



## DARRA-YE NŪR

**DARRA-YE NŪR** (Pašaī Dārē-i No: Herrlich et al., pp. 343, 858; lit., “valley of light”; a suggested Pashto etymology, in *Bābor-nāma*, tr. Beveridge, app., pp. xxiii-xxv, is to be rejected), name of a small tributary valley on the right bank of the Konar river in eastern Afghanistan and the corresponding subdistrict of Nangrahār province. The Nūr river rises on the forested Kōṇḍ Ġar (ca. 4,360 m), a ridge of the Hindu Kush that has been described as a place of pilgrimage (Simpson, p. 803). It flows due south for about 25 km, receiving several tributaries on its right bank, and joins the Konar river near the market town and district seat of Šēwa, at an altitude of 610 m, about 23 km upstream from the confluence of the Konar and the Kābolrūd.

The area seems to have been incorporated into the Afghan state under Amir ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān (1297-1319 /1880-1901; Keiser, 1971, p. 11). Owing to abundant forest game (Nāhež, p. 240) and proximity to the winter palace at Jalālābād, the Darra-ye Nūr was a favorite royal hunting ground. As early as 1327/1909 a road was built from Šēwa through the valley to Qal’a-ye Šāhī(d) (Pašaī Ḳalšaī; Morgenstierne, p. 22) and then to Šokīālī (or Šogīālī), a village halfway to the source of the Nūr river elevated to the status of administrative center of the area (Kohzad, pp. 1-2).

The subdistrict (*‘alāqadārī*) of Darra-ye Nūr covers 336 km<sup>2</sup>. In 1925 there were about 10,000 inhabitants and in 1358 Š./1979, according to preliminary [census](#) returns, 27,606 (Herbordt, p. 208), with a relatively high density of 82 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. The population, concentrated in scattered settlements ranging from compact villages in the upper valley to either dispersed fortified



farmsteads (*qal'a*) surrounded by small tenant houses or tiny hamlets in the lower valley, is supported by intensive irrigated double cropping (Keiser, 1971, pp. 38 ff.; idem, 1984, p. 128; Wutt, 1977; idem, 1981, pp. 73 ff.). In the market-oriented wheat-rice system of the semitropical lower valley rice is the main cash crop, whereas in the temperate upper valley the traditional subsistence wheat-maize farming, with declining goat pastoralism, has recently been giving way to commercial poppy production for the narcotics trade (Keiser, 1971, pp. 31 ff.; idem, 1984, pp. 127 ff.; Ovesen, 1983, p. 174; Wutt, 1981, p. 55).

The inhabitants speak the eastern Pašaī language, the so-called *laḡmānī* or *dehgānī* Pašaī, but with dialectal variations strong enough to prevent mutual intelligibility, although some standardization of the language seems to have occurred recently (Buddruss, p. 3; Tanner, p. 282; Keiser, 1984, p. 120). They belong to two geographically distinct endogamous clans, the Sūm in upper Darra-ye Nūr and the Šenganek in the lower valley (sometimes called Tajik and Sāfī respectively; Wutt, 1978, p. 43; Ovesen, 1986, pp. 247-48). A third group, allied with the Sūm, is of mixed origin: Čogānī (immigrants from the Kōrdar and Arēt [Oyrēt] valleys in the north and east; Tanner, p. 293) and Čelāsī (from Čelās in the neighboring Čawkī valley (Ovesen, 1981, p. 224); they inhabit Kandak and Šemōl, two high villages in a side valley (Wutt, 1978, p. 44 map). Pashtun families from the Sāfī (Sāpī) tribe, some reputedly of *sayyed* (claiming descent from the Prophet Moḡammad) origin, have settled in the lower valley and initiated a strong pashtunization process (Kohzad, p. 5; Wutt, 1981, p. 65).

The Sūm are numerically and socially dominant. They claim descent from a common ancestor (possibly a Tajik Naqšbandī *pīr*), who is said to have come through the Kašmūd range from the upper Alīngār about ten generations ago and to have converted the valley population to Islam. This tradition suggests a religious, rather than a patrilineal, affiliation and casts doubt on the belief that the Sūm were latecomers to the Darra-ye Nūr (Keiser, 1974, p. 449). The conversion must therefore have taken place later than that of the upper Alīngār in about 990/1582 (Moḡammad Khan). In fact, Islam had already reached the Darra-ye Nūr from a different direction, and the process of islamization lasted for centuries. In 411/1020, when the Ghaznavid Sultan Maḡmūd launched a first successful campaign of conversion from the south, the population of the valley was “*kāfer o botparast*” (infidel and idolatrous), most probably worshiping Hindu gods in this deeply indianized region (Gardīzī, ed. Ḥabībī, p. 185; Wutt, 1981, pp. 107-08). In 1035/1625 *kāfer*



communities were still living in the Darra-ye Nūr, notably in the western side valley of Sarōr (Raverty, pp. 109, 141). Several pre-Islamic traditions still survive (e.g., in zoomorphic funerary architecture); others vanished only a few decades ago (Herbordt, p. 207; Wutt, 1981, pp. 92 ff.; Ovesen, 1983, p. 179).

Despite traditional factionalism, in the winter of 1358 Š./1979-80 an alliance of all the clans under Sūm leadership drove all government representatives out of the valley. Since then the Darra-ye Nūr has remained outside government control (Keiser, 1984).

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