



Program for Culture and Conflict Studies

BANGASH TRIBE

The Program for Culture & Conflict Studies

Naval Postgraduate School

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PRIMARY LOCATION

The Bangash occupy the primarily the Kohat and Hangu districts as well as portions of the Kurram Agency.

MAJOR LOCATIONS

- Darra: although not a location of conflict, it is a region known for arms and ammunition production.
- Tanda Dam - located west of Kohat City, was built in the 1960s and is the main source of irrigation for the area
- Darsamand
- Hangu
- Kai
- Kohat
- Obbatal
- Tirah
- Togha
- Tora

PRINCIPLE BANGASH SHIA

- Alizai
- Hangu (Shia and Sunni)
- Ibrahimzai
- Jawz
- Lodhi Khel
- Marai
- Mussa Khel
- Raisan
- Shawo
- Sher Kot
- Ustarzai

KEY TERRAIN FEATURES

Valleys: Upper and Lower Miranzai, Kohat, Kurram

Plains: None

Mountains: Safed Koh Range

Rivers: Kohat Toi, Ishkali River

The administered areas are mostly inhabited by Turi and Bangash Shias and contain fine cultivated lands. The waters from the Kurram feed lush green paddy plots. The frontier regions in contrast remained closed until 1974 and as a result of this, the Para Chamkani Massozai, Ali Sherzai and Zai Musht, totalling just over half of the agency population, have lagged behind in development. Because of its semi settled history, Kurram has attracted more tourists than any other agency.

WEATHER

The climate of the district is hot from May to September. June is the hottest month. Average temperatures in June range from a high of 105° F to a low of 80° F. The winter is cold and severe. In winter, a strong west wind known as "Hangu Breeze" often blows down the Miranzai valley towards Kohat for weeks. Winter temperatures average between a high of 65° F and a low of 42° F.

Rainfall is received throughout the year. The monsoon rain is from May to October. August is the rainiest month, with an average of about 4.4 inches. The winter rain occurs from November to April. The highest winter rainfall is received in the month of March. The average annual rainfall is about 21.5 inches.

RELIGION/SECT

The Bangash are both Sunni and Shia Muslims. The Shias are concentrated around Hangu and the Upper Kurram.¹

RELIGIOUS FACTIONS

Both Deobandi and Bareilvi are present in the Bangash Sunnis. Mufti Munir Shakir, founder of Lashkar-e-Islami and a tough Deobandi, stirred up action against the Shias in Hangu and was expelled; he now lives in the Khyber Agency in Baza.²

ALLIANCES

In the past, the Bangahs have allied with the Khattaks. Currently there are no known alliances.

FEUDS/POTENTIAL TRIBAL FRACTURE LINES

Shia Bangash of the Kachai, Marai are traditionally at feud with the Sunni Bangash of Rabai Khel and Shekhan.³

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Bangash are predominantly an agricultural people, rather than pastoral. Most likely of Arab descent, they became thoroughly merged with the Ghurghust Pashtuns and settled into the Kurram valley in the fifteenth century and with their current locations established in the eighteenth century. The primary clans are the Baizai, Miranzai, and Samalzai.

KHASSADARS

In the twenties, the British Rulers intended to open strategic roads in different agencies. In an attempt to guarantee the protection of the road, the British agreed

¹ *The Pathans*, Government of India Press, New Dehli 1938.

² The Daily Times, March 30, 2006.

³ *The Pathans*, Government of India Press, New Dehli 1938.

to give allowances to the tribes in the form of Khassadars. Accordingly each tribe/sub-tribe, through whose area the road was to pass, were given a certain number of Khassadars who were to be paid out of the allowances given to the tribe for the opening of the road. Like-wise, the Khassadars were raised in Khyber as well in the year 1920.

The Khassadars are generally ill disciplined, mostly un-trained and are a loosely organized force armed with their own weapons and ammunition. They generally had outdated 303-rifles against criminals equipped with sophisticated automatic weapons. This changed with the introduction of the AK-47 assault rifle. They are the representative of the tribe to whom they owe loyalties rather than to the Political Agent or Agency Administration. Every agency has its own rules and conventions for the Khassadar service. A Khassadar's salary starts from Rs 3,000 and he is not entitled to a pension after his retirement.

The FATA has two types of security forces – Khassadars and Levies. The government provides weapons and ammunition to the Levies. Based in Bajaur, Kurram and Orakzai, the Levies have approximately 4,019 to their name, while the Khassadars number around 17,000 throughout the FATA.⁴

PERMANENT ARMY/FRONTEIR CORPS/SCOUT LOCATIONS

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) maintains a small air base in Kohat with a single runway of 8,100 ft. There are two well established Cadet Colleges in Kohat: Garrison Cadet College and Cadet College Kohat.

⁴ Zulfiqar Ali, "The Ragtag police system in FATA," Dawn, July 19, 2008: <http://www.dawn.com/2008/07/19/fea.htm> (February 10, 2009).