

Gath Valley Mission

NEW ALLIANCES FOR AFGHANISTAN AND AMERICA

Agenda

- ▶ Nuristani Tribes
- ▶ “Kafiristan”
- ▶ New Alliances
- ▶ Gaths and Gath Valley

Nuristani Tribes

- ▶ Do not have a formal tribal structure like the Pashtuns
- ▶ Six from the north-south valleys and 30 from the east-west valley
- ▶ Fiercely independent
- ▶ Descend from central Asian tribes and Greek invaders led by Alexander the Great



“Kafiristan”

- ▶ Region called “Kafiristan” during 19th-century British influence
- ▶ Kafirs (“unbelievers”): Pagan beliefs until forcibly converted to Islam in the late 1890s
- ▶ Hinduism and Zoroastrianism plus local gods and spirits
- ▶ Each village and each clan had its guardian deity
- ▶ Shamans advised the help-seekers and priests presiding at religious services
- ▶ Cults centered on the sacrifice of animals, mostly goats





“Kafiristan”

- ▶ Similar to the faith of the Kalash people of northwestern Pakistan
- ▶ Indo-European religion evolved into Greek and other famous pre-Christian religions of the region

New Alliances

- ▶ Marginalized tribes
- ▶ Likeliest to welcome aid against Taliban
- ▶ Coalition open even to the Gathis?
- ▶ Easier for other other disparate elements to get along



Gaths and Gath Valley

- ▶ Distinct ethnic group
- ▶ Long history of conflict with neighboring tribes and past invaders
- ▶ No one has ever succeeded in taking Gath Valley



Gath Valley Mission

- ▶ Mobile forces based in Gath Valley
- ▶ Clearly a defensible position
- ▶ Gaths have held it for centuries
- ▶ Harder for Taliban to sneak across Pakistan border

