The name Tirah is an elastic geographical expression applied to those highlands divided between the Afridi and Orakzai tribes, which lie between the Khyber and the Kurram. Tirah lies about midway between the two valleys but it dominates neither for the eastern extremity of the great Sufed Koh range and the upper reaches of the Bara valley shut it off from the Khyber whilst the Samana range hedges it in on the south. With other minor watersheds, it forms a serious obstacle to approach from the Kurram side. This inaccessibility has hitherto saved Tirah from the attentions of European explorers. It is a species of cul-de-sac, possessing little or no strategic value, and interesting as it may have been in the field of speculative geography, its gates have hitherto been too well guarded for the explorer to

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do more than just look over the hedge. From time immemorial, its climate and fertility have rendered it a theme of admiration to the border tribesman, whose poetic rhapsodies on its eternal verdure and its surpassing loveliness have at length been translated into the commonplace official prose of the War Office Gazetteer. The highlands of Tirah are now as well known as the Khyber or the Kurram valleys.

From the Sufed Koh range there strikes off in about longitude 70 degree 25 a subsidiary watershed, which, running to the south-east, encloses between itself and the southern slopes of the Sufed Koh the head of the Rajgul valley, which is watered by one of the chief affluents of the Bara River. After 15 miles of this south-easterly trend it suddenly bends southwards, and thenceforward divides the heads of the Bara, the Mastura and the Khanki rivers; all of which flow eastward, from those other subsidiary streams which flow south-westward to the Kurram. The highlands to the eastward of this meridional watershed are locally known as Tirah; those to the westward, belonging to the Chamkani, the Masozai, and other tribes, are not usually called Tirah, although in the matter of elevation and general topographical conformation they are very much the same as the eastern uplands.

Of the rivers running eastward, the Bara and the Mastura unite in the midst of a network of intricate ravines near Mamani and the Khanki finds its way to a junction with the Meranzai stream not far from Kohat. The Tirah highlands being formed by the heads of the Bara, Mastura, and Khanki (the former being Afridi Tirah and the two latter Orakzai), it follows that anyone of these rivers will give direct access to them without the intervention of any mountain pass whatsoever; and that to reach the Tirah in any other way it is necessary either to cross the meridional watershed by the Losaka or other passes which connect it with the Kurram valley, and thus enter at its head; or else to approach from either the northern or southern flank and to cross a succession of passes dividing the upper affluent of the Tirah drainage from each other. No one of these methods of approach is easy. On the contrary, they all bristle with physical difficulties, either from the altitude and roughness of the passes to be negotiated, or from the terrible defiles that beset the river routes, along which road making even of such quality as might admit the passage of mules is a practical impossibility without an inadmissible expenditure of time and labour.

In the late campaign, military considerations dictated the latter course, and Tirah was approached from the southern, or Meranzai, flank. Thus, the entree was affected sufficiently near its head to turn all dangerous river defiles and to drop straight into the most highly cultivated and thickly populated part of the district by the shortest possible line, which was, it may be added, the line that was most readily defensible against attack. This course involved the passage of three passes, - i.e. the Chagru (5525 feet), near Dargai, which connects the Meranzai and Khanki valleys across the now historical Samana range; the Sanpagna (6550 feet), which leads from the Khanki to the Mastura valley (all this being within Orakzai limits); and the Arhanga (7050 feet), which dropped on its northern side into the upland called Maidan, where we first made acquaintance with the Afridi on his own uplands. None of these passes would have presented any serious obstacle to a single traveller unburdened with heavy baggage; but to the formidable array of an army corps transport - numbering from 15,000 to 20,000 baggage animals, who followed the fighting force in single file, where every shifting load or fallen animal meant the stoppage of 15 miles of transport - it is no great matter of astonishment that they proved difficult to negotiate within reasonable limits of time.

Close under the Chagru pass, on the southern side of it, lays the post of Shinwari. A dreary little detached fort, strongly built of stone, was the original outward sign of our occupation. It overlooks the Meranzai valley from an eminence formed by a detached excrescence of one of the southern spurs of the
Figure 1: Sketch Map of Tirah and Surrounding Areas
Samana, and is only a few hundred feet above the general level of the watershed which, near this point (at Kai), parts the upper and lower Meranzai valleys.

Shinwari looks down from the head of the upper Meranzai as it shelves gently westward towards Thal at the foot of the Kurram valley over scenery which is by no means un-picturesque. The gigantic mass of Dingsar shapes itself in grand outlines about 10 miles to the west, as rugged and massive a frontier landmark as may be found north of the Kurram. The lower slopes of Samana and the jagged spurs of Dingsar alike are patched with a growth of evergreens, amongst which the dark hues of the wild olive are well contrasted with the lighter sheen of low-growing scrub, including masses of dwarf palm and occasional pomegranate. In the month of October, the deep-shadowed rocks and twisted olives, backed by a vivid blue sky, are suggestive rather of the genial temperature and climate of Italy, than of the brassy blaze of white hot summer so familiar to the frontier official. Meranzai in the late autumn is almost beautiful.

From Shinwari, a white streak curling away northward denotes the road to the Chagru pass, which has recently been cut out of the rocky sides of a convenient spur leading thereto. And here it may be remarked that all road-making has been comparatively easy. The hills rest on a core of nummulitic limestone as hard as flint, but the surface rocks are usually weather-worn, and readily amenable to pickaxe and spade.

On either side the Chagru (which lies as a depression or saddle in the Samana ridge) are the dominating
peaks of Dargai and Narik Suk to the west, and of Samana Suk to the east. It was the possession of Dargai peak which gave the Orakzai such command of the pass, and the story of its capture is one which will ever live in history with certain military morals attached thereto.

From the kotal, or pass, to the Khanki valley the descent is short, and only steep for the first mile or so, the total fall to the Khanki riverbed being less than 1000 feet. It could hardly be regarded as a severely difficult pass even before road-making was affected, the exceeding narrowness of the track as it left the pass being the only cause of the terrible congestion of transport traffic which supervised on the capture of the position.

The Khanki valley offers no special attractions in the matter of scenery. The flanking mountains are ragged and rough, and unbroken by any marked peaks or fantastic outlines, such as usually give a weird sort of charm even to the most desolate frontier landscape. The long slopes of the mountain spurs gradually shape themselves downwards into terraced flats bounded by steep-sided ravines along which meander a few insignificant streams, of which the Khanki and the Kandi Mishti are the principal; and the whole scene is "washed in" with a flat tint of ochre, unrelieved by the brilliancy of continual verdure such as we find further on.

On a terraced slope lying between the Khanki and the Kandi Mishti ravines, under the pass of Sanpagna, stands a mud-wall enclosed village with a grove of trees near by, and it is near this village (called Gandaki) that the road to Sanpagna runs after crossing the Kandi Mishti declivities; here it winds its devious course up a long spur to the pass. A mile or so above Gandaki, sloping steeply up from the riverbed, there occurs a local eminence, in the centre of which was found a convenient base for the first artillery position, when the pass was captured, and this position afforded a very fine view of the pass itself. In front laid the brown folds of the Sanpagna spurs, one long sinuous and stretching directly downwards to the river as if to offer a convenient line of approach to the depression on the range which marked the position of the pass. On this spur a conspicuous rounded knoll, looking innocently un-suggestive, concealed the "sangars" from which a crowd of Orakzai defenders fled into the shadowed rifts of the mountains as the artillery shells dropped neatly in to the midst of them; and on this knoll the artillery took up its second "position after struggling up the steep hillsides in rear of the storming party. Here, too, after the advancing wave of attack had passed on, I found amongst the half dried and crushed vegetation, sprinkled with fragments of shells and shreds of torn clothing, blossoms of Alpine gentian uplifting their deep blue bells to the deep blue sky.

To the right front, high up, under the lee of the ridge lay the hidden village of Nazena. This was occupied by the right attack. To the left front, balanced evenly on either side a precipitous torrent bed, and leaving much to the imagination as to possible means of intercommunication, were two villages (or the two halves of one village), called Kandi Mishti. This occupied the attention of the left attack, and was soon a grey heap of smoking ruins. The conformation of the pass and its surroundings was almost a repetition of Chagru and Dargai. A succession of steep hills in steps overhung its western flank, and afforded excellent opportunity for a plunging fire on to the road beneath. These had to be carried in succession by direct front attack.

The descent from the pass into the elevated valley of Mastura (some 1500 feet higher than the Khanki, and not so much as 700 feet below the pass) was short and comparatively easy. The difference in elevation was at once apparent in the general appearance of the landscape; and the first view of the valley, as one rounded the last corner of the spurs - enclosing the downward path, was most striking. It was not late enough in the season, even at this elevation (about 5900 feet above the sea), for apricot
Figure 3: General View of Terraced Country
trees and walnuts to have parted with the glory of scarlet and yellow with which autumn had touched them; and each homestead and village piled on to mountain crag, or perched on the plateau high above the river, was embedded in colour. There were scores of such villages. Wherever a few houses were massed together in sufficient number to justify a name of their own as a separate village community, there a square-cornered but tapering tower dominated the little crowd, standing up picturesque and graceful against the sky as a Persian minar or a Florentine campanile. The beauty of the Mastura valley is the cultivated beauty of the higher Swiss valleys rather than that of Kashmir or the Himalayan Alps. Six thousand feet of elevation lifts it above the dust-begrimed atmosphere of Khanki or Meranzai, and associates it with visions of western mountain beauty.

Regretfully leaving the pretty Mastura valley by a wide upland valley which trends a little west of north, but which was seamed and intersected (as usual) by deep ravines, we soon faced the Arhanga—and the Afridis. In spite of special reports from native sources to the contrary, I doubt if the Afridis had given much previous support to the Orakzai’s, either at Dargai or Sanpagna; but to explain my reasons would be an inadmissible digression. It is sufficient to say here that we saw very little indeed of them at Arhanga. If they were there in any numbers, they succeeded exceedingly well in hiding themselves. Once again Nature had planted a convenient hill facing the pass from the valley below at effective artillery range. No "sangars" were observable on the pass or on the dominating peaks overlooking it and no solid obstruction was made to our advance.
Descending about 1000 feet from the Arhanga pass to the Maidan plain (which is approximately on the same level as Mastura), the first impressions gathered of the Afridi paradise are disappointing. The picturesque beauty of Mastura is wanting, and there is no immediate prospect of smiling valleys teeming with cultivation and watered by rippling streams such as the Afridi is wont to describe when speaking of his ancestral domains. Barren, brown, and sterile hills shut in the narrow roadway, and the ultimate outlook, as one peers through the end of the defile towards Maidan, is one of further brown and barren hills, with a triangular section of dust-coloured plain at the foot of them. Nor even when one turns the corner after a mile or two of descent, and after crossing the deep-set river flanked with steep terraces, climbs up again on to the general level of the Maidan platform, does the full significance of the landscape, hachured with close-set parallel lines of field revetment, and dotted with round trees, strike one with any overwhelming force.

The Mastura valley, with its graceful watch-towers and villages, and its grey limestone cliffs broken with black blotches of olive, appeals far more to the sense of affluent beauty than does the historic "Maidan." Indeed, I have heard the latter frequently classed by the British subaltern (who is nothing if not comprehensive, and whose powers of observation are often superficial) as a "ghastly hole." Later on, the occurrence of a few ghastly incidents might have better justified the epithet; but at first it required a little careful observation to become aware of the extraordinary resources in fertility that Maidan possesses.

Maidan is an oval-shaped valley about 7 to 8 miles long and from 3 to 4 miles wide, including all
Figure 6: Terraces in Maidan
cultivable slopes to the foot of the surrounding hills. From these hills centuries of denudation have washed down detritus, which has collected in the centre of the valley to an unusual depth. Judging from what one could see by the sections formed in the central river-beds, there may be deposits of 100 feet of alluvium in some parts, gradually thinning out towards the edges of the basin. Ten feet of excavation, within the limits of the camps at Maidan and Bagh, revealed nothing but deep beds of rich loam, the crop-producing qualities of which must be enormous. The outlet from Maidan, through which the drainage of the valley passes to the Bara river, is exceedingly narrow, running near Datoi into a defile (locally called Khrappa, from the scrunching noise made by walking along its pebbly bottom), and turning abruptly, almost at right angles to the length of the valley, after it has cut through the northern hills near Bagh.

The heads of the main stream spread like a fan through Maidan upwards from the Bagh opening; and it is probably due to the abrupt twist that they all receive when uniting below Bagh, that the denudation of Maidan, by the conveyance of the soil in the form of silt to the Bara River, is prevented. Thus, the wealth of cultivable soil in the Tirah Maidan is rather enhanced than diminished by the yearly floods. All the drainage lines converging from the rim of the oval Maidan basin on to the Bagh opening cut deep into the slopes of the foothills, hollowing out for themselves a waterway which deepens in the centre of the valley to 200 feet or more. The sides of these waterways are precipitous and almost impassable near the hills, but as they enter the plain they are frequently let down by terraced steps for the purposes of cultivation, which renders them somewhat easier to negotiate. Between them are long tongues of sloping plateau drooping away from the hills towards the Bagh centre. These are never very wide, but they are terraced, levelled, and dressed into the highest possible form of irrigated cultivation.

Never, either in Afghanistan, Baluchistan, or Persia have I seen an equal area so highly developed as
the Tirah Maidan, excepting perhaps the Chardeh plain near Kabul. Every inch of cultivable ground is
utilized. On the plateau above the riverbeds, one looks across a seemingly level expanse of brown plain,
with trees and houses scattered in irregular patches, and every apparent facility for inter-communication.
Yet without carefully directing one’s steps in the one possible direction, it is difficult to move for more
than a few hundred yards without encountering a steep declivity, and becoming at once swallowed up
by the narrow depression of a ravine-bed. Once down in the depths of these ravines, any action that
might occur on the hills or plateau above was completely lost to sound and view and the Afridis were
very well aware of this fact. To our unwary soldiers, there was every appearance of excellent cover about
these lines of retreat from the hills; to the mobile Afridi, they were just the right sort of trap to hold
his enemy until he could reach him from the overhanging banks.

In the late autumn, when once the yellow leaves of mulberry and walnut have disappeared, the general
aspect of Tirah is that of brown sterility. The briar and rose hedgerows take on a copper hue, and in
November, there was all the usual appearance that the frontier assumes when about to wrap itself in its
white cloak of winter snow. The delicate tracery of trees was lost in a monotonous, dust-coloured haze, so
that one could hardly appreciate the numbers of them that surrounded each homestead. There are many
magnificent walnut-trees, and the mulberry and apricot flourish with a true Himalayan development;
there are wild olives and pomegranates on the hillsides, and the blue pine (Pinus Excelsa) covers their
cliff-bound summits; but on the whole Maidan is sparsely wooded, and it is a matter of surprise that so
much timber is found for use in the construction of their houses. These houses are generally square-built,
flat-topped, two-storied erections of wood and mud, which (but for the obvious necessity of importing
timber from the Sufed Koh) are readily run up, and as readily destroyed. It is not worth the while of
any Afridi to display a sense of superiority to the rest of his clan by any pretensions in the matter of a
summer residence. His pretensions could be so very readily removed.

The mullah, Syed Akbar of Waran, had perhaps the best house that Tirah boasted. It was partly built
of stone, and it was partially demolished on our first visit to the valley; but in the short interval that
elapsed between that first visit and the second (only a week or two), this house was already well on its
way to restoration. At the second time of visitation, not much was left of it. It is a curious fact that
in a country where tribal factions are rife, where raids and counter-raids are periodic incidents, and no
man can boast of a house that is more than a few years old, individuals do not collect in communities
and place themselves behind walled enclosures, dominated by watch-towers, as is customary in other
countries where similar idiosyncrasies prevail.

But Afridi habitations exist far more generally in the form of separate homesteads than as village groups.
With the first general glance over the Afridi Tirah, the eye is caught by its quaint resemblance to a
city suburb teeming with detached villas and enclosed gardens, very different indeed to the dose-packed
villages of the plains of India, or the walled enclosures of Afghanistan, and far more suggestive of the
peaceful conditions of rural life than of a perpetual necessity for self-defence. Yet we know that there is
no trans-frontier district between the Arabian Sea and the Black mountain where a householder has to
tread more warily, or keep more constant watch and ward on his neighbours’ proceedings, than in Tirah.
This profusion of small homesteads and farms leads at first to an impression that Tirah must be very
thickly populated; and it is also conducive to much confusion of names of localities. Every separate house
or block of houses bas the owner’s name attached, often in addition to some local designation. Even
where houses are massed in numbers sufficient to denote a village, it is the name of the headman of the
community, rather than the definition of any local peculiarity such as would carry a lasting significance
that is attached thereto.
Figure 8: Maidan Terracing
Such names as Bagh, Dargai, Khrappa, Datoi, etc., which indicate topographical peculiarities, and which are likely to recur as often as the peculiarities they represent recur, are only applied to habitations when the habitations happen to fit themselves to the topographical features; and even then it will usually be found that the ruling Khan’s personal name is more readily recognized than the local appellation. Bagh denotes an orchard or garden; it is a name which acquired some significance from the fact that it was at Bagh that the tribal jirgahs were held, and it figured in local reputation as a sort of capital to Maidan. But we found nothing at Bagh—nothing but a few insignificant fruit trees—to justify the name; no permanent village or bazaar, nothing to indicate the central capital of a flourishing district, beyond a flat-roofed, mud-plastered shed supported on wooden posts, on the top of which the Country Council was wont to assemble. Bagh is only a convenient cantering position for meeting, affording no special advantage in position to one Afridi clan more than another. In all Maidan there is no single dominating village, or town, which could be considered as a trade centre, or give commercial pre-eminence to any particular clan.

The cultivated area of the Afridi Tirah is divided between the chief clans roughly as follows: the valley of Maidan is occupied chiefly by Zakka, Malikdin, and Kambar Khel, and there are other small clans in the high valleys to the west, which are unimportant; the Waran valley, which lies to the east of Maidan and connects it with the Mastura valley, is held by Zakka and Akka; the Rajgul valley, which lies between Western Maidan and the Sufed Koh range, and which forms one principal head of the Bara (Maidan itself being the other), is inhabited by Khuki Khel; whilst lower down the Bara (after the junction of the Rajgul and Maidan drainage at Datoi), we get Kamar, Sipah, and then Zakka Khel again, and the latter spread through the Bara valley into the valleys of Bazaar and Khyber north of Bara. Thus, the Zakka possess territory which stretches from the Orakzai Mastura on the south, right across Afridi land to the Khyber on the north. They are, therefore, the only section of the Afridis who can command a right of way from their summer headquarters in the hills to the plains of India without passing through the tribal limits of any other section, and they possess, moreover, peculiar facilities for retirement across the mountains into friendly Afghan territory, when reduced to this manoeuvre by stress of circumstances. It is this fact, combined with their relative commercial strength, which gives the Zakkas a lead in the councils of the Afridi Khel, and renders them exceptionally difficult to coerce by military methods.

The difference between the system of defence adopted by the Orakzai’s and that of the Afridis is indeed due to the difference of geographical position in the two countries they occupy. Both districts abound in narrow, tortuous, and precipitous defiles, flanked by boulder-covered hills, the steep slopes of which are impracticable to the untrained British soldier, and are difficult enough for native troops; but which can be traversed by the hill-bred tribesman, untrammelled by extra kit and well acquainted with every goat-track and by-path winding and twisting through the labyrinth of crag and forest, with a facility which seemed at times to be almost supernatural. In both districts there is cave-shelter to be found in the broken mountain wilderness, which might be sufficient to afford a temporary home for women and children turned out of their homesteads in the valleys by the pressure of invasion, but it is a protection that barely shelters them from the rigors of winter—from blinding blizzards, and from sweeping snowstorms, and the mortality amongst them would inevitably be great before spring set its seal of warm vitality on the country again.

But there is this difference between the Orakzai and the Afridi Tirah. The Orakzai possess no better refuge than may be found in their own hillsides, and they must perforce capitulate when these hillsides are rendered untenable by stress of winter. The Afridi, on the other hand, has a safe harbour of refuge in the Afghan valleys to the north of his country, with an open back door, or series of back doors,
Figure 9: Houses in Maidan
through which he may retire across the Sufed Koh watershed to the lower slopes of the range where the Shinwari’s dwell on the skirts of Ningrahar.

Here, being rich with rupees collected from Indian subsidies during many a long year of peace, he can pay for board and lodging, can plant out his wife and family, can recruit his energies, and emerge again to fight when time is called; unless, indeed, he first quarrels with his Shinwari entertainer (which would be the natural sequence of his visit) or runs out of cash. Thus, hunting the Afridi in his native wilds with an army corps is like hunting rabbits in a warren with a pack of hounds before the earths are stopped. There can be no immediate practical result. The existence of the army corps may be, however, amply justified if its moral influence makes towards the closure of those back doors, which chiefly inspire the spirit of defiance, and form the backbone of Afridi resistance.

The fighting strength of the Afridi clans has been hitherto largely over-estimated, the basis of all estimates having been the accounts which they have rendered of themselves. Information obtained in this way is never very trustworthy, and a far surer method of calculating their strength lies in accurate measurement of their cultivable lands, and an estimate of its capacity for supporting population. By far the finest area of crop-producing soil which the Afridis possess is the upland valley of Maidan; yet the whole cultivable area of Maidan does not exceed twenty-five square miles, and it is doubtful if the Upper Waran, the Bara, Bazaar, and Khyber valleys combined could together contribute another twenty-five. It is true that this area is developed to its highest possibility for the growth of cereals. (Chiefly wheat) in Maidan and of an exceptionally fine quality of rice in Bara, and that it is densely populated for a trans-border district. Money has been pouring into Afridistan during twenty years of peace. Every discharged sepoy has taken home his little pile. Eighty-seven thousand rupees a year have passed through the hands of the Khyber rifles, and as much again has been paid in subsidies.

This wealth has largely affected the development of agricultural interests (as well as contributed to the purchase of long-range rifles and ammunition), with the result that the Afridis may well be classed as the richest, best-armed, and possibly also the most prolific of border tribesmen; but the small extent of cultivable lands compared to the unproductive wilderness of barren hills must be reckoned with in estimating their numbers. If we put the limit of land occupation at 300 per square mile for the cultivated districts, this is probably the highest estimate permissible from such inferences as could be drawn by actually counting villages and homesteads. This only gives us a population of 15,000, as told, for the agricultural districts; and although there may be a floating nomadic population in the hills, the estimate of whose numbers is not to be based on their visible possessions, I should doubt exceedingly if they amounted to 10,000 more. Twenty-five thousand men, women, and children will not admit of a larger contingent than 7000 or 8000 fighting men, and this I estimate to be their full strength. A large majority of these must pass through our ranks, where they learn (being an exceptionally intelligent people) a great deal more than the mere use of their weapons; and amass money enough for that consummation dear to the heart of every Afridi, the purchase of a good rifle. The experiences of the late Tirah expedition certainly did not justify any larger estimate of their numbers than that given. At Dargai there were but few Afridis opposed to us. It was essentially an Orakzai engagement. At Sanpagna and Arhanga the numbers actually seen could be reckoned in tens. In Maidan there was no single engagement in which the enemy showed en masse; and in Bara their numerical inferiority was denoted by the fact that they were obliged to concentrate their forces entirely on the route taken by the second division, leaving the first division to pursue its march unopposed through a labyrinth of defiles, such as might have been effectually defended by a few score men.
The character of the Afridi presents, at first sight, a problem involving such a hopeless mass of contradic-
tions, that we must study the conditions under which the Afridi lives in his own country to account
for his extraordinary idiosyncrasies and intertribal customs. Family blood feuds, and the absence of any
central autocratic authority, accounts for much in a country where every man is a law unto himself,
provided he is strong enough. Thus it happens that, combined with a deadly intertribal vindictive-
ness which, in his eyes, justifies any sort of treachery, and an apparent total disregard of conventional
forms of honour and integrity when carrying a blood-feud to its conclusion, there certainly does exist
an underlying and crude, but sufficiently real, sense of honour, which will keep an Afridi true to his salt
under the most aggravating conditions. As an instance of this intertribal vindictiveness, I shall never
forget the determination shown by a Malikdin clansman, who was my guide in Tirah, in demanding
the destruction of certain Zakka villages. He even appealed to the chief of the staff personally, when
he observed that the village of a Zakka chief of some small note had been accidentally left untouched
amidst the general destruction which had fallen on the country, and that it was in danger of escaping
Scott free.

A story was told in camp of an Afridi who was questioned as to the value of the weapons he carried,
amongst which was an old and obsolete pattern of pistol, which possessed no merit beyond its power of
scattering destruction at close quarters. He admitted that it was out of date, but he added that, useless
as it might be for purposes of actual warfare, he reckoned that it was a most efficient weapon in a jirgah.

They all, however, complain bitterly of the evils which have followed the introduction of the long-range
rifle into their country. Formerly, a man who was at blood-feud with his neighbour could at least till his
fields by daylight, keeping one eye open to the possible chances of a shot fired within visible distance.
Now, they say, it is quite impossible to tell from whence a bullet may strike, and the only safeguard is
to take to agricultural pursuits by night only. Born and bred in such an atmosphere, it is no matter
of surprise that an Afridi should be steeped to the chin in all the arts and wiles of tribal and domestic
treachery.

The system of hereditary blood-feud, handed down from father to son, and imposed on successive
generations long after the original cause for quarrel has been forgotten, or its bitterness modified by
time’s intervention, leads to a peculiarly open-minded condition of feeling between the Afridi and his
enemy. Personal animosity seems to be wanting either in his attitude towards a hereditary individual
foe, or towards a national enemy. As an instance of the former, I can recall an occasion when I was
closely associated with a distinguished frontier official in Turkistan, and the nature of our investigations
led us together far afield where we were much dependent on the support of our escort and servants both
for our comfort and safety. The escort was small, and servants were few, and it was chiefly to our two
orderlies, both Afridis, and both drawn from the same regiment, that we looked for all those various
services on the Road, without which we should have had anything but an easy time of it. Every frontier
officer knows the value of a good orderly. They followed us from early dawn to sunset. They rode
together and assisted each other in the duties of camp life. They helped each other out of difficulties.
On one occasion I remember that one of them, dishevelled and soaked, was fished out of a river, where
he had lost his depth, by the kindly extension of a pugri, unwound and thrown to his assistance by his
brother Sawar.

When in due time, our journey came to an end on the borders of India, my orderly came to me with
a complaint, and the burden of his grievance was as follows: The other orderly, his Afridi relation, had
had the opportunity of visiting a far-away Persian town with his master, where, with the accumulation
of his regimental pay, he had purchased a most useful and far-searching rifle. I asked my friend what
difference that might make to him; and he explained, with great candour, that it might make just all
the difference. They two had yet to settle an ancient blood feud, and one of them had to die. He
did not wish it to be himself if he could help it. I was obliged to regret that I could not support his
bloodthirsty intentions, or recognize the necessity for arming him in such a cause, but I did not think
it an altogether misplaced token of my regard for his excellent services, and my real goodwill towards
the man himself, to give him a handsome present, although it could not take the form of a rifle. At the
bottom of my heart, I could not help wishing him success; he was such a good fellow. And yet I knew
the other man to be a right good soldier too. It was an awkward dilemma. As for dissuading them
from their intentions, such interference would have been regarded as a contemptible effort to affect a
breach of Afridi honour, and I should certainly have been suspected of a spirit of meanness unsuited to
an officer and a gentleman. I never saw my friend again. He has joined his fathers, and lies with many
generations of victims who have been sacrificed to a national sense of what is due to the spirits of an
acrimonious ancestry. One good soldier slew the other on the first opportunity that presented itself,
without animosity, and without remorse. As for their national feeling of vengeance against the British
for swarming through their country, destroying their homes, and laying waste the fair places which they
so love to talk about, it is perhaps best gauged by the fact that long before hostilities between us were
concluded there was a demand for admission into our ranks as recruits-greater than any that had ever
previously been known. The Afridi is treacherous and cruel (as we measure treachery and cruelty) by
heredity and by education, but he certainly does not deserve all the hard words cast at him by McGregor
and other frontier authorities.

He is intelligent—by far the most intelligent of all frontier tribesmen— and compared to the loyal but
obtuse Sikh; he is a man of quite monumental intellect. He will learn anything readily that he is set
to learn. Afridis are not, for instance, a people bred up to horsemanship and riding, but they rapidly
develop into most excellent horsemen in the ranks of our cavalry. Our teaching has turned the Afridis
into soldiers who not only know the use of their weapons, but who have shown that they possess that
quality the want of which has been our great security amongst the fighting hordes of Northern India,
the quality of combination and the power of leading.

The Afridi is a Pathan; but what this implies; what his relations are with the Afghan; who the Pathans
themselves are; and what generally is the nature of that strip of independent territory which he inhabits
together with those other turbulent tribes who have lately given us so much trouble - all this requires a
few words of explanation, which I will endeavour to render as short as is consistent with clearness.

Afghanistan, to begin with, is a name that we have applied to the kingdom ruled over by the Ameer. It
is not a geographical term recognized by Afghans; it means "the country occupied by Afghans." But this
is not an accurate definition of Afghanistan, for that country is peopled by a conglomeration of tribes
of mixed nationalities, originally drawn from nearly every corner of Asia, amongst whom the Afghans
are merely the dominant race. And just as Afghanistan is not the territorial designation recognized by
Afghan, neither is "Afghan" the ethnographical distinction chiefly in use amongst themselves. They
call themselves "Duranis" and, above all things, they claim to be the true Bani Israel, the descendants
of those people whom Nebuchadnezzar took captive and carried off from Syria to Babylon. How far
ethnographical researches confirm this tradition we will not stop to inquire; but it is well to remember
that the Afghan claims to be of Israeli descent, and to be a member of the great Durani clan—the clan
that once ruled an empire.
Figure 10: Near Arhanga Pass
But, again, the habitat of the Afghan is not confined to Afghanistan; he occupies a very large section of that strip of independent territory, buttressed in between India and Afghanistan, which we call "independent." The Mohmand's are Afghans; so are the Yusufzai's of Swat and of Boner. Now, an Afghanistan and all this independent country were, about a quarter of a century ago, part and parcel of one great Durani empire. This the Afghan never forgets; and there is, consequently, the strongest possible tie of brotherhood, based on the record of a grand history, to say nothing of the ties of religion and of common language, binding together the whole Afghan community into one, whether it be located in Afghanistan or in independent territory. The Ameer is still their religious chief, their Prince of Islam, their actual Durani king, whether they admit his direct control or not.

So much for the Afghan. The Pathan is simply a man who talks the Pashto language-consequently all Afghans are Pathans; but, besides Afghans (and far outnumbering them), is all that vast collection of tribes of Indian and Central Asian extraction which inhabits, not only a large portion of Afghanistan, but a large section of our independent "buffer" states as well, and who spread even into the Peshawar and Kohat valleys, speaking the same widespread tongue, and acknowledging such affinity as community of language implies. Thus all the frontier people (including Afridis) with whom we have lately been engaged on the north-west frontier of India are Pathans; and what we have to observe is, that all the people who live in Afghanistan, and all the people who live in this independent section of mountainous country intervening between Afghanistan and India, are bound together, first, by the strong tie of religious feeling and sympathy, and next, by community of language; whilst amongst the true Afghans (who form the dominant tribal community) there is the added tie of kinship in the Durani brotherhood, and in the faith that they are God's chosen people sprung from the seed of Abraham.

But those who have lived and moved amongst these frontier people will tell you that this bond of sympathy is by no means all-embracing; it sets most strongly in the direction where reciprocity of feeling tends to practical advantages (as is the case, indeed, all the world over), and that this gain of practical advantage is most obvious from the direction of Kabul. The Afridi cares no more for the interests of his Mohmand Pathan brother than he cares for those of the Esquimaux; but he cares greatly, and they all care, for the friendly backing of their great spiritual chief, even while claiming temporal independence. Should tribal Jirgas fall out and fight, then arbitration between them is to be sought at Kabul; should the Feringhi exhibit a tendency towards the adjustment of boundary-lines, then is intervention to be demanded from the Ameer; should a too-venturesome tribal chief fall into the strait places involved by defeat and disgrace, it is to Kabul that he will resort, and there his woes will be poured forth into the attentive ears of Kabul's king. There, too, will he usually find a safe harbour of refuge until the tyranny of the Feringhi be over past, and he can emerge again with the view of making himself as unpleasant as circumstances admit.

Thus have the Ameers of Kabul always exercised a very real influence in these border districts, which they have never conquered, and which claim independence; and it is small wonder that, from the days of Dost Muhammad downwards, they should have secretly regarded all Pathan subjects as their own, and occasionally, with no attempt at secrecy, have asserted their claim to Peshawar itself. The British Government has, however insisted on the independence of these tribes being a real independence by the construction of a boundary between them and Afghanistan. It has been a costly process, for our motives have been misinterpreted; but the net result is the creation of a new geographical feature in a mountainous borderland which is neither Afghanistan nor India, but which includes a great part of the province known to Afghans as Roh, containing those independent tribes (Rohillas) of whom the Waziris, the Afridis, the Mohmands, and the Swatis are amongst the chief.
On the one side is the recently demarcated boundary, which is the boundary of Afghanistan; on the other is the boundary of India, which (with many important modifications) is still the boundary that we inherited from the Sikhs when we conquered the Punjab. It is with the Afghans and Pathans generally that lie between the two that we have to deal in future, and the method of dealing with them is still a perplexing problem. Most interesting of all these tribesmen to me is the Afridi, for he is much the most advanced. He is a Pathan of Indian extraction. There are indications in his own traditions, and in his personality, which point to a Brahmanical (possibly Rajput) origin. He is distinctly wanting in fanatical fervour, and is overall, but a half-hearted Musalman listening only to the seductive voice of the mullah when the teaching of the latter jumps with his own love of fighting. It is naturally amongst those clans that furnish the fewest recruits to our ranks, that the greatest ignorance (and consequently the greatest faith in the ignorance of their mullahs) prevails. The Zakka Khel are pre-eminently the "wolves" of the community, and our worst enemies; and they are so regarded by the better-educated clans around them, by whom they are, as a matter of fact, detested.

Even they have learned the use of the long-range rifle, and know how to combine against an enemy, and it is probable that they would be able to overwhelm all the other clans put together if left in possession of their rifles, whilst others were disarmed. This makes disarmament of the smaller clans impossible without impartial pressure being brought to bear all rounds. Between the Afridis and ourselves, a good deal has been lately taught and learned. They have learned that we can make good our right of way through any country, however difficult and however when defended. They have lost that sense of security and that moral support which the existence of well-assured means of retreat always gives to the frontier fighting man, and they have learned therewith the useful lesson not to "put their trust in princes."

On the other hand, they have taught us something of the nature of that new phase of trans-frontier military existence, which is rapidly developing on our borders, i.e. the existence of people brave and warlike (as, indeed, they have ever been), becoming daily better trained and educated in military science, armed with weapons as good as ours, and just beginning to feel their way towards military combination under experienced leadership. All this puts an entirely new complexion on our little frontier fights of the future (for we cannot disarm them), and disposes most effectually of the argument that because a quasi-police system of reprisals has answered for the last fifty years, it should answer equally well for the next fifty. Nothing stands still in the evolution of time, certainly not the military development of the Afridi, the Swati, the Bunerwal, the Afghan, or the Wazir; and it is probable that after recent experiences even the Baluchi will understand that a small, well-armed, and well-disciplined force is not to be annihilated by a mob, however brave.

If we have purchased our recent experiences in Tirah somewhat dearly, we have at least secured much matter for useful reflection. Like the man in the fable who created a tiger, we have now to consider what to do with our own creation. But that is not a geographical problem.

Just a few words about the geographical results of the recent frontier expeditions, to which the survey of Tirah was a useful contribution, although it represented but a minor part of the total out-turn. Whatever may have been the real nature of that independence on which the Rohillas (a useful ethnological term as applied to the hill men who occupy this frontier province of Roh from the Indus to the Suleimani mountains) so love to dilate, it has, at any rate, hitherto acted as a severe check on the progress of border surveys. Of Afghanistan and Persia we now know a great deal, and of Baluchistan we know everything geographical, but these borderlands immediately adjoining our own frontier have, from the Suleiman hill northwards, only been approached by the surveyor under cover of a military expedition, or
else have never been approached at all. Thus it happened that up to this last year of 1897 we actually knew less of that which concerned us most in our immediate neighbourhood, than we knew of those further trans-frontier countries which lay beyond the new boundary of Afghanistan. Boner, Swat, the Mohmand country, the Tochi valley, with a good slice of indefinite border country north of it, have all now delivered up their geographical secrets, besides Afridi land; and a new survey has been secured of the Khyber pass and its neighbouring hills, which was much wanted. It will be remembered that that most energetic surveyor, Mr. G. B. Scott, who found himself more than once in hot collision with the tribes-people, and could only accomplish a rapid sketch of all the principal positions, surveyed the latter during the Afghan war. New schemes for defence, water supply and communications have demanded more exact surveys and these have now been made.

It is only fair to refer to those officers who (well backed up by a contingent of native surveyors) have accomplished all this, and have effected a clean sweep of all remaining terra incognita that fringed the north-west border of our map of India. In Boner and Eastern Swat, Captain C. Robertson has made his name great as a surveyor and mountaineer, and his hereditary artistic talent (for his father was one of our best-known painters of Eastern subjects) has turned out maps which for beauty of finish will be standing examples of what can be done by a true artist even in the rough field of a campaign. Captain Robertson will certainly be heard of often in future fields. In Western Swat and the Mohmand country, as well as in the Khyber and lower Bara valleys, I was indebted to that well-known surveyor, Major Bythell, for a large extent of valuable mapping. Major Bythell is also an artist; but he, like my old friend Colonel Wahab (who assisted me on the Kurram side of Afridi land, and who has taken over my duties in India for the future), has already won his reputation in so many fields that I can add little more than my thanks to them both. Tochi was negotiated by a young staff corps officer, Lieut. Perrie, whose only grievance seemed to be that his field of action was not quite big enough for him. However, there is a large world yet awaiting further survey developments, and there will be room in it for all his future energies. On my own personal staff in Tirah, I had the invaluable services of Lieut. G. Leslie, R.E. (now Major Leslie), and of Lieut. Holdich of the Cameroonian, both of whom were untried surveyors, but both showed a marvellous aptitude for the business part of the proceedings, especially when the plane table went to the front.

With their assistance on the field of action, I was able to leave much of the surveying along our line of route in the trustworthy hands of my old civil assistant, Mr. E. A. Wainright. With these officers there was, of course, associated a small but most efficient staff of native planetablers; mostly old soldiers, and drawn from a variety of regiments and classes, but all of them old hands at surveying and practised draftsmen. A Yusufzai Pathan and a Sikh both distinguished themselves greatly by their energy, their skill, and their daring; but it would be difficult to say that others were not almost as good as they. It was always more difficult to persuade these men to retire when the hostile Afridis closed on them whilst at work, than to ensure their obedience to any other order. The plane table lost a foot in action, and was otherwise injured; but a kind fate preserved the surveyors throughout the campaign, and no member of the party was the worse for it.

For perhaps the first time in these frontier expeditions the plane tabling had to be carried on with the fighting line, and triangulation (which necessitates going far a field and visiting high places) had to be abandoned. Fortunately, previous surveys north, south, and east of Tirah had left a legacy of surrounding points that were just enough to carry us safely through our topography. The plan of action was much the same all the time we were in Tirah. With the earliest movement of any troops leaving camp on a reconnaissance in force or for foraging purposes, as the case might he, the little plane-tabling
party was in the field. In addition, here I must make my acknowledgments to that splendid body of hill workers, the Ghurkha scouts, for they frequently safeguarded the surveyors through a difficult day’s work. Careful training in the hands of their leaders, Major Lucas and Lieutenant Bruce, had fitted them for work in which no untrained troops could possibly compete with them. They swarmed up the hills with all the agility of mountain cats (or Afridis), and once up, they spread out under cover right and left, and kept the Afridi sharpshooter at bay with all the science of old shikaris, and all that genial delight in the fun of the thing that only a Ghurkha betrays.

Meanwhile the plane-tabler plodded away at his work behind them. When, however, the shooting gradually got closer and hotter, and there was danger of being intercepted on the return journey, the order was given for the klassie who carried the plane table, to start. He was allowed a free run downhill in advance, to compensate for being handicapped with the instrument, and he usually went at his best pace. Then he was far enough ahead, the word was passed round for the scouts to retire, and the race after the plane table became general. I believe it was a fine sight, and I regret that personally I never participated in the movement. I believe the Afridis usually gained a little (but not much) on the Ghurkha, but the pace was too good to admit of any refined accuracy in shooting; and, so far as I am aware, the retirement to cover at the foot of the hill was always effected, if not gracefully, at least with perfect success.