



GANDĀPŪR

GANDĀPŪR, one of two Šērānī Pashtun/Paxtun tribal segments (the other being the Baḵtīār), who claim origin in southwestern Afghanistan and acknowledge descent from a male, non-Pashtun *sayyed* ancestor. They numbered about 8,000 in the early 20th century, occupying an area of approximately 460 square miles in the western foothills of the Solaymān mountains and concentrating at the town of Kūlāčī in the Dēra Esmā'īl Kān District, the Northwest Frontier Province. They have now been absorbed in local populations; presently no groups of any significant size identify themselves as Gandāpūr. The Mašwānī from the Kakar tribe and the Wardak and Hanī from the Karlānṛī tribal confederation, all located in southeastern Afghanistan, are the other Pashtun groups who claim a common *sayyed* ancestry with the Gandāpūr. According to the standard genealogical accounts of all these groups but the Baḵtīār, the Sufi Sayyed Moḥammad Gīsū-darāz (q.v.) wandered in from Khorasan or Turkistan, offered “prayers and intercessions” on behalf of the local people, and, in return, each host community gave him one of its daughters in marriage. Gīsū-darāz, however, left without his Pashtun wives and children, who were raised by their maternal grandfathers. His descendants claim Pashtun ethnic identity and forbid their children, “on pain of disinheritance” (Moḥammad-Ḥayāt Khan, tr., p. 279), to reveal their non-Pashtun patrilineage. It is, however, very doubtful that Gīsū-darāz had any relationship to any Pashtun tribe, including the Gandāpūr. The Gandāpūr consider themselves Pashtun by virtue of important Pashtun features of their culture and social organization, such as adherence to *paštūnwālī* (Pashtun charter for appropriate social behavior), the Pashtu



language, and tribal *tsalweštay* (the institution of forty local adult males designated to implement decisions of tribal councils, or a person or an office representing these forty men). Moḥammad-Ḥayāt Khan (p. 279) considers the Gandāpūr as a people who live “among the Afghans [Pashtuns], but not being of them,” an assertion rejected by Šēr-Moḥammad Khan (pp. 275-80).

The Gandāpūr, like many other nomadic Pashtun groups in the region, regularly moved between Afghanistan and the Dāmān plains stretching from the Indus to the eastern slopes of the Solaymān mountains. They combined pastoral nomadism with transporting and peddling of goods between Central and South Asia. The pattern of these nomadic movements and the transformations of their society fluctuated with the rhythms of trade and the nature of their contacts with the surrounding political economies throughout their history. During the 17th century, most of the Gandāpūr had settled in Dēra Esmā’īl Kān, with large numbers engaged in the trade between India and Khorasan, which intensified in the next two centuries (Elphinstone, p. 373).

The origin of the name Gandāpūr is not clear. It is unlikely that it has etymological roots in the terms Qandahār or Gandhara. The literal meaning of the term in Persian (fetid son) might be interpreted to indicate the descendant(s) of a person who incurred a stigmatized social identity due to an illicit relationship in violation of local norms or custom. Popular Pashtun genealogical accounts relate that Tārī, the putative ancestor of the Gandāpūr, a grandson of Gīsū-darāz by one of his Šērānī Pashtun wives, violated the local tradition by marrying a girl without her father’s permission and against the wishes of his own father. Thereupon, he was banished by his people, forcing the couple into neolocal post-marital residence.

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