

# A Century of Pashtun Leaders from Kunar to Swat

Abdul Hai Habibi

During the 13th century when Genghiz Khan and his armies were plundering the cities of Khorasan, Pashtun tribes took refuge from the Mongol raids in the mountains surrounding their land and remained there until Tamerlane's armies departed.

From Kunar as far as Swat, in the dales and valleys of Pakhtunkhwa (land of the Pashtuns), there lived a number of chieftains who have not been mentioned in the annals of history of this land before.

Starting from the Kunar valley and the mountain ranges as far as Swat and Bajawar including Pakhali, Samsura Shutur, Bala Kot and Gharie were ruled by by once unknown chieftains. According to the historian, al-Biruni, the vast valleys of Gharie, which start from Kaghan valley, were also ruled by Pashtun chiefs. From this we conclude that the eastern borders of their land extended as far as the source of Jehlum river.

In the 14th century a dynasty ruled over this land whose title of honor was "Sultan". The nucleus of its power was the Panj valley in Kunar. Local legends indicate that members of this dynasty were ancestors of Alexander the Great (Zul Karnein).

Two brothers were famous rulers of this dynasty—Sultan Pakhel and Sultan Bahram. They were the sons of Sultan Kohjaman Hindu. Sultan Pakhel is believed to have ruled over an area extending from Laghman to Kunar, Bajawar, Swat and as far as Kashmir. The region was named after him and in the Kunar valley his writings still exist. After his death it is believed that a major battle was fought between his sons. Sultan Bahram resumed power over Laghman and Nangarhar and expelled his enemies to Peshawar. He made Papin in Spinghar his ruling center. He conquered lands as far as Kashmir once again and spread his sultanate all the way to Kabul to the west.

After Bahram's death, Sultan Tomna took over the sultanate, ruling from Shinwar to Kashmir. He is said to have also ruled over the region known as Hazara situated along the bank of the Indus river. At this time the Pashtuns were migrating from the south by way of Kandahar and Kabul. The Kand and Zamand tribes moved to this land through Kandahar, Arghasan, Kabul and Peshawar under the leadership of Madad, Mado and Sheikh Osman. In the 15th century, when Mirza Alug Beg the son of Abu Sayed Korgan, was the sultan of Kabul he got together the leaders of Pashtun tribes and massacred them, but the nephew of Sultan Shah Yusufzai, Malik Ahmad, escaped death by taking asylum in Laghman. There he settled with the Tarakalai tribes. At this time war broke between the Yusufzai and Mohmandzai tribes. The Mohmandzai took control of Nangarhar and the Yusufzai migrated to Bajawar, Bunir and Swat. The tribe then conquered the Lazak people, driving them out of their land and killing Jelaw, chief of the Shelman tribe, hence occupying the area from Nawakei to Arhand in Bajawar and bringing it under the control of the Yusufzai.

The Yusufzai took control of many hamlets and engaged in farming the land. During this

time they had two leaders, Malik Ahmad was their political and military commander who ruled all the aforementioned areas. Their spiritual and social leader was Sheikh Adam, famous as Sheikh Mawlawi, who was Sarabani by blood. The distribution of land which fell into the hands of this immigrant tribe created difficulties, but since they were living in tranquility and equality the tribe did not haggle over the distribution of land. The reason for the peaceful existence of these belligerent Pashtuns was the wise leadership of their spiritual leader who divided the land, water for irrigation and the pastures justly according to the number of family members. The first division was valid for 10 years and after that the land was redistributed according to the change in demographics of each family.

Sheikh Mawlawi wrote a book on the social system and distribution of land which was called "Da Sheikh Mawlawi Daftar" (Records of Sheikh Mawlawi). This social system was used until the time the British introduced a system called "Band and Bast" (Ligature and Bonds) introducing possession of land and imposed land taxes under their system.

After the death of Sheikh Mawlawi, Kajo Khan Ranizai became leader of the Yusufzai tribe in the 16th century. Completing the records of Sheikh Mawlawi he wrote a book in which the system of Mawlawi was followed in earnest. Khajo Khan had an army of 10,000 horsemen. He defeated the Ghorikhel tribe in the battlefield of Sheikh Pato. Later on in Langarkot he defeated the local satrap extending his empire from Peshawar through Swat and Mardan.

When emperor Babur began his conquest of the Indian sub-continent, the chieftains of this area were Mansur, the son of Malik Suleiman, and Sultan Awais Suwati, who are mentioned in Tazk-e Babur. Also mentioned in this book are two other leaders, Alauddin Suwati and Taous Khan, who ruled under Babur's authority. These tribes lived in the valleys of Bajawar and Bara Kunar. Babur also married the daughter of Shah Mansur, Bebe Mubarak, in order to have family ties with the Pashtuns and in this way unite his domains.

From 1421 to 1521 CE the following rulers and chieftains were prominent rulers in this area:

Sultan Pakhel, son of Kohjaman, 1421

Sultan Bahram son of Kohjaman, 1431

Sultan Tomna, 1436

Malik Ahmad Yusufzai, 1441

Sheikh Adam, son of Yusufzai, famous as Sheikh Mawlawi, 1441

Kaho Khan Ranizai, 1501

Shah Mansur, son of Malik Suleiman, 1531

Sultan Wais Suwati, 1531

Sultan Alauddin Suwati, 1531

Taous Khan, 1531