

THE KINGDOM OF SWAT AND THE LOST TAJIKS OF NORTH PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT.

It is known to very few, that five hundred years ago, before the arrival of the Mughals, the demographics of the northern regions comprising Pakistan were much different. There existed a substantial and well established Tajik (Persian) farming population here from ancient times in the lush valleys of Peshawar and Swat (the Gandhara region). These areas formed part of a kingdom, ruled since Ghorī times by a family of Muslim Tajiks known as Gibaris (also Swati and Jehangiri) who were converts from Zoroastrianism. They were the sultans of the Kingdom of Swat or “Pakhli Sarkar” as it was known – which later became a dependency of the Sultanate of Kashmir. Kashmir in turn was a “provincial sultanate” of the renowned Delhi Sultanate.

The displacement from Kabul of the Yusufzai Pashtuns by the Timurids resulted in their migration to the Swat Kingdom, and both this and the subsequent Timurid (Mughal) conquests of India brought about the fall of both the Delhi and Swat Sultanates. Although the Delhi Sultanate is world famous, that of Swat is shrouded in mystery. It is the objective of this paper to apprise the reader of that history, as well as explain why it has been obscured.

KEYWORDS:*Tajiks, Zoroastrian, Gibari, Swati, Jehangiri, Dehqan, Ghoris, Afghanistan, Sultanate of Swat, Delhi Sultanate, Sultanate of Kashmir, Peshawar Valley, Swat Valley, Bettani Afghan Confederacy, Pashtun ethnogenesis, Yusufzai history, Sarabani Afghans, Mughals, invasions, population displacements, genetics*

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INTRODUCTION AND SUBJECT PREAMBLE

This article will come as a surprise to most, because there is no mention of any Gibar Sultanate or Pakhli Sarkar, or an indigenous Tajik population at all in local public discourse in Pakistan. Even in the limited historical awareness prevalent in our country, this is not at all insignificant as a subject – nor is it that far back in history, but its total absence from our country's sparse formal and national historiography seems very surprising, in particular with the continual emphasis on reminding everyone about how Islam came to India and furnished the basis for Pakistan. The Ghoris are frequently mentioned in this context. But no one even knows about their vassal Tajik kingdom that spanned the entire Northern Areas of Pakistan as well as a sizeable portion of northeast Afghanistan. The Gibar Kingdom and its sultans find mention in several standard classical early and medieval Muslim historical works and texts. These include the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, *Tuzk-i-Taimuri*, *Baburnama*, (including the biographies of the rest of the Mughal emperors – *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Jehangirnama*, *Shahjehanama*, *Alamgirnama*), and *Siyar-ul-Mutakhireen* among others. The Jahangiri Sultans and their times are mentioned in a wealth of detail by prominent British colonial writers such as Major H.G. Raverty. But as regards other modern scholarship, the situation is very dismal. There definitely seems to be a “formal” cover-up conspiracy spanning the centuries, with regard to this legacy, and its overthrow and takeover. A good example in this regard would be to refer to Sir Olaf Caroe's treatment of the matter. The last British colonial Governor of the NWFP (now KP) and a senior colonial bureaucrat and strategic planner, his book *The Pathans* is still considered by most to be the best international work so far on the Pashtun ethnicity and their history. An otherwise keen and erudite scholar such as Caroe – who it is evident, was always anxious and at pains to show his propriety in matters of knowledge – can only casually mention the Gibari-Swati Sultans...and that also just three times, in his celebrated *magnum opus*. It is as if he was referring to a quantity so well known that it merited no further academic elucidation or introduction. But in fact this seems to smack of a wily deliberation not innocence – as a sly way of distracting attention from, and diminishing the importance of a key historical matter at the same time! But that comes as no surprise, as upon examining *The Pathans* it is all too evident where the personal sympathies of this colonial official lay – as well as those of the establishment he was

tasked to work for; we see that glaringly, in his dedication of his book on its title page to the Yusafzais, as well as his wish recorded therein to be considered as an “honourary Yusafzai”...a tribe which like all the Sarabani Pashtuns, constituted the backbone of the British Raj in its Pashtun theater throughout. On the other hand, eminent scholastic personages such as Pakistan’s foremost historical authority, the late Dr. A.H. Dani – though he belonged to the Northern Areas himself – has declined any mention of the Kingdom of Swat, save for a few sentences which he has quoted from an English author...and he cursorily mentions the (Gibari) Sultans of Kashmir – but not in the context of their background or the nature of their linkages with Swat. Awareness of this history has tended to exist as a memory in the informal oral discourse of the local countryside, and its illiterate folkloric milieu. Or as confidential knowledge circulating among the local rural elites, discussed discreetly. These events and situations are also extensively recorded in the traditional vernacular histories of the Yusafzais themselves, in books such as *Tawareekh-i-Hafiz Rehmat Khani* and books by the contemporary saint Akhund Darweza such as *Tazkiratul Abrar Wal Ashraar*. But significant as they are, these accounts are far from being mainstream or visible, or accessible to modern educated audiences of our own country, let alone internationally.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The medieval *Mumlikat-e Gibar* of northeastern Afghanistan and the northern areas of Pakistan -- was established as a Muslim Tajik sultanate in about 1190 AD, being ruled in tandem by two brothers. Sultan Bahram and Sultan Fahkal (or Pakhal) Gibari, were the scions of an earlier local Tajik princely dynasty of Zoroastrian converts, ruling the famous Pech Valley area in Kunar (Afghanistan), and hence their family name Gibari which was taken from “*Gabr*”¹, a term used derogatively by early Arabs for unconverted Zoroastrians. The brothers were sons of Sultan Kehjaman, son of Sultan Hindu of Pech. Their family tradition states descent from “Sikandar-e-Zulqarnain” or Cyrus the Great – the founder of Persia’s first great (Achaemenid) Empire some 2600 years ago – via a daughter of his. The Gibari Sultans are more famously known as the “Jehangiri Sultans” – after Sultan Jehangir, a later member of this dynasty who became famous due to his achievements. Another name for these Sultans was “Swati” due to the fact that their capital was located at Manglaur in Swat. They are said to

have spoken an archaic pre-Islamic form of Dari Persian known as *Gabri*². All male members of the Gibari Sultani clan used the honorific “sultan” irrespective of whether or not they were the actual ruler. A variety of explanations has been suggested as to their origins, but it is likely that they were one of the several princely families residing in the eastern portion of the Iranian empire, most likely in Transoxania, Bactria or Seistan. More linkages will be explored in the GENETICS section below.

The dynasty later acquired the appellation “Jehangiri” from the name of one of its famous scions, Sultan Jehangir – grandson of Sultan Fahkal, who supposedly restored order in the Gibar Sultanate after the depredations of Genghis Khan in the area (see below).

Many names of the rest of the Sultans are traditionally known – of the 330 year period from the inception of the Gibar Sultanate till it ended its days as Pakhli Sarkar or Swat Sultanate – but hardly any details are known about any save for a few, and those also are sketchy at best.

Sultan Jehangir is known to have had another brother, Sultan Arghash – who is said to have fled the turbulence after his grandfather’s death, and gone to the court of one of the later Seljuks (Kayqubad I?) but what happened to him is a matter of conjecture other than the fact that he is regarded as the ancestor of the famous “Pashtun” saint of Peshawar Valley, Shaikh Abdul Wahab (Akhund Panju) and the progenitor of the *Arghash-Al Swati* clan in Mansehra.

BEGINNING

The Gibar Sultanate was a major vassal state of the Ghori Sultanate (and the succeeding Delhi Sultanate) – originally extending from Kabul and the Hindu Kush on one side, to the Karakorams and River Jhelum and Baramula at the other end. In Pakistan, its territory consisted of Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Dir, Chitral, Balor (Gilgit), Kohistan, Swat, Buner, Malakand and the Peshawar Valley districts to the north of River Kabul and west of the Indus (Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi) -- together with Hazara District across the Indus. Across the Suleiman Mountain Range to the west, the areas of Kunar, Badakhshan, Laghman, Parwan, Kapisa, Kabul, Logar and Ningarhar in present day Afghanistan formed part of the diarchy. Sultan Bahram was responsible for Ningarhar, Laghman and Kabul, etc., in the west, while Sultan Fahkal had from his family seat in Pech river valley – conquered and added the eastern parts from Pech right upto Kashmir.

Swat Valley – then still known by its ancient Buddhist name of Udyana –was under the rule of a local prince, Raja Gira, whose capital was in Udigram. The Raja left his citadel to repulse the invading Tajik forces, but met with defeat at Haibatgram near Thana village. In this battle, four of Sultan Fahkal's sons were killed – namely Zerdast, Alam Sher, Dashra and Qarzah. Their graves still exist in Alladand Dheri village of Malakand Agency. Among these, Sultan Dashra was the father of Sultan Jehangir and Sultan Arghash mentioned above.

After his defeat, Raja Gira retreated to his citadel in Udigram, where he was besieged and duly defeated. Thus the regions of Swat, Buner and Bajaur came under Gibari rule – and in the last named, Sultan Shamor was appointed as governor.

Sultan Bahram meanwhile conquered the western areas beyond the Suleiman Range and consolidated his rule over them. In the meantime, Sultan Fahkal died in Swat, and his surviving sons fell out among themselves over the succession and a bloody civil war ensued between their supporting factions. This began to endanger the territorial integrity of the new Gibar dyarchy, and their uncle Sultan Bahram was forced to take corrective action by proceeding eastwards against them to restore order, while leaving his son Sultan Tomana in charge of his base at Papin. In the process he reconquered the territories which Sultan Fahkal had previously subdued, but which had begun to break away.

The armies of the Gibari Sultans of Pech consisted of Ghori³ Tajiks and Khilji Turks.⁴ Sultan Bahram, on his mission of reconquest, settled thousands of these Turks and Tajiks across the Indus in the region now known as Hazara, after expelling its original Hindu inhabitants – to defend his conquests from the Rajputs and Ghakkars who were in nearby proximity.

After having accomplished this successfully, he left another son Sultan Qara in charge of the Swat-Hazara region, and made his way back to his capital at Papin in Ningarhar. However, he died suddenly enroute, just short of Papin at Kot, and was buried there.

ETYMOLOGY AND ORIGINS OF THE NAME“SWAT”

Regarding the origins and etymology of the name “Swat”, it is known that this valley was always known as Udyana from ancient times. The

name Swat appears to have been used the area with the arrival here of the Gibaris themselves. The actual word is said to be “Suwad” which became corrupted to Swat over time. In all the old accounts mentioning the Gibaris and their kingdom, it is Suwad which is used. The origins of this word have been traced to old Arab revenue nomenclature as adapted to the sophisticated system in place in the conquered Persian territories after 651 AD. Suwad was an Arabic term used to describe naturally lush and fertile irrigated “premium” areas, as was the case with the proverbially fertile tract between the Tigris and the Euphrates in Iraq (formerly Sassanian Persia). This was where the Dehqan aristocracy of Persia could be found at its best and in plenty, given as it was to farming and agriculture.

The valley of Udyana in the north of Gandhara was another such place – a beautiful and verdant paradise of snowy mountains and wooded forests, with a gushing river flowing through it and abundant water for the rice fields and fruit gardens that made it famous. So it was only fitting that it receive such a name.

It must be said that the Sanskrit name for the river flowing through the valley was *Suwastu* and it is widely believed that the valley took its name from the river. However, this seems to be contradicted by the fact that this name came into use relatively late, and so it seems that this correspondence is more of a coincidence than anything else.

MONGOL INVASION

Sultan Bahram and his brother had been assisted in their establishment of the Gibar State by Imaduddin Balkhi, a famous Tajik chieftain from the northern part of the Ghoris dominions, who commanded his army. As a reward for his services, Balkhi’s son Azam Malik was given a fief in the Shalozan area of Kurram (then called *Kurmaan*), on the other side of the Sufed Koh range from Papin. Later on during the Mongol invasion, Azam Malik allied himself with Sultan Jalaluddin (Shah of Khwarezm or *Khwarezmshah*), and helped him resist Genghis Khan at Parwan, north of Kabul in 1222. But shortly afterwards, he fell out over spoils with other generals of the *Khwarezmshah*, including Malik Saifuddin Ighraq Khilji which led to his deserting that army and retiring to his fief, while it proceeded in the direction of Peshawar. The result was that Jalaluddin *Khwarezmshah* sustained defeat from Genghis

Khan at Attock on the Indus. Genghis is reliably been recorded as having spent the next three months of the winter of 1222-23 camped in Gibar territory, or the “country of the fire worshippers”, spreading mayhem while in pursuit of the Turkish, Khilji and Tajik remnants of the *Khwarezmshah’s* army. He was awaiting permission of Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi to proceed north on a short route back to China via Gilgit, but when this was denied he returned northward to cross the Oxus using the route via Bamian and Takhar in the west.

PAKHLI SARKAR AND KASHMIR

Since its inception, the Gibar Sultanate remained in its original form for about 200 years thereafter, till the conquests of Tamerlane (Amir Taimur). It is indeed surprising why such a prominently placed and stable political entity lacks proper mention in the historical narrative. While Sultan Fahkal (Pakhal) was alive, his capital remained at Pech in the Kunar region. After his death dual capitals were established by Sultan Bahram one being his base in Papin and the other in Swat. Sultan Bahram, Fahkal’s partner and successor – preferred Papin as his base.

About 150 years after the establishment of the Gibar Sultanate, its western portions (beyond the Suleiman Mountains) associated with the legacy of Sultan Bahram had become largely autonomous, and were only nominally part of it. Also, its southwestern boundary had receded upto the Kabul River. At about this time, somewhere between 1355 and 1375, the five core eastern provinces of the Gibar Sultanate had been consolidated to form the “*Pakhli Sarkar*” also known as the Sultanate of Swat – named in honour of Sultan Fahkal/Pakhal, their former conqueror. The Kingdom of Swat was further made into a dependency of the freshly established Sultanate of Kashmir. The provinces or *wilayats* it consisted of were Bajaur, Swat, Buner, Hashtnagar and Pakhli (Mansehra). Its capital was located at Manglaur in Swat.

There were several reasons for this move. Firstly, Kashmir was larger and more powerful a dispensation than Pakhli Sarkar. Secondly, the Sultans of Kashmir were originally Gibari-Swati. In 1340 a Gibari from Batkhela town in the Malakand region called Shah Mir⁵ or Shah Mirza had migrated to Kashmir with his family on the insistence of his saintly grandfather Qaur Shah. Here he entered into the service of the Hindu

Raja Sahdyu, whom he served faithfully and rose to be his trusted minister. After the death of the Raja in 1342, he was able to take over as the first Muslim Sultan of Kashmir – renaming himself Shamsuddin and establishing the renowned Shahmiri Dynasty, which was to rule until 1561. Later in 1386, the third Sultan of Kashmir Shahabuddin further strengthened his Swat Dependency when he expelled the Delhi Sultan's governor from Gandhara (Peshawar Valley), and added vast swaths of Potohar to the south west of his own kingdom. Although no specific records exist, the ancient historic Walled City of Purushawar (Peshawar) itself was believed to have always been under the nominal control of the Jehangiri Sultans of Swat and their overlords in the Delhi Sultanate.

In 1398 with the attack of Amir Taimur, thenow ambiguous trans-Suleiman Mountain parts of the Gibar Sultanate were permanently separated from it. These included Badakhshan, Kunar, Ningarhar, Kurram, Laghman, Kabul, Kapisa and Parwan. Some were still under the rule of autonomous Gibari princes descended from Sultan Bahram, but all were included in the Timurid Empire. Across the Indus in Pakhli *wilayat* to the east, Taimur garrisoned a division of his army made up of one thousand Karluk Turks,⁶ which unit was the standard formation in the Mongol armies. This added to the Khilji and other Turks already settled there by Sultan Bahram, and the region acquired the name of *Hazara*⁷ ("Hazar" meaning one thousand) and declared its independence, which it was to maintain for another 323 years – although after Taimur's death it was temporarily reconquered by Kashmir and made a tributary for about a century. Thus Pakhli Wilayat got separated from the Pakhli Sarkar and became a separate little kingdom. The two should not be confused, although the former continued to possess a substantial population of Swati Tajiks under Turkish rule.

The original Gibar State had almost exactly the same boundaries as those of ancient Gandhara immediately preceding it. It is also a strange coincidence that later, the western border of Pakhli Sarkar very closely resembled the Durand Line which has now taken its place. The Sulaiman Mountain Range seems to be the separating factor in all cases.

Pakhli Sarkar in the end consisted of four *wilayats* or provinces – namely Bajaur, Swat, Buner and Hashtnagar. But these *wilayats* were

not limited to the regions now known by these names. For example, Hashtnagar (also called Bagram) encompassed the flatlands of both Charsadda and Mardan above the River Kabul, instead of referring to just Charsadda District, as today; while Buner extended over vast portions of the present Malakand, southeastern Swat and Swabi, stretching from Attock in the south to Swat Kohistan in the north. In turn, Bajaur encompassed all the area from the Chitral River in the north, to the northern border of Charsadda District in the south. Swatwilayat itself extended from Chitral in the north to Charsadda and Mardan in the south, Bajaur in the east and River Indus in the west. In later times, Chitral was influenced by Badakhshan, and Gilgit was taken over by Kashmir at the same time that the Kashmiri Sultanate and Pakhli Sarkar were established.

TAJIK POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS IN GANDHARA

Tajik is the name given to ethnic Persians settled in the eastern parts of the Persian Empire, namely Afghanistan and Tajikistan.⁸ Till recently, mainstream history regarded the extent of the spread of Tajiks as being bounded by the Hindu Kush Range and the Pamirs. It is evident now, that they were found as far east as the River Indus itself, and as far south as Kurram if not further: with the exception of Kashmir and Hazara, the dominant rural population of the whole area upto the River Indus and above the River Kabul (Gandhara) had then consisted of *Shalmani*⁹ and *Tirahi* Tajiks and their aristocratic Persian *Dehqan*¹⁰ ruling class, all of whom were believed to have been among the area's ancient inhabitants since the days of the great Persian empires before Islam – of which this region had remained a longstanding “*satrapy*” or province. Among the Dehqans of this region, three tribal names are documented, which still exist: Gibari, Mitravi and Mumiali. There were also Dards (Kohistanis). Prakrit (early Hindko) speakers, mostly indigenous Hindus, lived alongside in the urban settlements.¹¹ It is very clear that Tajiks (ethnic Persians or Farsiwans of the east) then existed far beyond what are now regarded as their traditional ethnographic borders in Wakhan and the Hindu Kush. This is further borne out by the fact that Gandhara had remained a satrapy or province of Imperial Persia for 1000 continuous years before Islam.¹²

There was also then an old Pashtun tribe widely distributed in the region, the only Pashtun tribe here – by the name of Dilazak – said to have been brought here very late in the day, by the first Muslim conqueror of north India Mahmud Ghaznavi, somewhere in the 11th

Century. Most of the Dilazak Afghans were much later expelled across the River Indus into Hazara and Chachh areas by the invading Yusufzais and their allies, where they are now. The greater part of those who remained behind most likely changed their identity by adopting the name of their kindred Khattak tribe into which they were absorbed, which lay further to the south, on the perimeter of Peshawar Valley.¹³

The territory of the Gibar/Swat Sultanates was loosely governed, being home at one or another time to several other ethnic and religious communities and autonomous tribes in addition – such as Nuristanis, Siahposh *Kafirs*, Talashi *Kafir* Dehqans (Zoroastrians) and the Tatar Hindu Doma *Kafirs*.

ISLAM

Islam first arrived in the Gandhara region with Mahmud Ghaznavi, but it actually began taking hold here during the Tajik Swati-Gibari rule. However sizeable Hindu and other non-Muslim populations still remained. Mir Syed Ali Hamadani, the Persian saint who introduced Islam into Kashmir, was a trusted confidante of the Jehangiri Sultans of Swat. He died in the fort of the Gibari governor of Bajaur area, Malik Khizar Ali Gibari. Though the Gibaris themselves were now staunch Sunni Muslims by all accounts, local Muslim society was still very much in the process of formation during their time.

SWAT FALLS: ADVENT OF THE YUSUFZAIS AND MUGHALS

The Tajik Swati Kingdom of Pakhli Sarkar finally came to an end as a result of two factors. Mass migrations from southern Afghanistan of certain Pashtun tribes of the Eastern Sarabani¹⁴ section – headed by the Yusufzais – which had been provoked by Timurid political moves, swept the area. At the same time, another Timurid prince from Ferghana called Zaheeruddin Babar also invaded India. In 1519 he attacked and conquered the Kingdom of Swat /Pakhli-Sarkar as the first part of his strategy to overthrow the Delhi Sultanate and establish the Mughal Empire seven years later. Then in 1586 Kashmir also passed into the hands of his grandson Akbar. The Sarabani Pashtun tribes, whose arrival *en masse* had flooded the area west of the Indus, at around the same time that Babur came – gradually settled in the lands of the Kingdom of Swat, and then established their domination over the area. In the latter, they were helped by Babur, who required their assistance in conquering India. Though the Kingdom of Swat was overthrown in 1519, the completion of the dastardly usurpation of its lands by the Yusufzais and their allies is believed to have taken place

over a 70 year period, beginning with the massacre in 1481 by Mirza Ulugh Beg – of their tribal chiefs in Kabul – which initiated their mass exodus eastwards. Ulugh Beg was a Timurid prince, Babur's maternal uncle and governor of Kabul. The stricken Yusufzais were at first sympathetically accommodated by the Swatis and Dilazaks on their lands, where they initially lived as menials for about thirty five years. After that they felt confident enough to stage an uprising against the authorities. In this they were further assisted by the invading Mughals under Babur of whom they became allies. The Yusufzais were soon followed here from Kabul and Kandahar by their other Sarabani cousins, the *Ghoriah Khel* who had heard of their good luck. The major part of the now extinct aboriginal Shalmani and Tirahi Tajik populations were subjugated into bondage and serfdom – and their Dehqans were forcefully absorbed by the newcomer tribes under new Pashtun or *astanadar* identities such as Akhunds or Mians (a notable clan is the Papin Khel Mians). Their refined Tajik culture was assimilated and “hijacked” by the invading Pashtuns. The once proud Persian term of *Dehqan* which had meant aristocratic landed proprietor, became synonymous with tenant cultivator or serf in local parlance. Those resident in the Peshawar Valley and Bajaur were almost totally absorbed into Pashtun tribes, while a great number of Tajiks fled across the Indus to Hazara, where they settled and now speak Hindko and are known as “Swatis”. Many Swatis also still to be found in the upper reaches of Swat and Dir, where they still maintain their identity and speak Pashto. The names of Shalman and Tirah also still exist as localities in Khyber Agency now populated by Afridis – who were not living there in those days.

Babur first attacked the huge *Gibar Qila* fortress in Bajaur, killing Malik Haider Ali Gibari, the Swati governor of the Bajaur *wilayat* of Pakhli Sarkar. He also massacred 3000 inhabitants of the town located inside the fortress walls. The fort was impregnable, but the Mughals were at an enormous tactical advantage, because on this occasion they employed firearms, this being the first ever instance of guns being used in the Subcontinent. Babur's victory was assured because the Shalmani troops ran away, being frightened by the bangs and smoke created by the unknown new weapons. Babur chronicles this conquest in all its vivid and bloody details in his memoirs, the *Baburnama*. The conquest of Swat Valley itself took place later that year by the Yusufzais, and was a bit different. Employing a mixture of intrigue, deception and

aggression, they expelled the Tajik governor of the Hashtnagar (Charsadda-Mardan flatlands) region, Mir Hinda Dehqan. His rapid retreat towards his village of Thana in Malakand and the dismal performance of the assembled Swati armies and their last stand there, ensured that the pursuing Yusufzais gained access to the biggest prize of all, the lush valley of Swat. The Yusufzais having lived in the area for 35-40 years as refugees and labourers, were familiar with the riches and beauty of Swat, which they coveted – a place they had frequently visited in order to sell the straw mats they manufactured. It was not long before they defeated the last ruler of Swat, Sultan Owais – who abandoned his capital and fled to Nihag Darra in Dir where he took refuge among the *Kafir* population. The Swatis were taken completely unprepared by this turn of events.

Thus the old Turco-Tajik [Ghorid-Khilji/Ghilji-Afghan] Order of Muslim rule in India passed on to the Timurid (Mughal) order with the fall of the joint Kingdoms of Swat and Kashmir – and their patron the Delhi Sultanate. The Timurid Order itself was replaced by the Afshar-Abdalid Order to the west of the Indus (in Afghanistan) in 1747 – while in India it remained in an increasingly diminishing and emasculated form for a further 110 years till it gave way to the British Raj.

POSTSCRIPT

The last Gibari-Swati ruler Sultan Owais, after evacuating his capital Manglaur, fled with his family and retinue northeast to a secure and remote location called Nihag Darra in Dir. There he is recorded as having built an impregnable fortress, after carving out a small fief for himself among the *Kafir* population – where he settled down to rule them contentedly till he died of old age. He had a son called Kazan Shah, who continued to harass the Yusufzais with raids and forays using armies comprising Chitralis and *Kafirs* – till the men of the Yusufzai chief Gajju Khan sought him out and succeeded in killing him, much to their relief. Sultan Owais was succeeded by his son Sultan Mah and grandson Sultan Zain. After that, the family and line simply disappear from history – although a British Imperial Gazetteer of Hazara District for the year 1883 casually lists a certain individual named Samandar Khan as his descendant, who lived in Hazara and received a stipend from the government. That is all. No remains of the castle of Sultan Owais and his grave or those of his successors are known. The Swati tribes of Mansehra retook some of their areas from the Turks in their former Pakhli *wilayat* under the leadership of a

mystic warrior Syed Jalal Baba in 1647 – but apart from that, their time in history was over.

CONTINUING EFFECTS ON PASHTUN CULTURE IN PESHAWAR VALLEY AND FURTHER NORTH

These are multifold and subtle, and range from elements such as handicrafts, architecture, lifestyle, and cultural and behavioural traits to profound political effects. For example, the average Pashtun elsewhere is traditionally gruff and individualist, with contempt for organized living habits and authority in general. But Peshawar Valley is unique in having an organized feudal agricultural system, now taken over under the aegis of its Sarabani Pashtun Khans. Moreover Malakand, Swat, Dir and Bajaur – along with Kunar in Afghanistan – are classed as “tribal areas” in the same manner as the Afridis, Wazirs, Bangash, etc. But unlike them, they have a solid tradition of being ruled by princes and lords. That is unheard of elsewhere. (Similarly the Khattak Pashtuns, who are suspected of being former Dilazaks – are renowned for their obedience and cooperation with state authorities). Not to mention the adjacent Dardic ex-state of Chitral. All this reflects the underlying influence of Gibari rule – itself no doubt grounded in the ancient civilized tradition of Gandhara.

GENETIC INDICATIONS OF THE GIBARI-SWATI CLAN

Haplogroup Q-L68 (also termed Q-Y1150)¹⁵ is the Y-chromosome that has been determined to be associated with the clan of the Sultans of Pech, and the progeny of Sultans Fahkal and Bahram. It is also evidently the genetic marker of a large number of “Pashtuns” (Pashtunised Tajiks) and Tajiks in the Laghman-Kunar-Ningarhar region and beyond. In fact it can be regarded as a major indicator of “crypto-Tajiks” of Pashtunised Tajiks after the Gibari overthrow by the Sarabani Pashtuns. Only a limited number of tests have been so far undertaken, and the investigations conducted thereon are preliminary – but so far they have yielded dramatic results, which speak for themselves. This Y-DNA testing has been conducted since at least 2004 under the aegis of perhaps one of the leading reputable international western companies in this field, based in America – FamilyTree DNA or FTDNA. One of these few tested is this author himself, while the other is of another prominent Swati from Mansehra. This Y-chromosome occurs sparsely in general, but in high concentrations in

the areas of concern to this study. In addition, a group of Russian and other scientists and citizen researchers working as associates with FTDNA have turned up further evidence to support this conclusion. They have carried out an additional five tests of “Pashtuns” representing this particular Y-chromosome – proving that these individuals are not Pashtuns per se but Pashtunised or “masked” Tajiks, as the Pashtun Y-DNA hallmarks have by now been well established and identified. These five tests relate to the Kunar-Ningarhar region of Afghanistan. Each of these individuals has characteristics, such as belonging to locations or tribal background that identify them as Gibaris. In many cases vague traditions and cues reported on part of those tested corroborate the other findings. Italian expert and researcher Alessandro Biondo who heads the Y-Haplogroup Q-M242 Project team at FTDNA¹⁶ refers to a case of ten random tests from Laghman in which the frequency of the Q-L68 sample reaches 40%. All of this fits in with the evidence drawn from the available researches as well as hypothetical assumptions in this regard. If the outcomes and results and data derived so far represent those derived from random and scattered preliminary sampling, then detailed and systematic surveys will definitely provide rewarding results in this regard. Q-L68 is additionally found in Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, areas which were formerly the domain of the great Persian Empires of yore. The citizens of these areas, though now “Arabs”, are not of Semitic genetic origin. These Arab/Assyrian-Nestorian (Christian) links prove very interesting to the Gibari case: among the Gibari residents of Bajaur is a tradition of their being “Arabs, descended from Cyrus the Great”. While this may sound jumbled at best to the ear, it actually provides rich clues to lost ancient linkages. Thus we can conclude by saying that Haplogroup Q-L68 is a highly unique Y-chromosome in this milieu, and that the sum of circumstantial evidence already associated with its presence here at the current level of investigation as detailed above – leads to conclusions that are hard to deny.

Among Pashto speakers (“Pashtuns” as explained above), Q-L68 has so far been found in areas that comprised important parts of the Gibar Sultanate; and conversely also among those tribes (Yusufzai, Salarzai) where the probability of Tajiks being absorbed and “Pashtunised” is known and is highest (Swat, Mardan, Bajaur, Kunar, Laghman, Ningarhar). In other instances, the absorption of the major part of the Mitravi Tajik clan into the Yusufzai aristocratic Nekpi Khel clan is a

fact well known traditionally to the elders of the Swat area, and has been proved by at least one case from among the genetic investigations described above. There will definitely be many more such instances, a lot now permanently lost to history.

Moreover such methodology as that of genetics is irrefutable in its conclusions and is a cutting-edge science, which can prove invaluable for salvaging matters which are now irretrievably lost in the mists of history and intrigue. For example, in the case of this author – he hit a blank stone wall as far as investigations into his (paternal) genealogical origins were concerned; a few scant and subdued clues gleaned from vague family traditions, plus the results of genetic testing combined to establish his Gibari background.

CONCLUSION

It is more or less established that the history of the Gibari Tajik Swatis has been the victim of a dark cover-up, motivated by sheer and desperate greed. Otherwise the history and culture of this area would appear in a new light, and the mysteries and enigmas surrounding it and the actual nature of the Pashtun ethnicity and culture and its accurate academic definition, a matter which is so lacking and deficient – would be dispelled. Systems of governance keep changing, and social orders come and go all the time. That is what history is all about. But not many situations have such a legacy of hidden skeletons in closets – and not for such extended periods of time. With certain strong parallels to the Norman invasion and takeover of Britain in 1066 – the historical travesty of the fall of the Kingdom of Swat has however been obscured by its perpetrators and their foreign helpers and overlords, so as to hide the villainous nature of their deeds and perpetuate misinformation. And we may surmise that those defeated also remained mum, out of not only fear, but shame too. Moreover Britain's Norman analogy cannot pertain to the present context in our case, as by 1566 – 500 years after its Norman takeover -- Britain was on the way to dominating the globe...while Pashtun society on the whole has now sunk totally, to the lowest ebb of dissolution, being riven with dysfunction, corruption and decay and its social and cultural fabric disintegrating. Unlike the Norman invasion of Britain, the Sarabani-Timurid overthrow of the Kingdom of Swat/Pakhli Sarkar was more sinister and insidious in character – and its consequences are fully manifesting only now, in the situation obtaining 500 years later.

BETTANI PASHTUN CONFEDERACY AND ITS TAJIK (GHORI) ANTECEDENTS

The Tajik antecedents of a great many now classed as Pashtuns is not something unusual. But in the general intellectually starved environment of our society, it is very little known. And that ignorance is further enhanced by the vulgar clamour of populist Pashtun “nationalism”. It is a known fact that formerly the largest and the greatest of the four Pashtun tribal confederations¹⁷ –the Bettani –*Matti* (Ghilji or Ghilzai) tribes, by the admission of their own traditions – have Tajik and Turkic antecedents.¹⁸ It was these Bettani Afghans who were most closely associated with the Delhi Sultanate, its creation and all stages of its existence, and as such were also closely entwined with the Gibari Swatis. Nowadays Gibari-Swati tribes are formally classified among Pashtuns, by being included in the Bettani tribal genealogical tree *orshajarrah*.¹⁹ This classification is most appropriate, given the Tajik antecedents of the Gibaris, being the same as those claimed by the Bettani *Matti* tribes. The Bettani tribal confederacy of Pashtuns hides many glorious historical secrets, being associated with and made up of the Ghoris and Khiljis -- and has produced the renowned Afghan historical colossi such as the Khilji and the Lodi Dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate, and Sher Shah Suri and Mirwais Hotaki not to mention others.

REGARDING UNDERSTANDING THE TERM “SURI”

Suri was the title of the princes from ruling family of Ghoris Tajiks – which was also known by the name of Shansabani and Ghoris. In the same manner that their Khilji Turk soldiers later became Pashtunised and later came to be called Ghilji or Ghilzai, *Suri* was also reborn among these Bettani/Matti tribes in the form of the Sur tribe,²⁰ which produced the renowned conqueror Sher Shah Suri. Most Afghan scholars and historians who belong to a lobby which tries to justify a particular outlook of “nationalist” attitudes, have tried to explain the origins of *Suri* as a Hindu term – but have done so in a manner most clumsily and unsatisfactorily, failing to explain it properly. It is widely known that the term *Suri* is actually derived from the eponym *Suren Pahlav*,²¹ a famous member of the House of Suren²² – which in turn was one of the Seven Parthian Ruling Clans of Sassanian Persia.²³ The House of Suren ruled the region of Seistan (or Sakastan²⁴, Land of the Sakas), which nowadays comprises of the eastern parts of Iran, plus the areas of Ghor, Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar and Zabul provinces of

Afghanistan. “*Pahlav*” itself is “Pahlawan”²⁵ or “strong man”, a term for the Seistani rulers as described in the epic Persian tradition of Rustam, who was Ruler of Zabulistan²⁶ (Seistan/Sakastan) as given in the great Persian classic work, the *Shahnama-e-Iran*.²⁷ The population of Seistan was a mixture of Parthian²⁸ and Saka²⁹, two powerful ancient Eastern Iranian clans. It is significant that not only did the Saka language eventually give rise to Pashto³⁰, but that basically all Pashtuns/Afghans, including the Yusufzais – by their own tradition – were originally from the Seistan/Sakastan region – where they took shape, and later migrated to other parts.³¹

Suri was the title of those Parthian (Persian) princes in the east, who later became known as the “*Tajiks*” of Ghor. It is unclear about whether they were directly descended from the House of Suren (Suri), or adopted the term as a title out of respect. But not only do the Ghori traditions state their descent from *Zohak*, another character in Iran’s sacred Zoroastrian folklore, but the father of Sultan Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghori was called Bahauddin Muhammad *Saam* – “Saam” being the name of the Pahlawan who was Rustam’s grandfather and King of Nimroz. Not only the Ghori Sultans, but many other earlier Tajik rulers of note also bore the title of *Suri*.³²

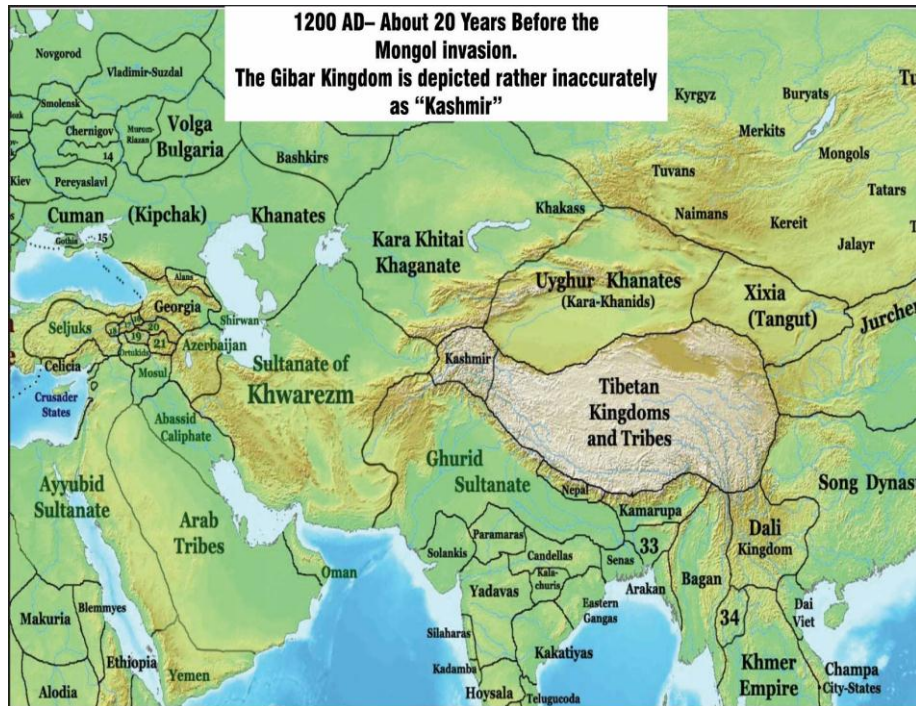
EPILOGUE

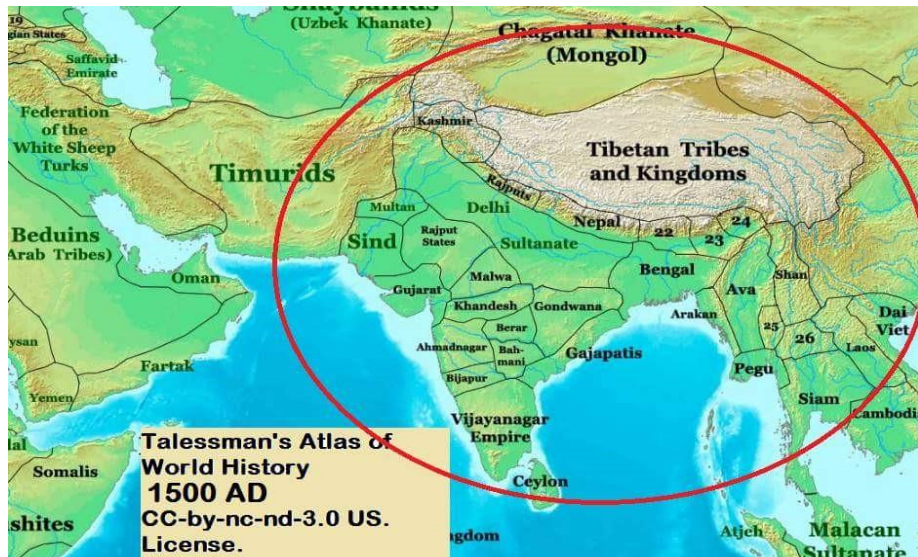
The record, therefore, needs setting straight with regard to all these lost but integral aspects of Pashtun history – aspects which although lost to time – still have very basic and far reaching effects on the culture and character of the Pashtuns in general, as well as those inhabiting the northern part of Pakistan, once part of the Kingdom of Swat – and without which it would be incomplete and incomprehensible. This in turn can provide the key to misunderstood and misinterpreted processes within Pashtun ethnogenesis, revealing the ancient linkages at work within the dynamics between two neighboring major eastern Iranian ethnicities such as Tajiks and Pashtuns, and how each affected the development of the other.

Another factor worthy of mention...and one which has greatly aided in uncovering this mystery is that within the last 15 years, incredible quantum leaps in the scope of the revolutionary young science of genetic genealogy have at last shed light against which no cover ups can stand a chance. The forcefully absorbed and “Pashtunised” original Tajik populations and lineages of the Peshawar and Swat Valley regions have been revealed in surroundings least expected or desired.

Startling facts have also been genetically revealed, behind the true ethnic origins of the presently dominant section of Sarabani Pashtun tribes which suppressed the aboriginal Tajik inhabitants 500 years ago, and who since Mughal times have come to dominate the overall Afghan ethnicity. But that is a subject not within the scope of this paper.

MAPS





The second map above depicts the area as it was in 1500 AD. It shows the Sultanate of Kashmir and its reduced Dependency of the Kingdom of Swat (Pakhli Sarkar) – less than 20 years before the collapse of the latter. It can be seen that the territory of the parent Kashmir Sultanate had in fact increased manifold by that time.

COMPREHENSIVE REFERENCES

The bibliography has been divided into the following sections and subsections – with remarks added – for the convenience of the reader:

I –Numbered textual references:

Included here are several internet URL references from *Wikipedia*. Although that is not regarded as the academic norm for several cogent reasons, to their merit, *Wikipedia* articles are easily accessible, diverse and contain their own reliable references.

1. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gabr-> ;
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabr><http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/magi>
 2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrian_Dari_language
 3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghurid_dynasty
 4. https://revolvvy.com/topic/Khalaj%20people&item_type=topic ;
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khalaj-i-tribe-turkistan>
 5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shah_Mir
 6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlugh_Turks
 7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazara-i-Karlugh>
 8. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajiks>
 9. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shilmani>; <http://www.khyber.org/pashtotribes/s/shilmani.shtml>
 10. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dehqan> ;
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dehqan>
 11. [History of Civilisations of Central Asia \(UNESCO 1996\); Vol.3, Chap. 16, P. 376](#)
 12. [Caroe: The Pathans, P. 91](#)
 13. Caroe: The Pathans, P. 190-1, 212
 14. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarbani>
 15. *CLARIFICATION OF Y-DNA HAPLOGROUP Q1b PHYLOGENETIC STRUCTURE BASED ON Y-CHROMOSOME FULL SEQUENCING*: The Russian Journal of Genetic Genealogy, Vol. 7, No.1 (2015); Gurianov, Adamov, Tagankin, Kull; Pp. 95-96
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16. <http://forums.familytreedna.com/forumdisplay.php?f=228>
17. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pashtun_tribes
18. Caroe: The Pathans, Pp. 15-19
19. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bettani>
20. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sur_\(Pashtun_tribe\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sur_(Pashtun_tribe))
21. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suren_Pahlav
22. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Suren
23. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Parthian_clans
24. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakastan> ;
25. <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/shahnameh/heros.htm>
26. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rostam>
27. Shahnameh – The Persian Book of Kings (Abol Qasem Ferdowsi); New Translation by Dick Davis (Penguin Classics – 2007)
28. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthian_Empire
29. <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/saka/index.htm>
30. Caroe: The Pathans, P. 65
31. Caroe: The Pathans, P. 169
32. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divashtich>

II – BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS MENTIONING GIBARI SWATIS:

(Despite the fact that they are of recent memory, the historical record and general awareness regarding the *Gibari-Swatis* is very scant nowadays. However numerous scattered references to them exist in well-known works of academic and historic repute. The source materials are both primary and secondary as well as mixed. Some main titles from among them have selected below...those underlined are key source books; a single asterisk denotes famous but rare books or manuscripts in other languages than English -- centuries old and/or out of publication, or hard to obtain).

1)TAJIK SWATI AURMUMLIKAT-E GIBAR TAREEKH KAY AINAY MEIN (In Urdu): By Prof. Muhammad Akhtar; published by Sarhad Urdu Academy, Urdu Nagar, Qalandarabad, Abbottabad (2002)

This is by far the main reference work, and the only book devoted solely to this subject. It contains a wealth of anecdotal evidence,

derived from local traditional sources, etc. Written in the official national language of Pakistan, it has so far been published only once, is below average quality in format -- with a run of only one thousand copies. Includes almost all of the rest of the mentioned source material as secondary references. The OCLC World Cat page for the book is: <http://www.worldcat.org/title/tajik-svati-va-mamlakat-i-gibar-tarikh-ke-ainah-men-tarikh-salatin/oclc/506677640>

2) *History of the Pathans*: By Brig. ® Haroon Rashid; Vol.2 (2005) - Pp. 29, 39, 43, 46, 68; Vol.4 (2011) - P.17; Vol. 6 contains an entire chapter devoted to the Gibaris – but has yet to be published

3) *Notes on Afghanistan and Baluchistan*: By Maj. Henry George Raverty (?); reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (2001); Pp. 51-3, 56, 117, 128, 151, 156, 236-7, 278-9, 282

4) *BABURNAMA – The memoirs of Babur*: English translation by Annette Beveridge (1922); reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (2008); Pp. 211, 366-7, 376, 754, 821, 834, 845

5) **TABAQAT-E NASIRI* (in Persian): By Minhaj-us-Siraj Jawzjani (13th Century); Urdu translation by Ghulam Rasul Mehr (?); Pp. 146, 154, 161, 167, 175

6) **SAIRUL MUTAKHIRIN* (in Persian): By Ghulam Hussain Khan Tabatabai (18th Century); P. 64

7) **TAZKIRATUL IBRAR WAL ASHRAR* (in Persian): By Hazrat Akhund Darweza (17th Century); Pp. 105, 108, 113, 213

A major local history of the Pashtun tribes of Peshawar Valley and adjacent areas – by a key contemporary historian.

8) **TAWAREEKH-E HAFIZ REHMAT KHANI* (in Pashto): By Khan Roshan Khan (translated by Pir Moazzam Shah into Urdu); published by Pashto Academy – University of Peshawar (2017 Edition); Pp. 31-2, 64, 83, 96, 103-4

The main local history of the Yousafzai tribe; by a 20th Century author.

9) **MIR SYED ALI HAMADANI* (in Persian): By Dr. Muhammad Riaz; published by Center for Promotion of Persian in Pakistan and Iran – Islamabad; Pp. 3, 7-8, 15, 38-9, 42, 46, 52-5, 71

II (a) –Various fleeting mentions are also made in the following publications and works of authoritative and international repute:

10) *The Pathans*: By Sir Olaf Caroe; Published by OUP (1958); Pp. 159, 175, 180

- 11) *Hayati-i-Afghani*: By Muhammad Hayat Khan (1864); Translated as *Afghanistan and its Inhabitants* by Henry Priestly (1874); reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (1999); Pp. 103-6
- 12) *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*: By Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone (London 1842); reprinted by Cosmo Publishers New Delhi (2015); Vol.1, Pp. 447-8; Vol.2, Pp. 14-15
- 13) *Imperial Gazetteer of India – Provincial Series – NWFP* (1911); reprinted by Sang-e-Meel publishers Lahore (1991); Pp. 124-5, 148
- 14) *Gazetteer of Peshawar District 1897-8*: Colonial Punjab Government; reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (1989); P. 53
- 15) *Gazetteer of Hazara District 1883-4*: Colonial Punjab Government; reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (2013); Pp. 72-4
- 16) *Panjab Castes*: By Sir Denzil Ibbetson (1883); reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (2011); Pp. 95-6
- 17) *A Dictionary of the Pathan Tribes on the North-West Frontier of India*: Published by the Government of India – Calcutta (1910); reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (2004); P. 51
- 18) *The Races of Afghanistan*: By Major H.W. Bellew; reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (?); Pp. 109-112
- 19) *Peshawar – Historic City of the Frontier*: By Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani (1994); reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publishers Lahore (2002); P. 95
- 20) *TAREEKH-E MUKHTASIR AFGHANISTAN* (in Persian): By Allama Abdul Haye Habibi; Kabul(?); Pp. 73, 192-3

III -- Below is listed a further selection of locally known, recent and historical reference materials relevant to this topic -- which are not in English, and are exceedingly rare as far as availability and access to the general public is concerned; page numbers are mentioned where relevant:

- *SHABAB-E KASHMIR* (in Urdu): By Muhammad-ud-Din Fauq (?)
 - *TAREEKH-E BUDDHSHAHI* (in Urdu): By Muhammad-ud-Din Fauq (?)
 - *TAREEKH-E MUKHTASIR-E GHOR* (In Persian): By Ghausuddin Mustamand Ghorî (?)
 - *TAREEKH-E TABARISTAN* (In Persian): By Bahauddin Muhammad Bin Hasan Bin Asfandiyar (?); P. 64
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- *YOUSAFZAI PATHAN* (In Urdu): By Allah Bakhsh Yousafi (?); Pp. 7, 306
- *ROOHANI RABITA WA ROOHANI TAROON* (in Pashto): By Qazi Abdul Haleem Asar Afghani (1962)
- *TAREEKH-E HAZARA* (In Urdu): By Raja Muhammad Irshad Khan (?)

IV –Maps:

- 1) The map of the Gibar State is the property of the author
- 2) the other two Eurasian maps used are the property of Talesman's Atlas of World History:
<http://www.worldhistorymaps.info>