



BARAKĪ BARAK

BARAKĪ BARAK, an inhabited locality in the province of Lōgar in Afghanistan (*Afghanistan*, p. 15) 33°58' north latitude, 68°58' east longitude), made up of three component parts: 1. a large village of the Tajik type with rows of houses sandwiched between narrow alleys leading to squares—a compact layout suitable for defense in a region of chronic insecurity; 2. a settlement of the Pashtun type consisting of about ten fortified farmhouses (*qaḷ'as*) with high walls, corner towers, and a gateway surmounted by an upper room (*bālā-kāna*; see Kieffer, 1986); 3. a *bāzār*, separated from the village by a gap of 500 meters, with a rest house (*sarāy*) for travelers and some governmental buildings. Prior to 1979, the total population was between 3,000 and 4,000. On most British maps from the 19th century the only place shown is Barakī Rājān (*Afghanistan*, p. 15: 33° 56' north latitude, 68° 55' east longitude), which formerly was the seat of a governor and had an important *bāzār*, now for the most part in ruins. Barakī Barak, situated on the link road joining the main Kabul-Ġaznī and Kabul-Gardēz routes, became the governor's seat sometime in the mid-19th century and remained so until ca. 1970, when the local administration was moved to Pol-e 'Alam on the Kabul-Gardēz highway. Under the new configuration Barakī Barak is also the name of a whole district in Lōgar province (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan* VI, pp. 91-92), with an area of 329 km² and a pre-1979 population of between 30,000 and 40,000.

The importance of the village lies in its being the abode of the Ōrmuḡ people of Afghanistan. The country's last Ōrmuḡī speakers live in the nearby *qaḷ'as* (Kieffer, *Grammaire de l'ōrmuḡī*; idem, *Le multilinguisme*, pp. 115-26;



Morgenstierne, pp. 307-414). Ōrmuṛī together with Parāčī constitutes the Southeast Iranian language group; it is spoken by the Ōrmuṛ people, who use it as their clan language, at Barakī Barak in Lōgar province and also at Kāṇīgrām in Pakistani Waziristan. The name Ōrmuṛ appears to mean literally “fire quenched.” Both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, however, they call themselves Barakī, Bīrkī, Brakī, or the like—an ethnonym obviously related to the toponym Barakī Barak but of uncertain etymology, all the attempted explanations being mere conjecture (Kieffer, *Grammaire de l’ormuṛī*). The Ōrmuṛī speakers of Barakī Barak call the place Grām, an Indo-Aryan word meaning “village,” as in Kāṇī-grām which means “fire village,” cf. Sanskrit *grāma*. With few exceptions, the Ōrmuṛ people of Barakī Barak are now assimilated to the persophone Tajiks. Definitely of the Tajik ethnic group are the inhabitants of Barakī Rājān; there is no evidence to suggest that they were ever related to the Ōrmuṛ people.

The earliest references to the “Barakīs” are found in the *Bābor-nāma* (Bīrkī on p. 207, but Barakistān on p. 220) and in the works of Elphinstone (Burrakees on p. 315) and Leech (Baraky).

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Qāmūs-e joḡrāfiā-ye Afḡānestān I, Kabul, 1335 Š./1956.

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