the Konar 5 km downstream from Asadābād. The aim was to make local use of the abundant Nūrestān timber, principally cedarwood, floated down the rivers and hitherto exported to Pakistan. The factory's chief products were doors, window frames, and school furniture. Distance from markets proved to be an insuperable obstacle, and the enterprise, which never had more than eighty employees, declined rapidly after the departure of the French technicians and finally closed down. In 1362 Š./1983 it was announced that Asadābād had acquired a small hydroelectric generating plant (350 kw with plans for expansion to 700 kw).

The census of 1358 Š./1979 credited Asadābād with a population of only 2,000; but many officials and traders who work in the town live in nearby villages. The population of the district (318 km<sup>2</sup>) in 1358 Š./1979 was recorded as 29,000, giving a density of 92 per km<sup>2</sup> (238 per square mile).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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