

Scientific and Theoretical Analyses of Pashtun Origins

Buranov Sukhrob Muhammadi Ugli^a and Abdurahmanov Obidjan Nabijan Ugli^b
Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Keywords: Abgan, Abdali, Amazon Basin, Durrani, Gilzois, Paktians, Pashtunwali, Pukhtuns, Patan, Tallit.

Abstract: The article is devoted to studying the views of foreign and local scholars about the origin of the Pashtuns, who have a great position in the administration of the state and society of Afghanistan. We can see approaches that Pashtuns are descended from Jewish, Aryan, and Turkic tribes. The purpose of the article is to determine that the theories proposed by scientists contradict each other and do not have sufficient grounds.

1 INTRODUCTION

Researching issues related to Pashtun history, traditions, lifestyle, location, and their role in Afghan society plays an invaluable role in promoting peace and stability in the country. Pashtuns have significantly influenced the formation and development of Afghan statehood, as well as various inter-ethnic relations. A thorough analysis of scientific and theoretical approaches concerning the impact of the inter-Afghan peace process on this ethnic group remains a pressing contemporary issue. It is crucial to highlight that delving into the history of Pashtuns, including their genealogy, tribal structures, and unwritten laws, is a complex undertaking. Willem Vogelsang, the former deputy director of the Institute of International Asian Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands, aptly noted, "Studying the history of the origin of Afghans and Pashtuns is akin to exploring the source of the Amazon River."

2 DISCUSSIONS

The history of the Pashtuns and the evolution of the term "Pashtun" are intricately intertwined with the history of Afghanistan. According to the perspective presented in the book "History of Afghanistan" by A.M. Mannonov, N.A. Abdullayev, and R.R. Rashidov, experts in Afghanistan studies, the origins

of the Pashtuns can be traced back to the earliest inhabitants of the Afghan territory, dating back to the Paleolithic period. During this time, evidence such as specialized hunting weapons discovered along the Amudarya River in northern Afghanistan suggests the presence of Paleolithic hunters.

It is important to note that while there is evidence of ancient inhabitants in the region during the Paleolithic period, there is no conclusive information linking these people directly to the ancestors of the Pashtuns. The study of Pashtun genealogy involves various approaches, each exploring different aspects such as language, customs, values, and physical appearance. Afghan historical scholars, researchers, ethnographers, anthropologists, and linguists offer diverse perspectives on the origin of the Pashtuns.

These approaches to analysing Pashtun genealogy include:

- Historical approach.
- Ethnocultural approach.
- Linguistic approach.
- Mythological approach.

In summary, the history of the Pashtuns is a complex narrative that involves a multidimensional analysis, considering historical, ethnocultural, linguistic, and mythological perspectives.

Historical Approach: This approach aims to determine the origin and ethnogenesis of the Pashtuns by comparing them with manuscripts, handicrafts, and the histories of other nations. Unfortunately, detailed information about Pashtun genealogy is scarce and often unreliable. The views of historians,

^a <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2725-3767>

^b <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3794-4502>

orientalists, ethnographers, and linguists researching the origin of Pashtuns are divided. Some claim Pashtuns have Jewish ancestry, while others argue for connections to historical states and peoples in Afghanistan, such as Aryans, Achaemenids, Hephthals, Sakas, Bactrians, and Arabs.

Baht Munir, an assistant professor at the University of Lahore, supports the Semitic and Aryan theories of Pashtun ancestry. However, there is a lack of concrete evidence, and the preservation of Pashtun history and culture is deemed inadequate. Afghanistan's strategic location in the Eurasian space has led to conflicts among global powers, further contributing to the disappearance of historical sources on Pashtuns.

Various scholars, including Herodotus, Bernard Dupaigne, Y.V. Gankovsky, and others, propose connections between Pashtuns and Persians, Sakas, Hephthals, and Aryans. The Hephthalite rule in Kandahar is linked to the belief that Pashtuns are descended from the Hephthals. The term "Afghan" is mentioned in Sassanid inscriptions, indicating influences from Sassanids, Arabs, and Somanites on Pashtun ethnogenesis.

Notably, some English researchers in the 19th century suggested that Pashtuns were descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, a claim not substantiated by genetic research. Pashtun genetic studies suggest they are a distinct race, separate from the Bani Israel.

The debate extends to Pashtun views, with some supporting the theory of Jewish ancestry. Nematullah al-Haravi, Olaf Caroe, Said Bahadirshah Zafar Kakakhel, and others assert Pashtun descent from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Olaf Caroe suggests connections between the Prophet's Ansar and Pashtuns in Gur, while Qazi Atullah Khan disagrees, stating that the Bani Israel tribe did not accept the new religion until later.

In conclusion, the origin of Pashtuns remains uncertain, with conflicting theories and limited reliable sources. The debate encompasses historical, genetic, and cultural perspectives, making it a complex and intriguing subject of study.

Ethnocultural Approach: According to this perspective, the origins of the Pashtuns are interpreted based on their culture, customs, traditions, and overall way of life, which have been preserved over time in comparison to other peoples. Scientific works by researchers such as Sara Aharon, Israeli anthropologist, Professor Avigdor Shachan, Yevgeny Aizenberg, Miryam Argaman, Dr. Anatoly Klyosov, Dr. Hamid Saidov, Yasmin Eliaz, Dr. Yusufzai, Ari Greenspan, and Z. Zivotofsky provide information

about the Pashtun origins, linking them to Jewish heritage through their customs and traditions.

Anatoly Klyosov and Hamid Saidov's work, titled "Yevri i Pashtuni Afganistana" (Jews and Pashtuns of Afghanistan), emphasizes the importance of studying Pashtuns and their society to analyze their ethnogenesis, genealogical structure, and kinship ties comprehensively. The research suggests that historical and comparative analysis of Pashtun genealogy is crucial in understanding them as a socio-cultural group.

Sarah Aharon's book, "From Kabul to Queens: The Jews of Afghanistan and Their Move to the United States," mentions that Afghan Jews have considered themselves descendants of the 10 lost tribes of Jews who fell into the hands of Assyria for many centuries. While there's a popular myth linking Pashtuns to Jewish tribes, the authenticity of this claim remains unconfirmed due to the lack of reliable sources.

In an analytical article translated by Miryam Argaman, the question is raised: "Are the Pashtuns Israel's Lost Tribe?" It notes that some Pashtun traditions resemble Jewish traditions, such as circumcision on the eighth day after birth, following kashrut and dietary regulations, and distinguishing between clean and unclean birds according to the Torah. However, the article acknowledges that these similarities are not entirely reliable, as customs like circumcision and the use of white cloth (Kafan) after death are common in the broader Islamic world.

Evgeny Aizenberg points out the visual resemblance between Pashtuns and Jews, suggesting a connection between the two based on observable similarities in the laws of the Torah and the unwritten laws of Pashtun honor codes. Yasmin Eliaz also notes parallels between Pashtun customs, such as lighting candles on special occasions and avoiding the consumption of meat and dairy together, and Jewish traditions. Dr. Yusufzai mentions similarities between the Pashtun Attan dance and Jewish Hora and Hasidic dances, particularly in the movement of the feet.

In conclusion, researchers emphasize that there are undeniable cultural similarities between Pashtuns and Jews, despite the lack of concrete evidence supporting a direct ancestral link.

Linguistic Approach: According to this perspective, the most reliable information regarding the origin of the Pashtuns can be elucidated by examining the sources of the Pashto language. Indeed, special attention to the language factor is essential in understanding Pashtun genealogy. Furthermore, the sole surviving source of analysis from the time of the

Pashtuns to the present is the Pashto language. A thorough investigation into the origin of the Pashto language provides a direct pathway to identifying Pashto ethnogenesis.

In Zmaray Mukhaqiq's book titled "Historical Roots of the Pashtun Family" (د پښتنو د شجرې نالېکچي) (پښتني), scholars, historians, and orientalists posit that the Pashtuns are descendants of Bani Israel, considering them one of the ten lost tribes of the Jews. On the other hand, some researchers oppose this view, asserting that Pashtuns are descendants of Aryans, whose language is Indo-European, or Aryan. According to linguistic rules, Pashto is unrelated to Hebrew, the language of the Jews. This dichotomy suggests an approach that links Pashtuns to Jews based on appearance, legends, narratives, shared values, and traditions, while associating the Pashto language with the Aryans.

For instance, Ahmadullah Aziz, a researcher at Saeed Jamaluddin Afghan University, contends that Pashto and the Pashtun people have a long history, tracing their descent to the Aryan ethnic group with a historical existence dating back to 5000 BC. Ancient monuments and artifacts of the Pashtuns are predominantly found in Bakhtar and Bukhdi. Pashto, being an ancient language with a rich folklore and oral literature, suggests indications of cohabitation with the Aryans during that period. However, claims of linguistic similarities between Pashto and Hebrew remain unconfirmed and may stem from groups asserting Jewish descent for Pashtuns.

According to G. Morgenstern, "Pakhtun" is a secondary form of the Eastern Pashto word preserved in the Western dialect as "Pashtun." The character "sht" in Pashto corresponds to the compound "rs" used in old Iranian, such as "porsidan" in Middle Persian and "pushtel" in Pashto, both meaning "to ask." The Indo-Aryan name "Pathans" is derived from the Pashtun adaptation "pashtan." The term "Pashtu" (Pashto) today denotes the common socio-cultural identity of the Pashtuns. Taking the historical perspective of Pashtun origin from a linguistic standpoint implies a connection to Aryan, Iranian tribes, as some information is found in Zoroastrian holy books like Avesta, Behustun rock inscriptions, and Rigveda.

The treatise "Historical Evolution of Pashto Language" by Kabul University professors Bayazid Achak and Muhammad Anwar Khairy underscores the significance of Pashto as part of the Orian language family, acting as a link between Indian and Iranian groups of Orian languages. According to some scholars, Pashto is a language belonging to the same family as "Avesta." A thorough exploration of

the history of the Pashto language and the discovery of valid evidence are crucial for resolving the controversial history of the Pashtuns.

Mythological Approach: According to this perspective, the origins of the Pashtuns have historically been diverse. Due to a lack of reliable information, oral narratives have emerged among the people. The tribal structure of the Pashtuns, as outlined by Bernt Glatzer in his book "The Pashtun Tribal System," was not solely based on the clan principle. Representatives of other ethnic groups seeking refuge in accordance with the "Pashtunvoli" code were accepted. Over time, through marriage and having children, these individuals assimilated completely into Pashtun society.

Glatzer details in his book that prominent Pashtun tribes like Afridi and Gilzoi established connections with other Pashtun tribes through intermarriage and family ties. Additionally, the "Legend of Gilzoi" is recounted in Nematullah's "History of Afghanistan." According to the legend, Shah Husayn, seeking refuge, marries Sheikh Batni's daughter, Matu, and their union leads to the founding of the Gilzoi tribe.

The process of Pashtun origin, according to this account, varied, and the formation of tribes did not strictly adhere to the principle of spreading from one clan. Some Western scholars propose that the Gilzoi tribe, in particular, was initially a Turkic tribe during the Middle Ages that later joined the Pashtun community. Nematullah mentions cases of groups whose lineage and origin are unknown but accepted the Pashtuns.

In Henry Walter Bellevue's "The Race of Afghanistan," various theories about Pashtun origins are presented, including Iranian mythology attributing the Abdali (Durrani) and Yusufzai tribes to the descendants of Afghanistan's sons named Sharkbun and Harshbun. Pashtun tradition suggests a common ancestry, but differing narratives and lack of specific sources result in variations, with names like Qays Abdurrashid or Daru Nika ascribed to the founders.

Myths and legends, while not fully revealing Pashtun origins, play a significant role in oral creativity among the Pashtun people. The scarcity of necessary sources contributes to the emergence of such myths.

3 CONCLUSION

The historical roots of the Pashtuns remain unclear due to a lack of detailed sources on their ethnogenesis. The conflicting opinions among

foreign and local historians and ethnographers can be attributed to the scarcity of reliable information about Pashtun origins. Consequently, various ancient groups with names resembling Pashtuns are considered potential ancestors. The historical perspective suggests that Pashtuns may have roots in lost Jewish tribes, Hephthalites (Aqhuns), Arabs, Iranians, Greek peoples, and Rajputs.

Alternatively, the linguistic approach traces the origin of Pashtuns back to Aryan tribes, with the Pashto language serving as a key factor in this analysis. Ethnocultural and mythological approaches have also been proposed, although they often lack empirical evidence. Nevertheless, the significance of similarities and stories preserved in folk traditions cannot be dismissed.

REFERENCES

- Mannonov, M., Abdullayev, N., & Rashidov, R. (2016). *History of Afghanistan (Textbook)*. Tashkent.
- Munir, B. (2018). Historical genesis of Pakhtoons with special reference to Semitic and Aryan theories. *Research Journal of the Faculty of Oriental Learning*, 40(114), 03–16.
- Suhrob, B. (2020). The Durand line-key of the Afghan problem. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 9(2), 1315-1318.
- Buranov, S. (2021). Afghanistan national-regional dualism: New scientific approaches. *The American Journal of Political Science Law and Criminology*, 3(05), 112-116.
- Razzaq, A. (2016, April 24). Pashtuns: Aryans or the lost tribe of Israel. Retrieved from <https://pdf.defence.pk/threads/pashtuns-aryans-or-the-lost-tribe-of-israel.428027/>
- Gankovskiy, Y. V. (1982). *History of Afghanistan from ancient times to our days*. Moscow.
- Habibi, A. (1967). *Short history of Afghanistan* (Vol. 1). Kabul.
- Dupaigne, B. (2011). Afghan genetic mysteries. *Human Biology*, 83(6), 738.
- Bexruzxon. (n.d.). Research on the origin of the Pashtuns: Historical investigations, stories, myths, and scientific facts. Retrieved from <https://www.voadeewanews.com/a/pakistan-pashtun-origin/2684260.html>
- Sayid Bahodirshoh Zafar Kakakhel. (n.d.). *History of the Pashtuns in their land*. Peshawar.
- Core, O. (1958). *The Pathans 550 B.C. – A.D. 1957*. London: Macmillan and CO LTD.
- Qozi Ataulloxon. (n.d.). *History of the Pashtuns*. Hebar Bazaar Peshawar.
- Ali, M. (1969). *The Afghans*. Kabul: Kabul University.
- Ibn Khordadbeh. (1986). *The Book of Roads and Provinces* (N. Velikhanova, Trans.). Baku: "Elm".
- Klyosov, A. A., & Saidov, K. S. (2015). *Jews and Pashtuns of Afghanistan. About fallen knees of the Israelites: History, politics, and DNA genealogy*. Moscow: Conceptual.
- Aharon, S. Y. (2011). *From Kabul to Queens: The Jews of Afghanistan and their move to the United States*. New York.
- Argaman, M. (2014, February 13). Pashtuns: The lost knee of Israel? Retrieved from https://a.kras.cc/2014/02/blog-post_9426.html
- Marcus, J. R. (1990). *This I believe: Documents of American Jewish life*.
- Aizenberg, E. (2020, June 8). Israeli roots of Pashtun tribes. Retrieved from <https://club.berkovich-zametki.com/?p=56249>
- Eliaz, Y. (2014, April 10). Just how similar are Pashtun and Jewish people? *Bar Ilan University*. Retrieved from <https://www.sharnoffsglobalviews.com/pashtuns-jewish-261/>
- Yosafzai, Dr. K. (2018, October 17). Stark similarity of culture and traditions of Pashtuns and Israelites that have thousands of years old roots. Retrieved from <https://pashtonroots.wordpress.com/2018/10/17/pashtuns-are-tribes-of-israel/>
- Muxaqiq, Z. (2020). *Pashtuns: The historical stars of the family*. Qandahar.
- Aziz, A. (2019, June). A brief history of Pashto literature. *JETIR*, 6(6), 609.
- Klyosov, A. A., & Saidov, K. S. (2015). *Jews and Pashtuns of Afghanistan. About fallen knees of the Israelites: History, politics, and DNA genealogy*. Moscow: Conceptual.
- Achak, B., & Khayri, M. A. (1391). *The historical evolution of Pashto*. Kabul University.
- Pashtuns in Afghanistan: Cultural Intelligence for Military Operations*. (n.d.).
- Glatzer, B. (2002). *The Pashtun tribal system*. New Delhi: Concept Publishers.