



AFRĪDĪ

AFRĪDĪ or APRĪDĪ (singular *-ay*), designation of a major Paštūn tribe in northwest Pakistan, with a few members in Afghanistan. The Afrīdī form part of the Ġilzī and are thus of the so-called “eastern Paštūn,” who are to be distinguished from the Dorrānī (or **Abdālī**) encompassing the “western Paštūn.” Their language is Paštō Mašreqī. Their eponymous ancestor is supposed to have been a certain Farīdūn, a descendant of Karlāṇ (whence the Karlāṇi lineage) through Mānī (or Mānay?) and Kōday (and his second wife).

Scholars have sometimes seen in the Aparútai, who, according to Herodotus (3.91), inhabited the seventh satrapy along with the Sattagūdai, Gandárioi, and Dadíkai, the origin and etymology of the Aprīdī (as they call themselves). It is, however, almost impossible to accept this double hypothesis. The Achaemenid inscriptions do not mention the name of the Aparútai, and we know nothing of where they lived. Moreover the etymology, although attractive, is highly improbable. The linguistic context of the region (Dardic languages in the ancient period and Paštō much later) would rather suggest an evolution of the type *aparút-* > **pril-* (by apheresis of *a-*, syncope of *-a-*, and *-t-* > *-l-*). The belief in a Greek origin still current among the Afrīdī can not be taken into consideration, for it results from a folkloric tradition to be found in a good part of the Dardo-Kafir domain. It was propagated, for example, by Abu'l-Faẓl 'Allāmī, the private secretary of the emperor Akbar; especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, it has been revitalized by orientalists in the grip of Hellenism, as well as by politicians seeking to claim Aryan blood.

Among the Afrīdī six so-called “Ḳaybar clans” are generally distinguished: the



Kūkī KĒl, Kambar KĒl, Kamar KĒl (or Kamra'ī), Malek-dīn KĒl, Sepāh, and Zakkā KĒl (or Zəḳā KĒl), all established in the region of the Khyber pass. In addition, there are two “assimilated” clans not recognized by the first six, the Akā KĒl, settled south of the Bārā river in contact with the Ōrakzī, and the Ādam KĒl, occupying a mountainous region between Peshawar and Kohat. Bellew (*Inquiry*, pp. 91-94) gives a much more complex clan structure, in which the eight clans cited above are included. The essential point is the complexity of the Afrīdī, which perhaps reflects the diversity of the origins of the different ethnic groups forming this great tribe.

According to J. W. Murray (*Dictionary*, p. 54), at the end of the 19th century the majority of the Afrīdī, with the exception of the Ādam KĒl, were still nomads. In summer they migrated to the Tīrāh heights, from which, at the beginning of the 19th century, they had driven the Dardic Tīrāhī, who have become more or less Pashtunized and live today in the valley of Kōṭ south of Jalālābād in Afghanistan. The Afrīdī winter quarters were in Khyber, Bāzār, and Kajūrī valleys. The location of their settlements seems hardly to have varied over a long period, a fact which favors the hypothesis that at least in large part, they are of Dardic origin. A tradition reported by Bellew (*Inquiry*, p. 91) claims that it was the Ghaznavid Sultan Maḥmūd who had installed them as a military colony in the Khyber region and that two centuries later Šehāb-al-dīn Ġūrī reinforced them by means of a new shift of population of the same origin. These probably historical facts in no way weaken the preceding hypothesis, but confirm what we know about many other Paštūn ethnic groups, that is, their heterogeneity, of which Bellew (*ibid.*), despite flagrant errors, sensed the importance.

In the estimate of J. W. Murray (*loc. cit.*), toward the end of the 19th century the Afrīdī numbered 32,900 men of fighting age (“fighting men”) in the easternmost part of the Sefīd Kūh, to the west and south of Peshawar, in the Bāzār and Bārā valleys, and in the northern part of Tīrāh. C. C. Davies (“Afrīdī,” *EI*² I, p. 237) estimates them today at 50,000, a figure which seems reasonable. But a delicate problem is raised by the large number (as high as 60,000) of Afrīdī who are supposed, according to unofficial Afghan sources, to reside on Afghan territory. They are classed as sedentary husbandmen or farmers and often also as producers of charcoal. Certainly we have often met Afrīdī in the Mašreqī and elsewhere in Afghanistan—tradesmen; truck drivers; agricultural workers, either seasonal or permanently established as *hamsāya* (“clients” in the Roman sense) of great landed proprietors; and



sometimes even themselves proprietors or owners of flocks. But their numbers seem to us quite modest. We believe therefore that the excessive figure sometimes mentioned in Afghanistan reflects in a particular way the Afghan claim to Paštūnestān (q.v.) and actually represents an estimate of the whole of the Afrīdī tribe on both sides of the frontier.

The Afrīdī first appear in history with Bābor, who had decided to bring them under his control (*Bābor-nāma*, tr. A. S. Beveridge, London, 1922 [repr. 1969], p. 412). Their strategic position is extraordinary. The region of Peshawar is ringed by mountains, which are pierced by four passes. To the east a road over the plains leads via Nowshera (Naw-Šār) to the Panjab. To the north the Malakand (Malakaṅ/Mālākaṅ) pass gives access to Kōhestān (Dir, Chitral, Gilgit, and so on, on one hand, and Swat, on the other). But the two other exits, the Khyber pass to the west, which gives access to the Kabul road, and that of Kohat to the south, which controls the road from Bannu, Waziristan, and Baluchistan, are in the hands of the Afrīdī. Thus they have always enjoyed the profits of brigandage or tolls levied on all those who have sought the right to pass. Their quarrels with the Mughal emperors are famous. But the punitive expeditions of Akbar, Jahāngīr, and Awrangzēb could not subdue them, and Aḥmad Dorrānī was able to integrate them into his army only nominally. The British occupying forces had no more success. They constantly clashed with the Afrīdī, who sometimes exacted a high price. In fact, the latter continually pressed their demands and in particular were able to profit from each of the Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-42, 1878-80, 1919-20) and the two world wars (1914-18, 1939-45) to affirm their independence. But their strategic position is such that the British authorities did not stint in providing subsidies. A subvention granted in exchange for their loyalty during World War I was augmented on several occasions, to the detriment of ethnic groups who received less or nothing at all. Today their territory in Pakistan still constitutes a sort of free zone famous for traffic in arms, munitions, tobacco, and other goods. This concession continues the old tradition of the *mawāḥeb* subsidy given to unpacified tribes to curb their turbulence. The role of the Afrīdī in the movement to further the economic, political, and cultural demands of the Paštūn continues to be dominant.



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