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## **Hostages on the Indo-Afghan border in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Hugh Beattie,

Staff Tutor and Lecturer in Religious Studies, The Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

hugh.beattie@open.ac.uk

Abstract:

*This paper look at some of the strategies employed by British administrators to control the highly independent Mahsuds, one of the principal tribes of Waziristan, during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. It focuses in particular on an innovative scheme introduced in 1873 for keeping a number of hostages in British territory. The British hoped that, as well as giving them more influence over the tribe, this would persuade them to adopt more peaceful ways. In 1878 it was replaced by a plan to settle some 200 Mahsud families in British territory. This was not a success, and the hostage arrangements were revived in a modified form in 1882 (this time an effort was made to use the hostages as a kind of tribal police), before being finally abandoned towards the end of the decade. The paper shows how Macaulay's hostage schemes accustomed the British to the idea that each year money should be spent on the Mahsuds, so presaging the later distribution of allowances to the tribe as a whole. Keeping the hostages did help the administrators to manage the Mahsuds more effectively, but failed to persuade them to adopt the customs and values of Britain and British India. The hostage schemes were nevertheless good examples of the kind of 'cultural agility' advocated in recent years by counterinsurgency experts.*

### **Introduction**

Critics of British policy towards the North-West Frontier often represent the relationship as having been characterised almost entirely by violence and conflict. In fact the British employed a range of strategies to try and gain some influence over it, not all of them involving the use of force. This article looks at some of these, focusing in particular on hostage-keeping.

In doing so it will be useful to refer to the distinction drawn by Irene Herrmann and Daniel Palmieri between voluntary and involuntary hostages.<sup>1</sup> Voluntary hostages, they suggest, usually came from the highest social classes and were generally well-treated. Such hostages

were ‘a guarantee *offered* to a victorious enemy – or even an ally – as surety for the execution of a promise or treaty, or as a symbol of submission on the part of the vanquished’.<sup>2</sup> The Romans for instance took the sons of tributary princes and educated them at Rome, both to familiarise possible future rulers with Roman culture, and to help ensure that the conquered nations from which they came remained loyal.<sup>3</sup> Similar arrangements were often made in the Middle East and India. The Mughals for instance kept the sons or other close relatives of the rulers of semi-independent states at Delhi, and when they could the Qajar rulers of Iran kept members of chiefly families at their court.<sup>4</sup>

In modern nation-states, however, Herrmann and Palmieri argue, ‘a more collective and unified concept’ of sovereignty has come to supersede the older idea that it was embodied in individuals.<sup>5</sup> Theoretically everyone is equal and has the same value, so hostages no longer have to be influential people. Moreover, Herrmann and Palmieri suggest, the nature of war has changed: confrontations grew fiercer and hostility became the only possible relationship between adversaries, with the result that ‘the voluntary offering of hostages as a guarantee of mutual respect was no longer appropriate’.<sup>6</sup> From around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century therefore, hostages tended to become involuntary rather than voluntary; they were taken rather than being offered.<sup>7</sup> As Herrmann and Palmieri recognise, these are ideal-types and in practice hostages may share voluntary and involuntary features, but the distinction between them is still a useful one, offering ‘a valuable analytical framework for anyone seeking to retrace the history of hostage status, its function, usage and evolution over the centuries’.<sup>8</sup>

We turn now to look at Waziristan. In 1849 the British annexed the Punjab, thereby extending their empire to Waziristan’s eastern border. At that point, like much of the rest of the mountainous region through which the contemporary border between Afghanistan and Pakistan runs, Waziristan was more or less independent. The great majority of its inhabitants belonged to one of several tribally-organised Pashtun groups - the Mahsuds or Mehsuds, Darwesh Khel Wazirs, Dawars, and Bhattanis, each of which had its own territory. Here we focus in particular on the Mahsuds, who were divided into three main branches or sections, Alizais, Bahlolzais and Shaman Khels. Their culture was deeply imbued with ideals of personal autonomy (for men) and resistance to authority of any kind, and although some men, known as maliks, were more influential than others, they had no strong chiefs or leader; decisions were usually taken by assemblies or councils of men, known as jirgas.<sup>9</sup> At the same time the Mahsuds saw

themselves as sharing a collective identity and as in some sense belonging to a corporate group. This was expressed in the concept of *nikkat*;

‘the immutable or slowly changing law which fixes the share of each clan and sub-section, even of each family, in all tribal loss and gain. By this system, known also as the tribal *sarrishta*, benefits would be distributed and liabilities apportioned. Thus *nikat* would regulate shares in allowances from government or booty from a raid, and equally the amount due in fine under any settlement either with the government or as between contending sections’.<sup>10</sup>

According to *nikkat*, therefore, any assets acquired from outsiders, and responsibility for any liabilities incurred towards them, were in the first place divided equally between the three main sections.

People in the region were well-accustomed to the idea of collective punishment, and hostage-taking. It appears that before the British conquest in 1849 the Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh, ruler of the Punjab from 1799 to 1839, and his successors, had regularly tortured and killed the hostages they took as part of their efforts to subdue the border region. A well-established practice (*baramta*), which continued under British rule, involved taking people prisoner to put pressure on the groups to which they belonged. Mahsuds were often to be found buying and selling various commodities in markets in British territory. When other Mahsuds carried out a robbery or a kidnapping there were usually some of these traders to be found in British territory, and government officials would arrange for them to be seized (along with their goods and pack animals). They were then used as hostages and usually not released until redress had been obtained.<sup>11</sup>

What we look at now, however, is a more structured British attempt to control the Mahsuds by obtaining and keeping hostages. Although, as pointed out above, the British relationship with them was not characterised simply by hostility and violence, it is true that after 1849 there were often difficulties. While some were agriculturalists and pastoralists as well as small-scale manufacturers and traders, other Mahsuds carried out plundering raids into British territory or along the Gumal route into Afghanistan to the south. They might even band together for larger incursions. In 1860 for instance more than a thousand crossed into British territory, aiming to attack Tank, a town close to the border. They were intercepted and a number of them were

killed, and the British retaliated by mounting their first punitive expedition against the tribe. Troops destroyed houses and crops and wounded or killed anyone who tried to stop them.

The Mahsuds and the British reached a settlement in 1861. One of its main features was a formal arrangement according to which the Mahsuds would supply six hostages, two from each of the main branches, all sons, brothers or nephews of influential men. They were given board and lodging and paid allowances. But it did not last; the hostages disliked living in British territory, and in 1863 they were allowed to go home.<sup>12</sup> Some Mahsuds continued to cause problems by carrying out kidnappings and robberies in British territory. In response the British built more military posts along the border and barred the Shaman Khels and one sub-section of the Bahlolzais in particular, the Shingis, from British territory. At this stage there was no question of paying allowances to the Mahsuds to keep them quiet. As one official, Reynell Taylor, put it in the early 1850s, the political officer should ‘turn a studiously deaf ear to all hints or suggestions of the necessity or expediency of providing by money allowance or otherwise, for individuals or classes on the border, on the score that they may otherwise give trouble’.<sup>13</sup>

### **Macaulay’s hostage scheme**

In 1871 Major Charles Macaulay became Deputy-Commissioner of the Dera Ismail Khan district of the Punjab, which to the west extended as far as the eastern edge of Waziristan. Although he was a nephew of Lord Macaulay, we know little about him. He had been an officer in the British Indian army, serving in the 1858-59 Awadh (Oudh) campaign and the Franco-British Chinese expedition of 1860. He was severely wounded in the latter and after recovering from his injuries joined the Punjab government. He is not mentioned in Charles Allen’s *Soldier Sahibs* (2000), which looks at the activities of some of the other British officials who worked along this frontier after 1849, but Caroe refers to him as ‘perhaps the most influential of all frontier officers in the ‘between’ period [presumably the 1860s and 1870s].<sup>14</sup>

During the later 19<sup>th</sup> century a range of surveys, reports and gazetteers with information about the North-West Frontier and Afghanistan began to be produced not just by civil administrators but also by the Indian Army Intelligence Branch.<sup>15</sup> In the earlier years of British rule along this border, however, British officials had little or no ethnographic information about the people of Waziristan or manuals of administration to draw on. They had to experiment and improvise. A

very good example of this was the innovative scheme for keeping hostages that Macaulay persuaded the Shaman Khel Mahsuds to accept in 1873. By the terms of the agreement they undertook to give up raiding in British territory, and to supply hostages.

The arrangements were much more elaborate than in 1861. Firstly there was to be a larger number of hostages. Macaulay wanted 36; presumably he thought he needed so many because the Mahsuds were so disunited and there were no strong chiefs through whom influence could be exerted. In the event, to keep costs down the Punjab government limited him to 20. They were all to be voluntary hostages; ten were to be influential men, or their close relatives, and ten were ‘ordinary members, taken also with discretion from the various sections’.<sup>16</sup> They were all to receive a basic allowance of ten rupees per month; the ten more influential ones and their relatives were given an extra five rupees a month to enable them to pay for servants and stable their horses. This would ensure that they were ‘tolerably comfortable’.<sup>17</sup> A second feature was that they were to be rotated. Every three months a third of them would be replaced by new ones. They were to live away from the border, at Dera Ismail Khan, on the Indus some 50 miles from the eastern boundary of Waziristan, and if other Shaman Khels did not behave themselves, by the terms of the agreement Macaulay could imprison the hostages and even send them away from the Derajat altogether. Sometimes the Romans might arrange for the rotation of their hostages, and it is just possible that in incorporating this feature into his scheme Macaulay was influenced by Roman precedents; after all his famous uncle was a great admirer of classical civilisation and the author of a very well-known collection of poems, *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842), four of which recount episodes from Roman history.<sup>18</sup>

In 1874 Macaulay was able to extend his hostage arrangements to include a second Mahsud section, the Bahlolzais. They agreed to supply 33 hostages: 19 more influential men and 14 less influential ones, who were to receive the same allowances as the Shaman Khels. Macaulay did not set up a hostage scheme for the third main section, the Alizais, as he regarded them as being less of a problem. This meant that neither he (nor the Shaman Khels and Bahlolzais) kept to tribal *nikkat*, which may have been a mistake. The hostages were supposed to be ‘some guarantee for the good conduct of the tribe generally’, but keeping them was also supposed to be a way of changing Mahsud attitudes and values.<sup>19</sup> They would be in ‘daily contact with peaceful and settled habits’ which should ‘exert a mollifying influence upon individuals accustomed to live in a state of demi-savagery’, as the Derajat Commissioner, Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Monro (1871-1880), put it.<sup>20</sup>

Macaulay's overall Mahsud strategy worked quite well for the next three or four years; possession of the hostages may indeed, as he claimed at one point, have exerted 'a restraining influence over the conduct and actions of the tribe generally'.<sup>21</sup> Mahsud trade with British territory grew, and although there were some robberies and kidnapping, there were no major problems. Macaulay's next step was to make arrangements to settle some Mahsud families in the Tank district, and in 1878 plans were drawn up for nearly 200 of them to do so. In the autumn many of them moved across the border into British territory to occupy the land set aside for them. In view of this Macaulay decided that he no longer needed the hostages, and allowed those who wished to return home. Some were intending to participate in the settlement scheme and they remained at Tank.

Imperial strategy then began to interfere with frontier management. In November 1878 as the settlement scheme was being implemented, British troops invaded Afghanistan. The Mahsuds and other inhabitants of Waziristan had links with Afghanistan as well as with the Punjab. During the earlier 1870s the Afghan Amir, Sher Ali Khan (ruled 1863-66, 1869-1879), had made a particular point of encouraging influential men from Waziristan and elsewhere along the frontier to come and visit Kabul, where they enjoyed free board and lodging and were given presents. In December 1878, appealing to Islamic loyalties and their shared cultural identity, Sher Ali Khan was able to persuade one of these men, Umar Khan, an influential Alizai Mahsud, to organise and lead a Mahsud attack on British territory. As we have seen, the Alizais had not been included in the hostage arrangements, and Umar Khan may have resented this.<sup>22</sup>

Late in December rumours of an impending attack on Tank began to circulate. Macaulay sent additional troops to reinforce the outposts, but on New Year's Day 1879 Umar Khan's *lashkar* (tribal army) crossed the border, and to everyone's surprise encountered little resistance. The Mahsud men already in Tank opened the gates to the invaders who plundered and burned the bazaar. They tried to take the fort but failed and retreated that evening. Their incursion triggered serious disorder, and men from other tribes plundered and burned a number of villages in British territory. The disturbances had a millenarian aspect, and it took several weeks for the British to suppress them.<sup>23</sup> Having done so, they imposed a reverse blockade on the tribe, which meant that its members could no longer visit British territory to trade and buy supplies. They also demanded the surrender of six men they regarded as having been principally responsible for the incursion, and payment of a fine. By the spring of 1881 the Mahsuds had still not

surrendered all the wanted men, and the British launched a second punitive expedition against them. Finally in the summer of 1881 Mahsuds handed over the last man and agreed to pay the fine, and the British lifted the blockade.<sup>24</sup>

After the attack on Tank, Macaulay's superiors criticised him for having released the hostages prematurely; this, they thought, had made the frontier more vulnerable.<sup>25</sup> As we have seen, Macaulay had previously argued that keeping the hostages had given him a way of exerting some control over the Mahsuds, but he now suggested that the civilizing effect had been more important. 'The principal end served by their residing at Dera for the last four years has been', he claimed, 'to bring many of the tribe into direct contact with British officers and with a higher state of civilization than is known to them in their hills'. 'No man', he commented, 'failed to be present on the day his turn came to be a hostage at Dera, and while the first batch on being relieved left everything in their quarters in the wildest confusion, the last made them over with the neatness and precision of a relieved guard'. '[T]he educative effects of living in British India were much appreciated by the tribe' he claimed, 'and what was originally viewed as a penalty began to be contested for as a prize'.<sup>26</sup> In fact it seems to have been the opportunity to make money rather than the educative effects of living in British India that appealed to them. Macaulay had in effect been paying a kind of tribal subsidy. The money the hostages received to pay for their board and lodging was more than enough for them to live on, and they had been able to save some of it and deposit it with money-lenders.<sup>27</sup>

### **Macaulay's hostage scheme version 2**

As part of the 1881 settlement, Macaulay revived the Mahsud hostage arrangements. In 1882 he restarted a settlement scheme as well. This time he included the third section, the Alizais, as well as the Shaman Khels and Bahlolzais. The Alizais and the Shaman Khels supplied 23 hostages each, and the Bahlolzais 34, so again neither nor the Mahsuds kept strictly to *nikkat*. In all 80 men with their families were kept at Dera Ismail Khan at a cost of Rs.1000 p.m. In spite of Macaulay's insistence that the hostage arrangements had not contributed to maintaining peace along the border, other British officials continued to regard them as helping them to control the Mahsuds. Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Ommaney, the Derajat Commissioner (1881-1889) thought that keeping the hostages had made it easier to manage 'this hitherto troublesome part of the border'. Not only had it helped them to get to know 'our laws and the usages of civilized society', but the fact that the Deputy-Commissioner could stop the allowances at any point had given him 'a greater control over the tribe than he had before, and of a kind that can

be promptly exercised when occasion requires'.<sup>28</sup> Without the hostages, when Mahsuds gave trouble, the Deputy-Commissioner would have to bar the tribe as a whole from entering British territory and arrest any Mahsuds he could find within it. This would take time and 'check the expansion of trading relations between the tribe and the district, which, as one of the means of control, should be fostered'.<sup>29</sup>

One interesting feature of this second iteration of the hostage arrangements was that Macaulay tried to use them as what were called *chalweshtis*. *Chalweshtis* were a traditional feature of Mahsud society - a sort of *ad hoc* militia raised by the tribal councils or assemblies that could be used for example to repel an external attack, or punish Mahsud individuals who had broken the rules.<sup>30</sup> Normally, if Mahsuds wounded or killed other Mahsuds, they could expect their victims' relatives to try and take revenge. But because they were acting on behalf of the group as a whole, these *chalweshtis* were at least in theory exempt from retaliation if they injured or killed someone in the course of their duty. Macaulay's aim was to adapt this custom, and persuade the Mahsuds to recognise his hostages as *chalweshtis*, in order to be able to use them as a kind of tribal police who could go across the border and take action against fellow-tribesmen who had given trouble in British territory. 'In the event of any Mahsud border offence occurring', he said, 'I should send a party of Chalwishtis to at once settle it; if they cannot do that, I should get others'.<sup>31</sup> No retaliation would be permitted against them, he thought, because of 'the sacred character which they hold as executors of the judgements of the jirgas or assemblies of elders'.<sup>32</sup> This is a good example of the efforts made by some British administrators on this Frontier to try and manipulate local culture and institutions rather than dispense with them. We see something similar in the efforts they made to develop collective group responsibility among the largely leaderless Mahsuds, using the notion of tribe as an 'administrative device'.<sup>33</sup>

In the event Macaulay's attempt to use the hostages as a kind of tribal police was not very successful.<sup>34</sup> He went on leave in April 1882 and never returned. He was succeeded as Deputy-Commissioner by Septimus Thorburn, another man with considerable experience of the frontier.<sup>35</sup> Early in 1884 Thorburn wrote to the Commissioner suggesting some changes to the hostage arrangements. The hostages were not much use as *chalweshtis*, he claimed; they had completely failed to detect or redress 'crime' in the few cases in which he tried to use them as tribal police. Instead, if there was a robbery or kidnapping, Thorburn would imprison the hostages from the robbers' section or sections, and cut their allowances. Moreover, he said,

although contact with British officials tended ‘to soften their character and open their minds’, this effect was limited.<sup>36</sup>

There were several reasons for this, he thought. In the first place, the hostages were no longer rotated as they had been in the 1870s; instead the sectional assemblies that nominated them tended to send the same men again and again. As a result fewer and fewer Mahsuds were benefitting from the civilizing effect of living in British India.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, nothing was done to keep the hostages busy; they had no duties, and were not given any education or training, and had to find their own ways of amusing themselves. ‘No other restraint or disciplinary measure is attempted with (the hostages) ... than those of roll-call at night and the necessity of sleeping inside an enclosure. A Chalwishti family therefore only changes its place of residence, not its mode of life.’ As a result, Thorburn complained, they spent much of their time quarrelling with each other, and sending him petitions and demanding to meet him to discuss them; they have been, he said, ‘very troublesome’.<sup>38</sup>

In fact some of the hostages had been able to save enough money from their allowances to buy breech-loading rifles from licensed dealers in Dera Ismail Khan.<sup>39</sup> Living in British India actually had actually had a bad effect on them, another official argued; the presence of the hostages in Dera Ismail Khan, ‘so far from teaching them, as had been fondly imagined, the lessons of civilization and softening their manners, has only taught them the value of rifled arms, with the result that the tribesmen have set themselves steadily to work to procure them.’<sup>40</sup> Over the years several hundred men must have spent time as hostages, and it may well have been a mistake not to have kept them suitably occupied.

Another problem was that in his original scheme Macaulay had intended that the hostages should be influential men or their relatives, but during the 1880s only poor men served as hostages, men of little or no importance - ‘needy nobodies’ Thorburn called them.<sup>41</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Bruce (Deputy-Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan 1888-1889, and Commissioner Derajat 1889-1896) later commented that to have been much use, the hostages should have been ‘the representative men of the tribe or their sons and brothers and there was not a single one of the really leading Khans or Maliks of the Mahsuds present among the Chalweshtis at Dera Ismail Khan’.<sup>42</sup>

The result seems to have been that the hostages were passing on between a third and half their allowances to other men.<sup>43</sup> Under the circumstances, it is not surprising to find that some of the more influential Mahsuds wanted to cut out the middlemen altogether and have the money paid to them directly. It was partly in response to their appeals that in 1884 Thorburn wrote to Ommaney, Commissioner of the Derajat Division, suggesting a change. Half the hostages should be sent home, and the money previously spent on them should go straight to the ‘few hundred leading men of the tribe who collectively compose its sectional and tribal jirgas’ (councils).<sup>44</sup> If the leading men could be won over, he thought, they would be able to control the rest. It was a straw in the wind. During the first decades of British rule along this border, as have seen, officials had usually refused to pay the trans-border people to keep quiet on the grounds that this would be to give in to blackmail. Payments could only be made in return for service of some kind, for example the tribesmen could be paid for acting as irregular levies. By the mid-1880s, however, it seems that both British and Mahsuds were coming to see the money spent on the hostages as payment for good behaviour and not for service, although Thorburn appears to have been the first British official to have formally suggested paying the Mahsuds directly to keep the peace.

The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab (Sir Charles Aitchison: 1882-1887) rejected the idea. Paying trans-border people to keep quiet would, he said, would be a major change and an unhelpful one.<sup>45</sup> So the existing arrangements remained in operation for another few years, before being abandoned in 1888 following the ignominious failure of a British attempt to survey the Gumal Pass on the southern edge of Waziristan early in the year. George Ogilvie, the Deputy-Commissioner, had arranged that a tribal escort of between two and three hundred men - Mahsuds (each of the three Mahsud sections were to provide 50 men), Zilla Khel Darwesh Khel Wazirs and Nasir Powindahs - should escort the survey party. On the day they were supposed to leave Tank, however, around 2000 Mahsuds and 250 Ahmedzai Wazirs turned up. They all carried arms, though they were not supposed to do so in British territory. Ogilvie set off nevertheless, but more Mahsuds joined him *en route*. The escorts then began to fall out amongst themselves, and on the third night some Abdur Rahman Khel Mahsuds fired into the camp; one shot actually passed through Ogilvie’s tent ! He had no choice but to return to British territory, and to punish the Mahsuds for being so uncooperative, the hostages were sent home. As another British official, William Merk, later commented, if this was a punishment, it ‘threw a new light upon the common interpretation of the term ‘hostage’’.<sup>46</sup> It

certainly shows how far the Mahsuds had managed to turn the hostage arrangements to their advantage.

In fact the hostage scheme was doomed anyway because a more assertive British policy was introduced along this border during the later 1880s. In 1888 Bruce persuaded the Lieutenant-Governor that the money that had been spent on the hostages should be used instead to pay Mahsud maliks to supply men for irregular military service.<sup>47</sup> It appears to have been the end of any systematic attempt to use hostages as a means of pacifying the Mahsuds. Although British officials continued to take hostages from them (and other groups) at various points well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this was usually in response to particular circumstances, and they were only held for a short time in order to put pressure on other tribesmen.<sup>48</sup>

During the 1890s the British set up the North and South Waziristan Agencies, and stationed regular troops at Wana (with an outpost at Sarwekai) in the south and in the Tochi valley in the north. Continuing difficulties with the Mahsuds led British administrators to conclude that Bruce's *maliki* arrangements were not working either. As regards the Mahsuds, they decided that instead of subsidising the maliks, most of the money should be distributed amongst the tribe as a whole (hence it was referred to as *tumani* – tribal), through representatives referred to as *vakils* (though some money was still reserved for the maliks, in return for supporting the government). The first payments were made in 1903, and they continued until 1914 when a Mahsud gunned down the Political Agent and two army officers in Wana. To cut a long story short, the British did not fully restore the payments until the early 1920s, when several thousand well-paid irregular police (*khasadars*) were also recruited from among the tribesmen.<sup>49</sup> These arrangements survived more or less intact until 1947.

In one way at least Macaulay's Mahsud hostages were more like the voluntary hostages of earlier European and Middle Eastern empires, because they were offered by other Mahsuds, not seized by the British. They were reasonably well treated and received allowances to pay for their food and accommodation, and as we have seen they appreciated this and saved as much money as they could. Nor were they physically abused in any way if and when other tribesmen broke the terms of their agreements with the British, although they might be imprisoned and docked of their allowances, even moved away from the border region altogether. On the other hand, their accommodation was cramped, and the weather was much hotter in Dera Ismail Khan than in Waziristan itself; during the summer temperatures rose into

the 40s centigrade. By 1883 a number of hostages had reportedly died from disease, and the possibility of moving them to somewhere less crowded was under consideration.<sup>50</sup> As regards their living conditions, their treatment was therefore closer to that of involuntary hostages.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

Although Macaulay was not, as we have seen, the first British official on this border to make a formal arrangement for the keeping of hostages, he nevertheless took things much further than any of his predecessors had done. In view of everything that happened since, Macaulay may seem to have been too optimistic, even naïve. But there is no doubt that his hostage scheme, and the associated effort to turn the *chalweshtis* into tribal police, were a creative response to the problem the Mahsuds posed for the British; a good example of the kind of ‘cultural agility’ advocated by contemporary counterinsurgency experts.<sup>52</sup> A later administrator, Evelyn Howell, in his classic study of the British relationship with the Mahsuds, suggests that ‘with very little encouragement or support and less guidance, working so to speak with nothing but his bare hands, Major Macaulay during his long tenure showed how much against all odds a great personality could achieve’.<sup>53</sup> It is true that from 1873 to 1878 and for much of the following decade the British enjoyed a relatively peaceful relationship with the Mahsuds, and the hostage arrangements played some part in this. In the longer-term they were an important step along the road towards the policy of paying the Mahsuds to keep the peace that was introduced in the early 1900s, something that earlier British administrators had earlier condemned. Nevertheless the fact that some of them used their allowances to buy modern weapons, and that the British continued to experience problems with the Mahsuds, suggests that in the longer-term the hostage arrangements did not do much to reconcile them to the British presence along the border and convince them of the superiority of British values and culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Herrmann and Palmieri, 'A haunting figure', 137.

<sup>2</sup> Herrmann and Palmieri, 'A haunting figure', 135-145.

<sup>3</sup> Hostage, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911, vol. 13, 802. Throughout early modern Europe, 'hostages were routinely given ... to cement an agreement or an alliance'; they were usually the sons of the weaker party, and might actually serve as pages and servants (Valone, *Anglo-Irish Identities, 1571-1845*, 33).

<sup>4</sup> Hutchinson and Vogel, *History of the Panjab*, 1933, 139-40; Tapper, 'Introduction', 52.

<sup>5</sup> Herrmann and Palmieri, 'A haunting figure', 139.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. The etymology of the English word hostage is disputed. Some see it as deriving from the Latin *hospes*, host, while others think it originates from the term *obses* 'related to the verb *obsidere* – "to

besiege” – and thus literally [meaning] ... “the one who is kept in sight” (Herrmann and Palmieri, ‘A haunting figure’, 136).

<sup>7</sup> Herrmann and Palmieri, ‘A haunting figure’, 139.

<sup>8</sup> Herrmann and Palmieri, ‘A haunting figure’, 137.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. ‘Beattie, ‘Negotiations with the tribes’, 574-583.

<sup>10</sup> Caroe, *The Pathans*, 402-3.

<sup>11</sup> *Baramta* (or *barampta*) was incorporated into the Frontier Crimes Regulations introduced by the British in 1872; officials justified it as being ‘recognized by Pathan custom’ (Memo. on Mohmand Affairs, 1935-36, quoted in Adamec, *Afghanistan’s Foreign Affairs*, 210: Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 182). Just to give one example, in August 1877, about 1,000 bullocks and 50 camels belonging to Mahsuds were seized after some tribesmen had kidnapped a Hindu boy from a British village near Tank (Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 124).

<sup>12</sup> Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 34-48.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, Reynell, *District Memorandum*, 120.

<sup>14</sup> Caroe, *The Pathans*, 375.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Commissioner Derajat Division (CDD) to Government Punjab (GP), No. 133, 3 June 1873, in India Office Records (IOR), Punjab Proceedings (PP) 143, A15 Nov. 1873.

<sup>17</sup> Deputy-Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan (DC DIK) to CDD, No. 152, 26 March, 1873, in IOR PP, A15 Nov. 1873.

<sup>18</sup> For example members of the household of the Syrian king, Antiochus III, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE (Goldwurm, *The Second Temple*, 120). As Sarah Butler has pointed out, ‘From an early age, future imperial administrators were imbued with knowledge of the Classics and the possession of an Empire was conducive to the study of ancient empires’ (Butler, *Britain and Its Empire*, 18).

<sup>19</sup> CDD to GP, No. 31A, 18 Jan. 1879, in IOR PP 1298, Appendix, Feb. 1879.

<sup>20</sup> CDD to GP, No. 133, 3 June 1873, in IOR PP 143, A15 Nov. 1873.

<sup>21</sup> DC DIK to CDD, No. 276, 7 May 1878, IOR PP 1147, A4C July 1878.

<sup>22</sup> Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 130-9.

<sup>23</sup> They anticipated the major risings which began to the north in Swat in July 1897 and spread to much of the rest of the frontier, though not to Waziristan itself, and were a serious challenge to British authority.

<sup>24</sup> Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 137, 141-50.

<sup>25</sup> He was also criticised for having relied too much on two of the local Indian officials, and his principal go-between with the Mahsuds, a local landowner - Azim Khan Kundi (CDD to GP, No. 31A, 18 Jan. 1879, in IOR PP 1298, Appendix Feb. 1879).

<sup>26</sup> DC DIK to CDD, No. 4P, 12 Jan. 1879, in IOR PP 1298, Appendix, Feb. 1879.

<sup>27</sup> Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> CDD to GP, No. 38, 25 Jan. 1884, in IOR PP 2221, A49 June 1884.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Other Pashtun groups have or had similar institutions, often called *arbakai* (see e.g. p.172 Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 171-2); see also Tariq, ‘Tribal Security System (Arbakai)’.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in CDD to GP, No. 38, 25 Jan. 1884, in IOR PP P2221, A49 June 1884.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* It was also intended that the *chalweshitis* should cooperate in maintaining security through the Gumal Pass, through which an important route from Afghanistan to the Punjab ran (CDD to GP, No. 129, 24 March 1884, in IOR PP 2221, A50 June 1884).

<sup>33</sup> Eickelman, *The Middle East*, 89: Beattie, ‘Custom and Conflict’, 211-212.

<sup>34</sup> Howell, *Mizh*, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Thorburn later achieved some notoriety when he attacked the forward policy introduced by the Viceroy, Elgin in his presence in 1897 (Harris, *British Policy*, 277).

<sup>36</sup> For example on March 1 1884 a party of Mahsuds plundered a number of cattle, sheep and goats from British territory. To put pressure on them, he imprisoned some of the hostages. This prompted their relatives to pay some of the compensation due but not all. To realise the rest, Thorburn cut all the *chalweshitis*’ allowances, and used the money saved to compensate those whose animals had been stolen (DC DIK to CDD, No. 457, 11 July 1884, in IOR PP 2222, A30 Aug. 1884).

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<sup>37</sup> DC DIK to CDD, No. 84, 7 Feb. 1884, in IOR PP 2221, A50 June, 1884.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> The Mahsuds did acquire better weapons during the late 19th century, but most of them came from other sources than the hostages (ibid.).

<sup>40</sup> F. Cunningham, quoted in *Report on the traffic in arms*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> 'Notes by Deputy-Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan on retention of 80 Mahsud families as Chalwishtis at cost of Rs. 1000 p.a.', in CDD to GP, No. 25 January 1884, in IOR PP P2221, A50 June 1884.

<sup>42</sup> DC to CDD, No. 46, 15 Feb. 1889, in IOR PP P3396, A24 Oct. 1889.

<sup>43</sup> DC to CDD, No. 457, 11 July 1884, in IOR PP 2222, A30 Aug. 1884.

<sup>44</sup> DC to CDD, No. 84, 7 Feb. 1884, in IOR PP 2222, A50 June 1884.

<sup>45</sup> GP to CDD, No. 352, 23 June 1884, in IOR PP 2221, A51 June 1884. In response Thorburn came up with an alternative - to spend all the hostage money on recruiting 63 Mahsuds to the border police instead. Aitchison asked him to prepare a detailed plan for this, but he does not appear to have done so (DC DIK to CDD, No. 457, 11 July 1884, in IOR PP 2222, A30, Aug. 1884).

<sup>46</sup> East India (north-west frontier). *Mahsud-Waziri Operations* Cd.1177, 101.

<sup>47</sup> In this way Bruce hoped to emulate Robert Sandeman's successful pacification of Baluchistan which was based on paying local leaders to keep order with their own irregular militias, and backing them up with force when necessary (Howell, *Mizh*, 10-11).

<sup>48</sup> Hostages were taken from the Madda Khel Darwesh Khel Wazirs in 1933 for instance, because they were suspected of harbouring an outlaw called Pak (Adamec, 1974, 210).

<sup>49</sup> Howell, *Mizh*, 63-4, 76. Charles Bruce referred to the khassadars as 'practically the Chalweshtas or "tribal police"' (Bruce, *Tribes of Waziristan*, vii).

<sup>50</sup> Derajat and Peshawar Political and Administration Report for 1882-83, in IOL PP 2013 1883, A17 Oct. 1883.

<sup>51</sup> The idea of using hostages as a way of obtaining a hold over the group from which they came and at the same time giving them a modern education and inculcating loyalty to the government and its values was revived by the Afghan government in 1933. In June it opened the Maktab-i-Ihzhariah, 'a military preparatory school for the sons of tribal chiefs', in Kabul (Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 297: Annual Report on Afghanistan 1933, in IOR L/PS/10/1571, 249). As many as 300 boys were reportedly collected from tribal areas of Afghanistan, among them 18 Mahsuds. The British regarded this as likely to increase Afghan influence in the tribe, and protested, and they were sent back (Annual Report on Afghanistan 1934, in IOR L/PS/10/1571, 210).

<sup>52</sup> See for instance Porter, 'Good Anthropology, Bad History', 45.

<sup>53</sup> Howell, *Mizh*, 98-9.