Chapter Two

Mapping the ‘Frontier’:
Explorations and Surveys, c. 1800- c.1895

Introduction

In the year 1885 five men in the Cis-Indus tract of this district [Palosi, on the right bank of Indus] rose up to preach a crescentade. They were followed and surrounded, when two of them, sooner than surrender, cut their own throats. Added to this fanaticism there is to be taken into account political jealousy causing the tribes to regard Englishmen as possible conquerors of their country- that one Englishman, shooting about their hills will be followed by the theodolite, guns and the revenue collector...in purely independent anarchic tribes it may be assumed that they would on no account relinquish their independence without struggle.¹

A violent response such as above to the British presence on the ‘frontier’ was not so uncommon in the nineteenth century. ‘Theodolite’, ‘guns’ and ‘revenue collector’ were not just words in themselves, they were instruments of intrusion in a space that was often guarded with tenacity by people of the ‘frontier’. It was a customary practice for marching armies to have their men carry surveying instruments and

¹Confidential dispatch of Colonel E. L. Ommannney, Commissioner and Superintendent, /Derajat Division, to the Secretary to Government, Punjab, dated Dera Ismail Khan, 21st April 1888. See Foreign Department, Pros. December, 1888, No. 227 (Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh. Hence forth, PSAC).
invariably all such occasions of military expeditions also resulted in production of small scale maps and route surveys. In this chapter we will primarily look at British attempts to carry out mapping and surveying on and beyond their ‘frontier’ not through military expeditions but through people who went as individuals to ‘explore’ regions whose accessibility to the British was a big question mark. This chapter will also try to bring to surface the tension which remained a perpetual part of engagement between the traveler and his surrounding.

This chapter has three parts. First and foremost, it discusses briefly the tradition of mapping and surveying that existed in India before the British largely took over the cartographic project in the early nineteenth century introducing the use of European instruments and the Great Trignometrical Survey. The second part looks at early travelers and adventurers chiefly Europeans whose experience in a way became the basis for further explorations, surveying and military activities in the region which the British vaguely defined as the ‘North-West Frontier’. The final part takes up in some detail the experiences and the journeys of the ‘native explorers’ who came to be used more consistently in the latter half of the century and in the process became pioneers of exploring several terra-incognita in the north-west.

Early explorations and cartographic forays in the ‘north-west’ frontier were in more than one ways different in their objectives from those carried out in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The initial forays were part of the early cartographic and route surveying fervor in British India, which basically started with the aim of mapping the peninsular India and gradually spread to other regions, reaching rather late towards the ‘north-west frontier’ in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The first British attempts to know the region around the Indus valley are visible in the travelogues of the early nineteenth century. We begin to see serious attempts to explore and map this region only with the shift of the British territorial influence after the annexation of Punjab in 1849, bringing them in direct contact with the people— which the British called the ‘frontier tribes.’
Explorations from the British point of view encompassed in itself a whole gamut of issues and observations. The underlying current which shaped the nature of explorations and surveys on the 'frontier' was largely a compulsion to understand and identify a region and the people therein vis-à-vis their polity, economy, food habits and culture. These aspects were crucial from both military and political points of view.

From the military standpoint it meant knowing the topographical features and resources of a region and 'the movements and dispositions of the potential threats and opponents.' Detail was important but fascination for minute detail was not without reason. Thus it was not enough to know that animals could be watered in a stream, but the numbers for which there was room, its depth, etc. Roads had to be classified not solely by their width, the surface condition and material for repair had to be considered. The ease with which troops could be deployed from them was important. The nature of the fences or ditches enclosing the road had to be mentioned. Also was to be mentioned whether water supply was sufficient for certain number of people, whether the water was brackish or clear. What kind of food was available in the valley and whether firewood was scanty or plenty for camel grazing? From the political point of view it was important to know where lay the focal of local administration and its hierarchy so that a timely alliance could be effected for fulfilling various economic and political needs.

Frontier defines the state by delineating limits of a territory on which the state exerts its authority. The state must have the means to define and control the frontiers, otherwise they remain virtual. To understand the reality of frontiers, one has to look at the state: its effective power and control over the territory and its ideology. What kind of state do we see over the long nineteenth century in India? By the beginning of the nineteenth century the British control over India had grown throughout the whole of India, though large parts were only partially controlled as they were under British protection. On the north west the boundaries were defined by the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs and the states of Rajputana- Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Marwar and further down by Kutch and
Kaithawar which were under the British protection. Sirhind, Bhatinda, Hariana, Delhi had been acquired by the East India Company from the Maratha confederacy in 1803 after the close of war. Thus, for the British, crossing the North-West Frontier in the beginning of the nineteenth century meant stepping into the territory of the Sikh kingdoms, Daudputras and Sind.

Daudputras was under Afghan vassalage during this time until it was transferred to the Sikhs in 1818 after the Sikh conquest of Multan. The Rajputana-Bikaner and Jaisalmer, who in varying degrees paid tributes to Marathas, were now in a virtual state of anarchy from 1803-17 after the defeat of Marathas by the British, and were jostling with each other to define the limit of their territories. The Sikh kingdom however looked much more stable under Ranjit Singh who had established an independent state by unifying Sikh misls north of Satluj and expanded his kingdom in all directions. The confederacy of Sikh misls had run over most of Punjab, it had made Kangara its tributary state by 1811 and conquered Kashmir by 1819. It was only the states of 'Sutlej Sikhs' whose chiefdoms were not part of Ranjit Singh's kingdom by virtue of proclamation of British protection in 1809. The political picture around these 'frontier states' looked nothing short of anarchic. The region which we now understand to be Afghanistan, following Barakzai uprising in 1818, the Sadozai King Mahmud had fled Kabul and established rule in Herat. Dost Mohmed, a Barakzai, had ascended the throne in 1826 in Kabul, but British refusal to support him in his struggle against the Sikhs had led to 'growing Russian influence' at Kabul. Let us also not forget that in 1808, the rumors of Napoleon's invasion of India were pervasive and in response to this fear the British were dispatching their convoys to Lahore, Sind, Kabul and Persia.

This picture of the insecure frontier is very important to understand. The Russian xenophobia, and the instability brought about by the constant infighting of the neighbouring polities were factors which played heavily on British minds and influenced their quest for a stable and clearly defined frontier. As we stated in the beginning, to understand the reality of frontiers, we have to look at the state: its

---

3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
effective power and control over the territory and ideology. The effective control over territory and its administration was largely made possible by geographical intelligence. This intelligence gathering was intimately connected to the project of mapping. But before the British began their exercise of map making in South Asia, there existed indigenous cartographic traditions which cannot be overlooked. The most prominent among them were the maps left by the Marathas in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. These maps depict the territorial administration of the Marathas, apart from location of strategic sites and main route of the period. These maps were basically constructed for revenue administration, military needs and maritime function in regions under the control of the Marathas in western India and parts of South India.

The map of North of Kanara for instance, produced somewhere towards the end of the eighteenth century was rich in text relating to topography, vegetation, drainage and cultural features such as settlements, forts, roads and ferries, and the main markets or bazaars. Apparently, produced for military purposes and prepared in North-Maratha territory, it reflected a fair knowledge of land survey and formed a primary source for the surveys initiated by Colonel Mackenzie in this area in 1806. In addition to the Maratha maps, some of the early Indian maps prepared by local agencies and discovered by the Survey of India also included maps of Tibet, Nepal and Afghanistan. A Mughal map with the survey of India estimated to have been made around 1650-1730, covered North-West, Afghanistan, and Sind, from Delhi to Kabul, and from Kashmir to the sea. It recorded the stages and distances between the towns of Punjab, Rajputana, Sind and Afghanistan though ‘greatly distorted in geographical position’, and recorded the crossings of the great rivers, and the main passes through

---

5 Kapil Raj's essay, 'Circulation and the Emergence of Modern Mapping: Great Britain and Early Colonial India, 1764-1820' in Claude Markovits, Jacques Poucheadass and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds.), Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia 1750-1950 (Delhi, 2003), discusses pre-colonial surveying practices of the 17th and the 18th centuries but completely overlooks the existing culture of map making left by the Marathas. See pp. 23-54.


7 Ibid., p. 139
the border hills; and gives notes on the nature of the country that would be of the
greatest value to the military commander. "A truly wonderful geographical map."8

Apart from this Mughal map, the British found another map made by the 'native, and
preserved in the archives of the government in Hindoostan.' This was a Persian map
of Punjab. James Rennell wrote in his memoir published in 1793, that he derived
considerable assistance from this map. This map included the whole province of
Lahore and a great part of Multan proper. Rennell wrote that "It not only conveys a
general idea of the courses and names of the five rivers...but set us right as to the
identity of the rivers crossed by Alexander."9

The British pioneer in mapping of the 'North West Frontier' of India was James
Rennell who also had the distinction of producing of the first map of India. His map
of 1792 constituted the 'countries situated between Delhi and Kandhar.' Rennell's
map was drawn in bold symbols both in English and Persian letters. In this map,
Rennell paid most attention to marking important forts and cities, in some cases
expressing them by ornamentation. In addition, he drew in bold, the hills and
mountain ranges shown in elevation of the city around Ajmer, then route to Quetta
and along passages to Kandhar, Ghazni and Kabul. The five rivers of Punjab-Sutlej,
Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum were shown from east to west thus making up for the
Mughal map where Sutlej was missing. Rennell's map was logistically drawn, as it
showed lesser places like wells in squares and rectangles.10

Phillimore claimed that in the Mughal map, very little was known of the country to
the west of Kabul-Kandhar route; the existence of Helmand river was known, but its
course from the west of Kabul was not marked. The map used such descriptive terms
as Qela-fort, registan (reg - sand), a sandy barren tract, sarhad- the border of frontier,
dasht- a desert plain, dariya- a river, a district or part of district- soubah- a kingdom or
state.11

9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.

38
The French, throughout the course of the eighteenth century produced a huge collection of military maps showing the strategic details of the territories such as chain of forts, travel routes for army, serais, sources of water and difficulties of terrains for much part of south India and the Indo-Gangetic plains in North India. For all their political far sightedness, these sources of military intelligence and political rule were taken away by the French sensing weakening of their position in India and understandably for not letting the British to lay their hands on them. These records can now be found in Ex-Provonce Archives in France. It should be noted that the French were far behind the Dutch and the English in map making, applied mathematics and instrument making in the seventeenth century but by the mid eighteenth century the French were producing sophisticated maps based on field surveys and triangulation methods due to active promotion of cartography by the French state to settle international boundary disputes and to complete the national map survey in its ‘desire to advance public works projects.’ By late nineteenth century, Josef W. Konvitz- a scholar on French cartography, states that in the field of map making France maintained a slight lead over Great Britain. In England, the interest in cartography was waning in the eighteenth century.

European Explorers and the North-West Frontier

In India, the British interest in mapping was revived greatly due to the ambitious imperial activities of Wellesley whose war efforts against Marathas had acquired for the British the strategic Indo-Gangetic doab. Though it still took nearly two decades and immense persuasion from the Trignometrical Survey officials as well as the political exigencies of ruling and knowing the newly acquired territories for the Company to open its coffers to further seriously promote map making. But

---

13 See Rose Vincent (ed.), The French in India: From Diamond Traders to Sanskrit Scholars (Bombay, n.d.).
16 Edney Mathew, Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India 1765-1843 (Chicago, 1997)
Wellington’s administration set the tempo for promotion of mapping so that the war with Marathas was over in North India. An army officer, Francis Whit was entrusted to survey the newly acquired territories north of Delhi which roughly covered the present day regions of Gurgaon, Karnal, Rohtak and Hissar. But before White began his survey, he had at his disposal maps made by a French adventurer, Michel Pierre Gacion. In addition, there were also survey reports of the late eighteenth century by a ‘native’ geographer Mughal Beg, especially of southern Punjab and Bahawalpur region.  

Michel Pierre Gacoin was in service of the Raja of Jaipur and was made prisoner by the British when he came to Kanpur in 1800. Gacoin’s map of his travels in upper Hindustan showed routes traveled from as early as 1784 till 1800 covering routes from Surat via Baroda to Jodhpur from Talner on the Tapti via Ujjain to Jaipur, Delhi, Agra, Aligarh, Lucknow and also route to Lahore and Jammu. Despite his use of the French orthography in maps which was ‘not always intelligible’, the information and routes in his map was new and good enough to be inserted in the new general map of India. Later, Gacion, after traveling along the banks of the river Jamuna, delivered to the Surveyor General Henry Colebrooke a survey of the river in four sheets. The survey represented the Jumna River with all its fords and ferries, and contained all the towns, forts and villages on its bank to about 160 miles above Delhi - a part of the river that had never been surveyed before.

Francis White had at his disposal Gacion’s map when he began preparing a map of the area lying between Delhi, Hansi and Jaipur with the help of local informants. In July 1806, the Surveyor General made clear instructions to White:

As government have distributed all, or most, of the conquered countries to the west of the Jumna among a number of Native chiefs, a particular map showing their respective boundaries, as well as the British boundary, is particularly wanted...your general map should also include the boundaries of the Seik territories, and of the

---

19 Ibid. pp. 57-58.
Bikaneer and Jaipur Rajahs, the countries of the Matcheree and Bhurtpoor Rajahs...and the little district of Badshapoor belonging to Sumroo Begum. With respect to the Bhurtpoor country, little more is wanted now than to survey the Northern part of it, as our Army during the late war traversed the southern parts of it in various directions and to ascertain the boundary line between it and the British territory...  

While surveying the region around Alwar, White was intimidated by Rajah’s abrupt orders to ‘quit his country.’ Rajah’s wukeel prohibited his going to Laswaree and supposedly gave secret directions to the zamindars of the villages to ‘give false answers’ to his enquires. White notes in his diary:

the Rajah had become so extremely suspicious of the survey....; on the other hand I was very desirous to ascertain whether there was any other ghaut besides that of Kishengarh...through which guns, & c., could proceed; I therefore determined to march...by Tijaree.  

However, Rao Rajah of Matcheree sent a Risala along with White on this route which prevented him to make any notings. The Surveyor General inserted White’s map of the Rao Rajah’s and Bhurtpore countries into his general map but also conveyed to the British government about the difficulties White met during the survey. White was now directed to survey the territory of the Sikh chief- Bhang Sing and map out the importance of this region from the military point of view. This survey took White away to the West, and his field book shows that he was at Bhatinda on June 13th. His appointment as the surveyor of the north-west frontier was now ‘extended indefinitely.’ By 1808, White had ascertained the British boundary from the river beside Kurnal upto Agra and acquired a general knowledge of the region between Kurnal, Patialah, Hissar, Rohtuk, Rewaree and Agra.

White worked for another six months and surveyed the surrounding regions of Delhi. The Surveyor General described this as a “Plan of the City of Delhi, and a map of the country for near ten miles round it, which would be very useful in case of another attack on the capital.” In January 1809, White finally closed this survey with a
trigonometrical survey of the Badlee ki Sarai and Jumma Masjid – two regions that proved to be critical in the success of the British in the war against the rebel collective in 1857. His map depicted ‘the old city gates of the city including Kashmiree gate and the Koorseah Bagh with a road outside the city wall.’ White also drew in his field book, “a very neat plan of the interior of the fort reduced from a large Hindostanny Map” of Delhi. 22

Soon after the conclusion of the Delhi and the surrounding regions survey, White was to be involved in the surveys further up in Sikh territories of Ranjit Singh, which were promptly planned by the British government largely in response to the strong rumour of Napoleon’s invasion of India from the north-west through Central Asia but also gave them a reason to ascertain their boundaries in the North-West. The British sent their political envoys to Lahore, Kabul, Sind and Persia. Charles Metcalfe who led the mission to Lahore with the objective of ascertaining ‘eastward limits of Ranjit Singh’s dominions’ was supported by British troops under Ochterlony. Francis White traveled with Ochterlony’s force on route to Lahore as the Surveyor. 23

Metcalfe procured for White a protective passport from Ranjit Singh and letters to all the regional thanedars to survey in the south west districts of Lahore mainly the regions of Faridkote, Bhatinda, Sirhind and Amballa. In late January, 1809, White moved to survey these regions with the passport and along with one of Ranjit Singh’s Chobdar as a confidant. He was also given protection of an escort of 30 regular troops and few Maulvi Patans horsemen. 24 He reached Durumkote on 1st of May and it is here that for the first time, he faced a major opposition from the locals to the surveying activities. He records the following in his diary:

On my arrival near Durumkote, several shots were fired at me... the Thannadar with a body of Sieks of about 40 horse and the same number of matchlock men came towards me, and began to act in a very hostile and imperious manner. I attempted to explain to him that I had the Permission of Runjit to proceed through the country, and was accompanied by one of his Chobdars, but this was so far from answering the purpose that the Seiks laid hold of the unfortunate Chobdars, and gave him such a

---

22 Ibid., p. 61.
23 Ibid. see pages 61-65
24 Ibid.
beating that I thought they would have murdered him; they were not sparing in their abuse to me...resistance from so small a party would have been unavailing, and must have occasioned our total destruction...the ten horsemen were so much intimidated that they were of no use to me...after some consultation they permitted the baggage to proceed, but insisted upon my returning from Runjeet’s Territory...25

Nearly after six months, White’s field party was attacked again in December, while on work between Bhatinda and Patiala by a large party of Sikh horse and foot. This time the loss was the loss was serious. All of White’s baggage including his field book was plundered. The Sikhs killed three sipahees and three servants and wounded nearly half of the 68 sipahies and 10 Irregular horse accompanying White. Both of White’s horses were killed and his party left crippled to the extent that this survey had to be terminated. A considerable part of White’s papers were recovered later.

In April 1811, the Surveyor General reported that:

Lieutenant F.S. White’s communication of his survey in Battinda are satisfactory, and, being of a country hitherto almost unexplored by Europeans, prove a valuable addition to our stock of geographical knowledge, tho’ [sic.] not conveying a minute description of it. His opportunities of surveying being restricted to the Marches of the Detachment, in a Wild and almost desert country, whose savage inhabitants would inevitably have cut off any small party separated from the Main Body of the Troops.26

By the time White’s survey was suspended, he had prepared a map of the region between ‘Delhi and Sutlej, bounded on the East by the Jumna and Nabha Hills, on the North by the River Sutlej from Makowal to Ferozepore, and on the west by Ferozepore, Batinda, and Banter.’

Thus, by the first decade of the nineteenth century, Delhi and regions around had been re-mapped and the Company was already looking beyond its Delhi frontier.

25 Ibid., p. 63.
26 Cited from Dehra Dun volume no. 82, in Phillimore, Vol II, p. 64.
In 1808, when it appeared that the French indented to carry the war in Asia, the British Government in India sent a mission to the King of Kabul under Mount Stuart Elphinstone to ward of French influence in Kabul and to make a treaty with the ruler that would allow no alliance with the French against the British. The British sent a small team of surveyors with Elphinstone headed by Lieutenant Macartney of the 5th Regiment of the Native Company and lieutenant Tickell of Bengal Engineers. This embassy which left Delhi on the 13th of October 1808, composed of a considerable number of troops with nearly one hundred men of the native cavalry, two hundred infantry and the a hundred of irregular cavalry. Elphinstone was engaged for two years before the mission was finally dissolved and during this period Elphinstone collected information which were "likely to be useful to the British government." 27

In 1830 Alexander Burnes traversed Sind via the Indus and visited Lahore, where Shuja-ul-Mulk expressed his longing to see an Englishman at Kabul, and the road between and India and Europe opened. On his return to India, however, the government of India decided to dispatch him on a mission to Afghanistan, and at the close of 1836 he, with his party, set out "to work out the policy of opening the River Indus to commerce." Kandhahar at this time was bent on Persian alliance and had sent presents to the Shah and the Russian embassy. The Russian alliance was unpopular at Kabul, and the dissolution of the friendship with the British was deplored.

While the Persians were laying siege in Herat in 1837, under the ageis of Russia, the English in India on account of these movements across the border, were turning their attention to safeguarding of their own frontier. The danger was believed to be great and imminent.

It took the deterioration of political situation in the neighborhood of Punjab after the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 combined with the daunting task of administering the newly acquired territory of Sind in 1843, for the British to now take much more efforts to secure its frontier. This development also coincided with the Russian movements in Central Asian Khanates and the disastrous retreat of the British army

from Kabul in 1841 where around 17,000 people were killed by the ‘frontier tribes.’ The alarm was both with in and outside the British territory.

But apart from the mission whose nature was more ‘political’ rather than ‘geographical’ in nature, the early nineteenth century is replete with European adventurers traveling in Afghanistan and Eurasia at their own risk. Charles Masson for instance, who was a deserter from the army, traveled initially disguised as an American from Kentucky. William Moorcroft similarly, in the 1820s, though had been given permission by the Company to travel to buy horses in Central Asia was never given an official status to his journey. Arthur Conolly and Claude Wade, during the same period travelled in Persia and Kandhar at their ‘own risks’.28 A first hand account of many of these travelers are available and we need not dwell upon them here, sufficient to say that we need to further probe the question as to why in the first half of the nineteenth century the Company state showed no urgency to promote travel beyond its frontier in the north-west except for its ‘political needs’.

**Death Danger and Native Explorers**

Lieutenant J. L. D. Sturt was employed as a surveyor north of Kabul and during his stay in Afghanistan he made sketches of the surrounding hills which he promised to deliver to the Surveyor General. Captain Sturt was killed in January 1842 during the ‘disastrous retreat from Kabul’ in the aftermath of the well known Afghan Campaign of 1838-41 and with this was lost the ‘promised sketches’ and maps of this not so frequently traveled region by the British.29 Death was not uncommon for the European travelers, adventurers and political agents who wished to make a foray in the terra-incognita of the trans-himalayan region in the nineteenth century. In 1825, William Moorcroft was killed near Bokhara and in 1857, the German explorer Adolf Schlaintweit was murdered near Kashgar. Alexander Burnes (1805-41), was hacked to death by the ‘Kabul mob’.30 George Hayward, an accomplished traveler of the Royal Geographical Society of London met the same fate in July 18, 1870, when he was

---

28 See George W. Forrest (ed.), *Selections from the Travels and Journals Preserved in the Bombay Secretariat* (Bombay, 1906), Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay.
treacherously murdered’ while on his way to map the Pamir passes in the no-man’s land between Russia and India.31

The Schlagintweit brothers were known to geographers and naturalists in the Royal Geographic Society before their being employed by the East India Company because of their surveys in the Alps Mountains.32. The Company asked them to go on an exploration of Ladakh through the Nubra valley and into what they called ‘Turkistan’. They left Ladakh on July 24 1856, reaching Nubra and from there crossed the Sassar Pass at about 17,500 feet. They stayed there for two days making magnetic observations. From Sassar Pass they journeyed through the large plateau to the South of Karakoram and crossed, ‘without any difficulty, the frontier of Turkistan.’ They were accompanied by Mani, the Putwaree of Nilum; by Marshoot, a former servant of Moorcroft; and by Mahomed Amir, an aged Turkistani, whom they found ‘particularly useful on account of his general knowledge of the country.’ But beside this, they had six horses and eighteen servants, thirteen of them to carry their load alone, five Yarkandis, and fifteen goats and sheep. From the Sassar Pass, their servants from the plains did not accompany them and the Schlegintweits had to dress as Yarkandis in order to travel further. At some point of time during the journey, one of the brothers Adolfe decided to make a journey towards Kashgar all by himself but little he know that it was to be his last journey.

While discussions went on at London in the Royal Geographical Society proceedings about the fate of the Adolfe Schlagintweit, his whereabouts and his possible return to India, it was later confirmed from the letters of his attendants and native explorers at Ladakh that Schlagintweit was indeed murdered by the orders of Wulli Khan, the chief of the raiding party in Kashgar. Apparently, Schlagintweit had taken a refuge in this region which the Khan had recently acquired. It was also confirmed that as the customary practice, Schlangintweit had asked for an interview with the Khan. According Abdullah Mahomed, an attendant- who accompanied Schlangintweit from Kashmir, when the German traveler was killed Abdulla made a return journey going

31 Ibid, pp. 344-45.
all the way to Peshawar via Bokhara and Kabul. He reported the events to the Commissioner of Peshawar H.B. Edwardes on 23 January 1859, nearly eighteen months after Schlagintweit was last heard of.\textsuperscript{33} We are told that Schlagintweit was refused an interview, “and was carried as a prisoner to the Khan, who, without any questioning or any apparent reason, ordered him to be beheaded. The execution took place immediately, outside the city of Kashgar. The informant was sold as a slave, but after various difficulties contrived to reach India.”\textsuperscript{34} We get a slightly different narrative of events from Mahomed Amir of Yarkand (Ladhak) who was also a courier to Schlagintweit. Mahomed informs that he advised Schlagintweit not to journey in-to Yarkand after the confrontation with the Khan- But contrary to a local attendant’s advice Schlagintweit carried on further. Mahomed Amir thus describes the episode of Schlagintweit’ murder like this:

On their approach to Yarkand they were treated with courtesy, receiving and giving presents. Thence they went to Kashgar, which was occupied by a Khojah of Kokan, who had installed himself in the city with his Mussulman troops; but the army of Khutta was in the field, besieging him, and every day there was a fight. The Khojah’s people “asked who we were? M. Schlagintweit replied, that he was the Hon. East India Company’s envoy, and was going to the Khan of Kokan; upon this they got into a rage, and ordered M. Schlagintweit to be beheaded, and I, with my followers, to be thrown into prison, and plundered of all our property. After thirty five days the army of Khutta overpowered the khojah and forced him to fly, and the informant was released.\textsuperscript{35}

It is interesting to note, that unlike Pottinger, Conolly and Stoddart, who lost their lives in (Bokhara) Central Asia, Schlagintweit did not get the privilege of having being traced officially after correspondence between him and the Survey Department was lost. Could the reason be because he was a not a British, or because his travel towards Yarkand was not considered to be politically important, these questions needs to be pondered over before any conclusion can be drawn. However, one should remember that this was a period when the Company was struggling to keep its

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35}Ibid.
political existence intact primarily in Northern India because of civil and military uprisings and rebellions of 1857-59. Most of its efforts being directed in that sphere, Schlagintweait death may not have created enough of an uproar in the Royal Geographical Society circle and the Survey Department in India. The events after his death and the sheer absence of efforts to trace Schlagintweait for two years was in quite contrast to George Hayward who was murdered nearly a decade later during his expedition to the Pamirs.

George Hayward was an ex-army official who had been promoted by the Royal Geographical Society in London to carry out explorations of the passes between Kashgaria and Ladhak. He came to Gilgit in July 1870 in order to cross over to Pamirs -via Yassin and Badakshan route. A year before, Hayward had tried entering the Pamirs through Yarkand, but he had been denied entry through that route and now he was determined to make over to the Pamirs through other routes. At this precise time, Gilgit was nominally under the Maharaja of Kashmir who had acquired the right to that region from the Sikhs in.....and the Sikhs had acquired their possession of the region from the local chiefs. It so happened that when Hayward came over to Gilgit to make a bid towards Yassim, he chanced upon a Yassin’s local chief’s representative, at that time present in Gilgit and sent through him some gifts to Mir Walli the Chief along with his wish to be entertained in that region. Apparently, Mir Walli took him to be a British political agent and thus took this opportunity to press for a negotiation through him to the British authorities about his political right over Gilgit which his ancestors had lost. But as we know, that Hayward’s journey had been promoted by the Royal Geographical Society in London and his object was not to strike a political negotiation with the local chiefs of the regions he traveled but to satiate his own adventurous and exploratory spirit and through it contribute to the scientific and geographical concerns of his patrons. But having said that, the larger objective of explorations in the Pamirs was primarily a political one, and a prime concern was in the ‘Great Game’ between Russia and Britain.

George Hayward, upon reaching Yassin camped his tent for three nights only to realize that owing to winter, the route to Badshakan was closed and he will have to make a fresh start next summer. Mir Walli, on the other hand obtained promises of address of his case to the British authority and sent his own representative along with
retreating Hayward. But as it transpired for obvious reasons, Walli's case remained unattended and naturally he seemed furious with Hayward at his arrival in Yassin again in July. Moreover, Walli Khan had instructions from Iman-ul-Mulk, the raja of Chitral to not allow the British traveler to directly take the route to Badakshan but instead divert his route through Chitral to make an audience with the Chief and as sources tells us to part with some of his 'untold wealth' in the form of gifts which apparently he carried for his journey ahead. Hayward had much more baggage with him than he had during the last journey in the same place. Thirty three coolies carried his camp and in addition, there was a munshi, a Kashmiri khansaman, a Kashmiri chuprasi and two pathans whom he employed in his service at Gilgit. Such a big retinue for a single man must have been unusual. Finally, after a heated argument with Mir Walli, Hayward was able to procure coolies for himself to carry his baggage on the road to Badshakan, but little did he knew that he would pay the price for not complying to the local chief's wishes with his life.36

Hayward thus began his last journey from Yassin towards Badshakan covering just 22 miles in a week's time reaching Darkut pass on the 17 July, he wrote “Carrying heavy loads is by no means a practice in that part of the world, and coolies very likely refused to go beyond their own bounds, and so caused a delay too.” Fredrick Drew an independent explorer in service of the Maharaja of Kashmir, who was later asked by the Maharaja to report and investigate the plot of Hayward's murder states the following in his report:

Mir Walli having made up his mind to plunder and murder his guest- the man who had done his best to serve him- sent shah Dil Iman, one of his relations, ad Kukali, a man well known in Yasin, with, some say, as many as sixty men. These reached Darkut in the evening of the same day that saw Mr. Hayward arrive there: and the collection of so many in a small village aroused attention, and- although Shah Dil Iman said he had been sent to see Mr. Hayward safe over the Pass- even suspicion. There had been yet another cause for doubt in the mind of Mr. Hayward, in some words which leave his master's service; so much influence had these doubts on Mr. Hayward that he sat up all that night prepared, expecting an attack. The headman of

36 'Letter from Mr. Fredrick Drew to Sir Robert Murchison, on the Death of Mr. Hayward, Jummoo, 21st December, 1870' in PRGS, Vol. XV, Session 1870-1, Nos. I to V (London: Whitehall Palace, 1871), pp. 117-120.
the Darkut village describes him as sitting in his tent, with the candle burning, with
guns ready on the table before him, and writing, but in his left hand holding a pistol.
No doubt, he thought that if he could tide over the danger of this night he might
escape free, for close in front of his camp was the ridge, the boundary of Mir Walli's
country, which crossing in the next march he would have reached Badakshan
territory, out of reach of Mir Walli's treachery, and have had new countries before
him to find his way through. It was not, however, to be. The watch kept certainly
deterred his enemies from an attack during the night; but these people are masters in
the kind of warfare that consists in surprises: they waited their time, and when, by
sun-rise, Mr. Hayward, thinking all danger over, lay down to take an hour's rest
before the day's march, their opportunity had come. The position of the camp helped
their design: it was at a little distance from the village, in a small garden at the edge
of a thick pine-forest; in this they could collect their men, and even stand them near
to the tents without observation. It seems that they did this on finding out that the
object of their wiles was asleep, and then Kukali entered the tent with a rope, picked
up from among the baggage, and while others came on and held in check and bound
the servants, he, aided by more, seized Mr. Hayward and bound his hands behind
him: and then they led both him and his servants away from the camp into forest, for
a distance of a mile or more, Mr. Hayward on the way offering them a ransom for his
life. When they had come that distance they stopped, and Shah Dil Iman, drawing his
sword, cut him down with a blow on the neck that must have killed him at once; and
this was while he was in the act of saying a prayer. At the same time four out of the
five servants were killed close by; the bodies were covered up with heaps of stones,
and so left.37

Later Fredrick Drew was to say about Hayward:

he had many of the qualities that make a good explorer. But he was more fitted to do
the part of explorer in a continent like Australia than in Asia, where nearly every
habitable nook is filled up, and where knowledge of human nature and skill in
dealing with various races of men are at least as much wanted as ability to overcome
physical obstacles...His fate, the fate of being at an early age barbarously, almost

37 Ibid.
wantonly, murdered by the order of one whom he had made a friend of and tried to
benefit, filled all with indignation as well as regret.38

While fear of death acted as deterrent to the policy of encouraging the British officers
to make an exploration in the region of frontier region of the North-West, in contrast,
the local people of the frontier region could easily travel through the areas which to
British were terra-incognita. This conspicuous aspect which seemed so banal was
used by Captain Montgomerie a surveyor trained under Andrew Waugh, the surveyor
General of India (1843-61). Montgomerie is credited with the development of a novel
system of explorations where the lead role of traveling, recording, and mapping was
given to ‘native men’ who generally came to be known as ‘pundits’.39 The surveys of
routes in the stupendous mountains of the North-West were exceedingly difficult,
requiring great skill, caution, and scrupulous care to prevent the intrusion of large
errors. To meet this end, the local explorers were first trained in the skills of
surveying, mapping and route recording. Following this they were kept on probation
for sometime, the success of which decided their future journeys and a handsome pay.
It was in 1863, that Montgomerie first sent a local to procure information and make
observations in Yarkand. He believed he was the first native to accomplish such a
journey.40

But as a matter of fact, it was not the first time a ‘native’ was making such an
exploration. Philimore records an example as early as 1774, when a sepoy officer was
sent to collect information on the territory between Bengal and the Deccan.41
Educated Indians were taught to use compass and perambulator. John Hodgson, in
charge of the survey in the north -west of India, sent a Brahmin posing as physician
(“with medicines for those unfortunate ones as to become his patients”) up into
Ladhak and Western Tibet in 1813. The Brahmin returned with some useful
information, and Hodgson considered sending him to Kahsgar ‘to get some idea of the
distance and route to the nearest part of the Russian dominions.” Both James Tod in

38 Frederic Drew, The Northern Barrier of India: A Popular Account of the Jummoo and Kashmir
39 ‘Report of the Trans-Himalayan Exploration during 1867, by Captain T. G. Montgomerie, B. E., of
the G.T. Survey, from the Original Journals, & c., of the Trans-Himalayan Exploring Parties.’ In
40 Ibid.
41 Philimore, Volume I, pp. 286-7

51
Rajputana and Lloyd in Nagpur employed a number of *Harkaras* collecting routes. Tod spent a considerable amount of private money on them; Webb also employed men to collect accounts of routes into the mountains, and this led to the surveyor general to put the matter before the Government. The surveyor General did not think too much of the practice and stated that “These native surveyors work hard for small pay; they can penetrate into parts of the country inaccessible to Europeans, and collect valuable information...there can be no doubt of this method of procuring intelligence being very economical, the expense being trifling, but I do not consider it respectful to encourage it without the express sanction of the Governor General in Council.” Later, the Surveyor General wrote that the government have “notified to me that they wish to throw cold water on all natives being taught, or employed in making geographical discoveries. As a result, Lloyd was stopped from sending out *harkaras* on surveys and Tod had to discontinue the practice due to lack of any re-numeration. The government of India, thus discouraged this practice by refusing to provide funds for native explorers. The government did not want Indians to be taught surveying techniques to acquire geographical information about the country, especially the sensitive northern border areas. The use of Indian explorers, therefore halted except for their occasional use by individual travelers and adventurers, until the need to obtain geographical intelligence beyond the borders required reconsideration of the policy.\(^{42}\)

William Moorcroft traveled in Tibet in 1812, and at the same time sent an “intelligent native friend”- Mir Izzet Ullah to explore Central Asia and reconnoitre the area with a view to developing its trade potential with India.\(^{43}\) Mir Izzet Ullah crossed the Karakoram pass and visited Yarkand and Kashgar before halting at Bokhara and returning in 1813 by way of Kabul.\(^{44}\)

Fortunately for Montgomerie, the post ‘1857 uprising’ period was a favourable one. While rebellions in North India had been quelled, British the government was gradually becoming occupied with the development on the frontier once again after Afghan wars of 1839-42 and the conquest of Sind and Punjab in the 1840s. His

\(^{42}\) Ibid, pp. 354-5  
\(^{44}\) Phillimore, Vol. IV, p. 290
proposal of introducing the system of training the local people as surveyors was well supported by Lord Lawrence the governor general of India. Another aspect, perhaps in favor of Montgomerie was the post 1850 victorian enthusiasm for science, keen interest in new technology which had provided gas and electricity, railways and steamships. The Royal Geographical Society became and long remained a pre-eminent source of information on nature of the physical world and on the means of getting about it. There was also increasing romance towards traveling and communicating. Montgomerie himself read many papers on the trans-Himalayan surveys for which he was training Indians to travel in disguise. It was not surprising to find something of this kind occurring with the native explorers:

With the end of the Waziri campaign of 1881...many and exciting were the adventures that befell the plucky native explorers who made their way about them. One explorer disguised himself so excellently well, that on arriving at an unexpected point of the frontier, our own local police positively declined to recognize him as anything but the foreigner he had pretended to be. His indignation with the police led to a scrimmage, and landed him in a frontier jail, from whence he was extracted with the loss of some important records.

The new recruits were trained to ‘penetrate difficult countries’, acquire languages, and to make observations rendering their journeys of ‘high scientific value’. The explorers were taught to observe but not to reduce their observations which were done by their officers after their return to headquarters. On their journeys the explorers took bearing in the direction that they went, and measured the distance in paces. They carried with them beads and “in a Buddhist country they tell their beads just as rosary might be

46 See Index to the Journal of Royal Geographical Society (1851-60 and 1861-70).
47 T. Hungerford Holdich, Through Central Asia, reprint of 1901 (Delhi, 1996), pp. 68-69. Holdich presents slightly romanticized account of another disguised explorer: “another assistant of mine disguised himself as shikari...and accompanied other shikaris right into the heart of that most difficult country which overlooks the Afridi Tirah, some years before any campaigning in that country was dreamt of. His experiences were most amusing, but he was never inclined to repeat them. He lived in dens and caves for the most part, and the caves possessed more than human occupants. He could not undress, and he could not wash. He lived with the people, and as one of them. He took his plane table and surveyed boldly till he was shot at by an alien clan. Then he returned, with a most useful contribution to our frontier geography. This stood us in good stead afterwards when we visited the Afridi country under other auspices," pp. 70-1
used in a Roman Catholic country." At every 100 paces they dropped a small bead and at every 1000 paces a larger one and thus taking a strict measure of the distance they covered. This, however, had to be done without arousing a suspicion. In the exploration of Tibet, for convenience, the explorer was given a prayer-wheel, into which he inserted his compass and the memoranda of the day’s distances and bearing, and he went “about twirling this round and round, after the manner of the religious people of the country, and thus preserve a character of respectability.”

Many persons were not fully aware of the dangers involved in the exploratory journeys. Pundit Nain Singh the much known ‘native explorer who began as an explorer in 1856-7 in the service of Schlagentivists, (the German brothers who were carrying magnetic and scientific observations in Ladhak and Kashmir) with in two decades ‘was rendered unfit to carry out more observations; his eyesight injured from the constant use of instrument in a very trying climate exposed to constant glare and alternate heat and cold of Upper Tibet. ‘They traveled at the risk of their lives every moment; for if one of the scientific instruments which they possessed had been detected in their boxes, they would have been put to death. These pundits had been able to traverse the country where no European would be safe, and to make a series of observations for latitude and longitude, and to determine the height of a great many mountains, approximately, 3000 feet higher than Mont Blanc.”

The native explorers also exposed them selves to ‘great peril from death by starvation or thirst not to speak of their liability to attack by wandering tribes or robbers.’ However, not every trained local explorer stuck to his task. In one instance, a native surveyor by the name of Allum Ullah after being trained with ‘compass duties’ and with a salary fixed from the Survey Department, “spent all the money entrusted to him with bad companions,”

49 Ibid.
50 ‘Statement of H. Trotter’ in S.T.S. Trans Himalayan Explorations, 1873-77, Volume 30/2 (NAI)
52 ‘Statement of H. Trotter’ in S.T.S. Trans Himalayan Explorations, 1873-77, Volume 30/2 (NAI)
sold his instruments and spent the money raised by it and ‘did not leave his home for any other foreign place.’"53

The journey accounts of a local explorer could look quite intriguing and interesting. See for instance, expenses incurred by Ata Mahmed explorer from February to December 1876 in the trans-frontier region.54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of Expenses</th>
<th>In Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toll and presents on the road</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll and presents on the road at Gor Village</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll and presents on the road at Gilgit</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll and presents on the road at Puniar</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll and presents on the road at Kaduchi</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll and presents on the road at Muldikoh</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll and presents on the road at Kohistan Mabizi</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarai hire</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferry hire to Kashgar to Peshawar</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waziri Bala Beg of Yasin</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen of Yasin</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wazir Rahmat of Yahran</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present to king Palwar of Yasin</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present to Chust Hakim of Yarum</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicines to Basha</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black mail to robbers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53 Translated letter from Persian to Colonel J. T. Walker, superintendent G.T. Survey of India in S.T.S. Trans Himalayan Explorations, 1873-77, Volume 30/2 (NAI)
54 Memo. too H. Trotter, 25th August, 1875 from Tehsil Hashtnagar, Peshawar, in S.T.S. Trans Himalayan Explorations, 1873-77, Volume 30/2 (NAI)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carriage of merchandise from Peshawar to Yarbum</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants pay @ 15 rupees per mensem from Feb. to Oct. 1875</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants engaged at Gilgit</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes for horse</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire of a horse from Peshawar to Dehra</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise sold to Hakim Chust of Yassin</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise sold to Dewan Chuniyad</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid for a horse</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Rupees</strong></td>
<td><strong>1678</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tolls and presents were an important part of the journey leading into unknown regions and person may have to change his disguise sometimes from a trader to a *Hakim* or a *faqir*- religious man without losing sight of his objectives towards making route maps. These were rituals which the European travelers and adventurers performed themselves. Disguising was an important part of journey without which moving freely in a new region was difficult. When Colonel J. T. Walker, the superintendent of Grand Trignometrical Survey of India employed some men in 1873 to make observations in the Pamirs, he found that these men being professional traders would only ‘stick to the main road’ and would not succeed in getting ‘collateral information’, since they would be afraid of ‘exciting suspicion by endeavoring to trace it.’

---

55 Letter of J.T, Walker to T. Pollock, Commissioner Peshawar, dated 28th June, 1875, Mussooree in S.T.S. Trans Himalayan Explorations, 1873-77, Volume 30/2 (NAI)
Lifting the Veil from the Hills: The Race for Chitral

After the annexation of Sind in 1843 and of Punjab in 1849, it was the Indus river which roughly came to be identified as a ‘natural’ North-West Frontier’ of the British Indian Empire. The region bordering the other side of the river became increasingly important as British ambitions to control largely the political activities beyond the frontier became more prominent. In the official language it was not so much the internal matters on the frontier region but those beyond it were to govern the nature of British policy on the frontier - the policy was becoming more ‘imperial’ in its nature. It is not a coincidence that after 1860s we see a spurt of exploratory activities in the north-west. This region can be broadly understood to occupy Gilgit, Kashmir and Pamirs on the North to Afghanistan and Belochistan in the West. The ‘Great Game’ was picking up momentum and we see the Russian political envoys visiting the Amir of Afghanistan and the Khan of Khelat at regular intervals. While Russia and Britain played the diplomatic game of having Afghanistan as a buffer state in their favour and in their influence, they also encouraged sometimes openly and at other times secretly, the exploration of these regions by their local secret explorers and then by trained official surveyors. It is not surprising that whenever an opportunity for an expedition arose, the official surveyors with their armed party were instantly ordered to march along. The party of survey officers accomplished several of such military survey expeditions in 1880s, where while the officials prepared maps on their plain tables, the troops kept guard. Thus these military surveyors were in an absolute contrast to the lonely, individual and disguised local explorer. But there was another group of local explorers who did not travel individually but assisted the British officers in surveying often also acting as guides and were expected to warn the surveying party of any attack or conspiracy from the population and still there were those who accompanied them from the plains of India. In one instance, Thomas Holdich, the Surveyor General pointed out:

Whenever demarcation was carried there also spread the network of triangulation binding the tops of mountains together and trellising the plains with its invisible threads, reaching out long arms to far-away hinterland, and fixing the whole into geographical position. Then followed the native surveyor, making maps of the land surface, and searching out hidden topography. It is impossible to say too much about
the value of these native artists in the field. They work silently and indefatigably, never hurrying, never resting, never talking, and seldom complaining. One of them was once lost amidst dust storms and haze in the desert south of the Helmund. In that red-hot land of volcanic rocks and earthquake cracks, of snakes, lizards and poisonous water, it is usually fatal for a man to lose his way. For five days he wandered about without a guide, living on leaves and roots until he struck the camp again. Luckily he came across water or he would have died there, and we should have had a gap in our mapping.56

The geographical space of the ‘north-west frontier’ became a space of ever increasing military and exploratory activities, however, in this grand region there were areas which were considered more important or more ‘strategic’ from others. First, it is important to look at the terrain of this region. The Indus River had not been an obstacle to the historical invaders of India, but it was the mountains of the Hindu Kush which offered resistance, but for some of its passes through which invading armies could march in. By maintaining a lengthy line of communication and armed forces to the passes, the British could defend its frontier. The northern part of the Afghanistan’s border was a hilly piedmont rising up to the Hindu Kush. The passes were closed for long periods of the year due to snow. At the eastern end was a complex chain of mountains and valleys called the Pamirs, which was comparatively much less explored by the British than the other regions of its north-west frontier. At the western end was the low mountain range of the Paropamisus and the town of Heart. The Herat valley was a fertile strip in a region of semiarid hills, watered by Hari-rur River. To the south of Hindu Kush lay another chain of mountains and two prominent cities, Kabul and Kandahar. There were further complications on the flanks of the Indian ‘frontier’. To the south of the mountains North West Frontier was the great Baluch desert. In case an invading army avoided the difficult Afghan mountains, they could turn towards this open southern flank, supplying its troops from Herat in Western Afghanistan. However, the British occupied this region in 1870s and also realized that the scarcity of water would rule out a threat from this direction. It was then, the mountains of Pamirs above Kashmir which provided a formidable resistance to an invasion but also through some of its passes provided a possibility of threat along with some independent ‘hill states’ joining in.

56 Holdich, Through Central Asia, p. 240.
Three regions stood out along the chain of Pamir Mountains, these were Chitral, Hunza and what the ‘Afghans’ called ‘Kafiristan’. These regions were understood to be very critical in the defense of the Indian frontier. All three regions became the scene of exploits by local explorers and scouts of the Intelligence Department of the Army. ‘Kafiristan’ had the same kind of fascination for Victorians as the Upper Nile. For the British was an entirely virgin territory, as untouched by the old Islamic civilization that has conquered India as by the British; for “kafir” in Arabic meant “unbeliever.”

British explorer John Wood’s account on Kafiristan was a reflection on the understanding which helped in furthering explorations in this region. On his encounter with a ‘kafir’ he wrote:

> The Mussulmans unwittingly give high praise to this people when they acknowledge, as they readily will, that one kaffir slave is worth tow of any other nation. They add that they resemble Europeans in being possessed of great intelligence, and from all that I have seen or heard of them, I conceive that they offer a fairer field for missionary exertion than is to be found anywhere else on the continent of Asia. They pride themselves on being, to use their own words, brothers of the Firingi; and this opinion, of itself, may hereafter smooth the road for the zealous pioneers of the gospel.

In the 1880s, when the British political rivalry with Russia was rising, an Army officer, Major R. Gorden wrote in a letter to the Times:

> a course of action for the security of our hold on northern Afghanistan, the Cabul Valley and the Khyber which has apparently hitherto either neglected or not thought of. It is simply to form an alliance, offensive and defensive, which the people of the country, misnamed by the Afghans Kafiristan, bordering on and commanding the whole of the Cabul Valley and the Kyber, at a distance of barely 50 miles – a race of brave warriors, numbering nearly a million, calling themselves Kami or Kamdeshi, descendants of the Greek colonies left by Alexander the Great at Candahar (Iskandhrhar- i.e., the city of Alexander) and at Cabul (Kampul the city of the Kami),

---

who love us and call their European brethren and have repeatedly sent piteous appeals to us for our help and alliance against their hated Afghan foes, who find a religious delight in murdering them as infidels or profit in kidnapping and selling them for slaves, they being white like Europeans.59

If some British explorers were ostensibly overcome by the need to save their non-Islamic brothers in Kafiristan, a more serious agenda was put forward by Francis Younghusband an official explorer and the political agent at Hunza in 1889, for the importance of Chitral for the British Indian frontier. For Younghusband, Chitral was important because it lay on the flank of the line of defense- Attock, Peshawar and Kabul and from this line there were roads leading down into the territories nominally under the control of the British- the first from Nowshera to Peshawar and the other one from Kunar Valley to Jalalabad. Younghusband proposed a strong possibility of the Russians making an entrance in this place from Dorah and Baroghil passes and ‘working on the mountain tribes’ who inhabit the region between Chitral and the plains of Punjab by ‘promise of loot and plunder’ and could with the help of these free booters repeat the history of invasion of north India.60 According to him this was real possibility since the Russian frontier lay right down to the bend of the Oxus River at Iskashim- with in a dozen miles of Chitral frontier.

In a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society in 1895, Younghusband opined, that in reality ‘the country is but a poor one’ and ‘a very small fraction of it was cultivated. Yet this is the country which will every year become of more and more importance in our Imperial affair, and it is the very fact of its sterility and inaccessibility which has caused so much interest…the rich accessible countries of Asia have been overrun again and again; but round these secluded little mountain states of the Hindu Kush, the tides of conquest have surged without disturbing them.”61 Later, the same year after a military expedition had been carried out in Chitral and a local uprising had been quelled against the British political agent, Younghusband wrote to the Secretary

59 Schuyler Jones, An Annotated Bibliography of Nuristan (Kafiristan) and the Kalash Kafirs of Chitral (Copenhagen, 1969) pp. 40-41.
60 ‘Note on the Dir route to Chitral’ by F. E. Younghusband to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Simla, 20th May, 1895 in Foreign Department Proceedings, 1895, No. 982 (NAI).
to the Government of India stating that even though the barren valley of Chitral may not support with supplies the invading army of Russia but the same valley led to the fertile valleys of Bajaur and Swat where enough supplies of grain and fodder could be found.

It is indeed somewhat surprising that the first journey in Chitral by a British officer Macartney, was carried out in as early as 1808, when the invasion of Chitral was nowhere in contemplation. Macartney seems to have relied a great deal for his itinerary on Indian traders for the route in Chitral which ‘debouches on the Oxus’, though the British also had available to them the mid eighteenth century register of the Jesuits, who under the Chinese government, pushed their research as far as Sarik-Kul, on the extreme frontier of the empire. Later in the century, the main credit of exploring the Pamir and Chitral regions went to a group of local explorers who were only secretly acknowledged in the meetings of the Royal Geographical Society. In the journal of the Geographical Society their actual names do not appear but they were recognized as Pundit Manphul, Muhammad Amin, Faiz Buksh, the Havildar and the Mullah to name some prominent of them. In addition, Major Raverty who published his account in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1862 and 1864 volumes, Major Biddulph whose account ‘Tribes of the Hindoo-Koosh’ was published in 1880 and to these were added the journeys made between 1885- 1900, by Mc Nair, Ney Elias, William Lockhart, Colonel Durand, Dr. George Robertson and Fracis Younghusband. Here we would limit our selves to the accounts of the ‘native’ explorers whose journeys were never published except in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society where they are available in second hand.

A great interest was taken in the native explorer ‘Mirza’s’ journey by the members of the royal geographic society as he covered up the intermediate space between the Russian territories and British Indian territories. Through this journey, the Russians and the Indian explorers had approached within twenty miles of each other. Mirza

---

began his journey of the Pamirs in 1868 and entered Kashgar, like the British traveler George Hayward who was murdered in Pamirs, from South. The most interesting portion according to Montogomerie of Mirza’s line of route was that he followed the valley of the Upper Oxus, “from the junctions of the two arms of the river at the fort of Penja to the source of the left branch in the Pamir Lake;” he then crossed over the watershed to Tash-Kurghan, and from that town pursued an entirely new track to Yendi Hissar, and then to Kashgar. Major Montogomerie considered this route as an entirely new route of geography. As far as Penja, another English explorer Lieutenant Wood followed the same route, but at that point the route divided and while Wood traced the right arm of the river, Mirza traced the left. More than six centuries ago Marco Polo, had probably taken precisely the same route as the Mirza. Mirza’s observations corresponded to those made by Mirza Hyder- cousin of Mughal Emperor Babar in his account *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* which agreed in all essential points with Mirza’s discoveries and also with the observations made by the Jesuits working for the Chinese government.64 Mirza completed an important task of uniting the route covered by George Hayward who had made a detour by Gilgit, Yassin, and the Darkut Pass to the valley of the Oxus. The Royal Geographical Society claimed that though “the line of country along the Upper Oxus river was not absolutely unknown, but at the same time...the Mirza’s journey was by far the most important that had been undertaken along that particular track, being in fact the only journey which supplied materials at all fitted to the scientific requirements of the age.” The most important discovery of Mirza was that “the Pamir highlands were not, as had been supposed, a transverse range joining the Himalaya with the Thian Shan Mountians to the north, but were, in fact, a prolongation of the axis of Himalaya.”65 Mirza’s journey determined the great watershed which separated ‘Eastern Turkistan’ from the basins of the Indus and the Oxus, viz., the Pamir-kul Lake which came between the Mustagh Pass and the Sirikul lake discovered by Lieutenant Wood. Though neither of these explorers could discover the ‘real source of the Oxus.’ Further, Mirza’s description of the rivers of Kashghar and Yarkund was very valuable because it ‘nearly co-incided’ with the statements left on record by Mirza Hyder in the Tarikh -i-Rashidi, and seemed to be more accurate than the statements of the English travelers.

64 Report on Mirza’s Exploration...in PRGS, 1871
65 Ibid.
Mirza was followed by a pathan explorer nick named the 'Havildar' in the Pamir region. Though both travelers had different destinations to reach, both uncovered routes which proved very critical to the 'knowing' of the Chitral Valley- a region which was to become the hotbed of war between the British and the local chieftains of the valley two decades later as well as a political dispute with Russia who carried imperial ambitions towards Chitral. How discovering and knowing these regions through the local explorers helped British to wage a successful military campaign in this region and subsequently laying down officially the 'North-West Frontier' in agreement with Russia is an issue I will discuss in detail in my last chapter. For the moment, we must get back to the story of Havildar whose narrative of the journey, fortunately for us, is produced in full in the proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society.66

In 1870, T. G. Montgomerie was looking for a suitable ‘native’ who could be trained to proceed beyond the British frontier from Peshawar to Faizabad- the capital of Badakshan surveying on the way the route from Peshawar, through Swat and Chitral, to Badakshan. While the German brothers Schleagintweits could not go beyond the region of Hunza (?), another British explorer George Hayward was murdered few miles away from Chitral. This was a difficult tract to traverse, mostly mountainous and the passes being closed for most part of the year due to snow beyond the Swat valley. In addition, this region could bring hostile response to the new travelers as seen with Hayward. Montgomerie was ‘fortunate enough’ to find at his disposal, after making several attempts, a Pathan sapper. Consequently, he was ‘carefully trained, and after several preliminary trials, was started on an exploring expedition, with instructions to carry a route survey from peshawur through Swat and Chitral, to Badakshan.”

Havildar started with a small party from Peshawar on 12 August 1870 crossing Swat by the Malakand Pass on a range with a height of 6000-7000 feet reaching on the 15 August, Alladand, the capital of the then ruler of Swat, ‘a small poorly built town of 300 houses.’ The next day they reached the Swat River- a mile and a half north of

Alladand, and crossed the stream on rafts. The same day, they ascended the opposite mountains through an easy pass crossed over the Lurrum Mountains into the Talash district coming down to the Punjkorra river which appeared to them larger than the Swat River. From the Punjkorra River they walked through Jundul (Jandol), the largest district of Bajaur reaching on 18 August, Miankilai, the chief town of Jundul and the capital of the province. From there, they traveled for 5 days to reach a small town of about 400 houses called Dir. It is at this place Havildar and his party realized that the route further from Dir to Chitral was a ‘dangerous one’; the travelers were frequently attacked by ‘kafirs’ and many were killed and this was testified by the graves of the travelers on the side of the road in hundreds, they were called the ‘tombs of the martyrs.’ Both in Dir and Chitral it was a custom for the traders to collect in large numbers, sometimes as many as 200 at the same time, so that they can start the journey together. However, by the time Havildar reached Dir, the party of traders had already left for the northern route of Chitral. The sapper then, asked for armed escort from the chief of Dir who seemed to have been satisfied by the answers of Havildar, when asked about the object of his journey. The Havildar, then presented a ‘handsome gold-laced scarf’ to the chief and pointed out that “it would be simple madness for his small party to go by itself, he begged that the chief would kindly send an escort with them.” Fortunately for Havildar, the chief consented and sent with him an escort of 25 armed men. The whole party now crossed the Lahori Pass, close to mountains 14,000 feet and ‘after a very trying march’ reached the village of Ashreth. Here inspite of their escort they were attacked by ‘kafirs’ ‘who swarmed in about the village’ but helped by the locals to escape from being plundered. Their escort accompanied them out Ashreth village down to the valley of Koonur River, finally parting from them at the village of Galtak, in the Chitral district, where an escort was no longer necessary. In another two days on 31st August, the whole party reached Chitral and camped there for five days. During this time Havildar had an interview with the chief who was a ‘styled Badshah’ by the local people. In a futile attempt the chief through his wazir tried to exchange a portion of their goods at ‘his valuations.’ Leaving Chitral, the Havildar traveled further north in a very trying climate in to the Hindu Kush range and passing through a pass descended into Daigul the first village of Badakshan in about two weeks from Chitral and from there made their way to

---

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
Zebak, the same village which Mirza had passed but from a different route. Their stay in Badshakan and their return journey from Chitral was also full of incidents and the Havildar escaped few chances on his life. His party came back to Peshawar on the 13th December and 'neither he nor any of his men had added another mound to the tombs of the many Mahomedan martyrs' who had fallen on that road. In total Havildar covered a distance of 286 miles 'over entirely new ground' which had never been before surveyed by an explorer. The journey touched upon a great number of districts and determined with accuracy a number of important places. It accounted for the geography of about 13,000 square miles of terra-incognita. He, however, could not boil his thermometer on the passes for the fear of being detected, except for the Nuskan pass, where he could not find any wood, him being far from the limits of forests.

In his report, Montgomerie concluded that Chitral had always been a 'great desideratum' because of its position immediately north of Peshawar and that the Havildar had 'very satisfactorily' determined its position. In addition, he fixed a number of peaks by bearings which aided the 'solving the geography of the surrounding mountains.' Praising Havildar, he further stated:

the sapper deserves all credit for his great pluck and endurance as well as for the discretion with which he penetrated through such a difficult country, without, I believe, getting into a dingle disturbance with the people of any districts he traversed, through constantly bullied by requests for legal and illegal tolls which were made at most places. I am convinced, moreover, that his undaunted bearing on his return journey, which the chief (of Badakshan) had guessed his secret, was the means of preventing himself and party from being sold into slavery, or possibly from a worse fate; the wily chief probably thinking that his co-religionists who showed such a bold front did so because he was backed by something more than the few men had with him.69

---

69 Ibid.
Conclusions

The Latin word *terra-incognita* comes with loaded meaning and implications. Literally it meant a territory not known, but its definition is to be understood by comparing the experience and perception of the same territory by the British and the non-British. Throughout the course of the nineteenth century, the British pursuit of ‘new’ territories was primarily a quest for ‘knowing.’ This task of ‘knowing’ was undertaken by individuals who many times did not and could not represent the state, this was true especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. This task of ‘knowing’ was ridden with adventure, doubts, accidents and a fulfillment of personal agendas. As the ‘great game’ caught up in central Asia, new projects of exploration were promoted by the British state beyond its Punjab and Sind frontiers, the trained ‘local’ explorers became the lynchpin of these ventures. The ‘theodolite’ was indeed followed by the ‘gun’ but sometimes the order could be reversed, such seemed to be the imperial need towards the latter half of the nineteenth century. But often mapping opened up new routes on the frontier for military expeditions which in turn led to more surveys and map making. The relation between the ‘small wars’ and map-making was complimentary.

One is made to believe the ‘originality’ and novelty of routes, geography, and the living norms of the frontier societies when we read official sources. But one is immediately reminded of the contemporary trends in economy and society which ran parallel to the colonial dialogue with the frontier ‘tribes.’ There was a constant outflow of people -merchants\(^70\), traders, and peddlers\(^71\) from India in Afghanistan and central Asia going as far as Astrakhan and Baku at the Caspian Sea.\(^72\) This flow was not one-sided, as travelers, pastoralist, horse sellers, camel drivers, banjaras and a whole medley of people came down in to the markets and ganjs in the plains of north India as well in to the sea ports in western India.\(^73\) There were also strongly rooted


\(^73\) S.P. Chablanl, *Economic Conditions of Sind 1592 to 1843* (Bombay, 1951), pp. 51-117.
communities from Chitral, Swat valley, Roh, and Afghanistan who were either permanent or semi-permanent settlers in Rohelkhand in the Ganga Yamuna doab and Katiher to the west of Delhi from the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The British must have been quite alive to these connections and therefore they relied a great deal on locals for information and to become part of or rather control such trading networks, more so since their own presence evoked hostility from the people beyond the ‘frontier’.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, mapping and surveying in India had come full circle. One just have to see the common features of the Francis White (basically a route surveyor) surveying in Delhi in 1805 and Havildar’s journey in Chitral in 1870. In the mountains, route surveys had returned very strongly, a trend which was dying out in the early part of the nineteenth century for its supposed inferiority to trignometrical surveys. The comparison between White and Havildar is also a contrast between mapping and surveying in the plains versus mapping and surveying in the mountains. Conducting a plain table survey in the mountains had its proven difficulties, the first was that the unevenness of the surface often induced big errors in measurements and second, one person alone was not sufficient to conduct such measurements. Such surveys were only conducted in the mountainous territories during a military expedition or under sufficient re-assurance from the local authorities to the surveying team that their party will not be attacked and their paraphernalia not be destroyed. For these reason, route survey was a good option in the mountains and it could be carried on by an individual, who were trained enough to perform their task secretly, without exposing their field notebooks and other instruments.