



Program for Culture and Conflict Studies

MOHMAND TRIBE

The Program for Culture & Conflict Studies

Naval Postgraduate School

Monterey, CA

Material contained herein is made available for the purpose of peer review and discussion and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Navy or the Department of Defense.



PRIMARY LOCATION

The Mohmand Tribe resides in the Mohmand Agency and the Kunar Province of Afghanistan. The Mohmands live on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, from the Peshawar Basin to the confluence of the Kunar and Kabul Rivers. The Bar Mohmands (Hill Mohmands) inhabit the network of hills between the Kabul and Swat Rivers; these hills connect the Sefid Kuh with the Hindu Kush and form a barrier at the eastern end of the Nangarhar Valley. The Kuz Mohmands (Plain Mohmands) live in the plain country in the southwest corner of the Peshawar District in Kotla Mohsin Khan, Bahadur Killi, Kagawala, Landi, and the surrounding areas.

Mohmand Agency is geographically sub-divided into Upper Mohmand and Lower Mohmand, the lower division being the most fertile. The agency is an area of rugged mountains with barren slopes. General slope of the area is from northeast with an average height over 1,450 meters. Ilazai near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, at 2,716 meters, is the highest peak. Another important peak is Yari Sar at 1,929 meters. The most extensive part of the territory in the Mohmand Agency lies in the glens and valley that start at the Tartarra Mountain, south of the Kabul River, and the Ilazai Mountain, north of the Kabul River – the main settlements being in the valleys of Shilman, Gandab, and Pindiali. Running water is hard to find, except in Shilman and Gandab.¹

KEY TERRAIN FEATURES

Valleys: Bara, Gandab, Shilman Plains: Bohai Dag

Mountains: Kabul Tsappar

Rivers: Kabul, Kunar, Swat, Bara

MAJOR TOWNS

- Chianrai
- Lakarai, inhabited by both Mohmands and Safis Ghalanai
- Yaka Ghund
- Mian Mandi, an important market town that draws Mohmands and Safis; the market area is considered a neutral zone where no feuding is allowed.²

HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Shabqadar Fort is about 24 kilometers from Peshawar; it was built by the Sikhs in 1837. It is a historical defensive point that overlooks the entire Peshawar Valley and is heavily fortified. In 1857, the British converted the fort for military training,

¹ <http://www.fata.gov.pk/subpages/mohmand.php>

² Ahmed, Akbar S., *Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas, 1972-1976*, Oxford University Press, London, UK, 1977.

and it is still used today for training of the Frontier Constabulary.³

WEATHER

The climate in Mohmand Agency is hot in summer, with high temperatures around 105 degrees Fahrenheit, and cool in winter, with low temperatures around 30 degrees Fahrenheit. The summer season starts in May and lasts about four months, while the winter season starts in November and lasts through February. Rainfall is scant, most of which falls during the winter.⁴

RELIGION/SECT

The Mohmand Tribe are Sunni Muslims and are a deeply religious people. While Islam is a major part of their identity, members of the Mohmand Tribe traditionally have only followed religious leaders “in times of supra-tribal crisis.” In the past, religious leaders played a subordinate role to traditional tribal leadership.⁵ The extent to which the balance between tribal and religious leadership has evolved in the face of Taliban/Deobandi militancy remains to be seen.

ALLIANCES

The Mohmands are likely to be allied with the Safis when threatened by external forces. They are neighbors in both the Mohmand Agency and in the Kunar Province of Afghanistan.

FEUDS

The Mohmand Tribe is usually in a state of conflict with the Shinwari Tribe.⁶ Competition for limited resources in the region has led to antagonism with the Yousufzai as well.⁷

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Mohmands were originally Afghan tribesmen who moved into their current areas in the 15th century, where they divided into two major sections: the Bar Mohmands and the Kuz Mohmands.

In the 1970s, the Pakistan Government launched economic development projects in the unsettled Mohmand areas, building schools and hospitals and constructing roads and electricity projects. There have also been increased job opportunities for members of the tribe and government allowances provided to supplement tribal

³ <http://www.shabqadar.com/FC.html>

⁴ <http://www.fata.gov.pk/subpages/mohmand.php>

⁵ Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth Century Afghanistan* (London: Routledge, 1997): 147. Noelle points out that “give[n] the formative role of pashtunwali for tribal behavior, little importance is attached to questions of doctrine or religious status.”

⁶ Ahmed, Akbar S., *Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas, 1972-1976*, Oxford University Press, London, UK, 1977.

⁷ Noell, 146.

livelihood. These developments have integrated the tribe into the Pakistan national economy, even if only slightly. Now some researchers believe these modern developments may have impacted the tribe's traditional values, as tribal elders are having a harder time maintaining their status.⁸

The areas occupied by the Mohmand Tribe were long considered “the calmest and most moderate region in FATA” until 2007, when the Taliban in Pakistan began its attempt to exert control over local governance.⁹

Tribal elders have little influence individually, but complete power as a group. They resolve problems and disputes through jirgas, which are fully empowered to decide any problem brought to them.

Many maliks live in Peshawar and rarely visit their tribal areas. They work closely with the government, and their role is one of financial conduit for government money and projects, rather than one of leadership.¹⁰

The TTP is active in Mohmand Agency. This branch is led by Umar Khalid, a Safi tribesman. For further information, see the Safi Tribe link.

PERMANENT ARMY/FROTEIR CORPS/SCOUT LOCATIONS

The Mohmand Rifles is headquartered at Yusaf Khel and is comprised of the following units:

- 1st Wing, Mohmand Rifles at Mohmand Gat
- 2nd Wing, Mohmand Rifles at Ghallanai
- 3rd Wing, Mohmand Rifles at Yusaf Khel
- Field Artillery, Mohmand Rifles at Fort Salop
- 2nd Wing, Dir Scouts at Tor Ghundi

⁸ R. O. Christensen, “Tradition and Change on the North-West Frontier,” review of *Millenium and Charisma Among Pathans: A Critical Essay in Social Anthropology and Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society*, by Akbar S. Ahmed, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 16, Number 1, 1982, 162-165.

⁹ Imtiaz Ali, “The Emerging Militancy in Pakistan’s Mohmand Agency,” *Terrorism Monitor*, v. 6, Issue 2 (January 25, 2008), at

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4681.

¹⁰ Ahmed, Akbar S., *Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas, 1972-1976*, Oxford University Press, London, UK, 1977.

