

Resilience or Assimilation: A Critical Analysis of the Burial Practices of Kalasha in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the burial practices and death rituals of the Kalasha tribe of Chitral, Pakistan and explores the process of change or development in the burial practices and decline of gandau (Kalashamon: burial memorial effigy) and gundurik (Kalashamon: burial memorial effigy) making. Once the whole of Chitral Valley was inhabited by the indigenous and pre-Islamic Kalasha people and Chitral was their chiefdom, later they were ousted from the rule when the Chitral was taken by the Muslim rulers. The people, later, concentrated themselves in the southern valleys of Chitral and gradually lost their grandeur. Though they are struggling for their survival, but gradually are losing their cultural traits. Their burial practices have been hit badly for various reasons. Sharuga (Kalashamon: feast of merit) and installing the ancestral effigies were a central portion of their tradition which they had almost deserted. They changed burial practices and follow their Muslim neighbours, though there

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are some old traditional graveyards but in pathetic condition and need the attention of policymakers.

Introduction

The studies carried out under the theory of cultural assimilation read that the assimilation of any culture is a course of development, change or modification; natural or engineered, the majority community absorbs the minority wholly or partially. The non-dominant group gradually discards its customs, traditions and norms and adopts the norms of the dominant group around them.¹ Once the Kalasha was a ruling tribe of the Chitral Valley (upper to lower) centuries ago, in the 14th Century they were raided by the Muslims and were pushed towards the southern Chitral² and later they were limited to three valleys and now these are at the vulnerability of their survival; conversion is a great challenge for the community. The burial rituals are very expensive; therefore, some old Kalasha folks prefer to convert to avoid the expenses of very costly death rituals³ the *gandau* [Kalashamon⁴: burial memorial effigy] and *gundurik* [Kalashamon: burial memorial effigy] are two wooden memorial effigies and are installed in the cemeteries and around the villages according to the Kalasha *dastoor* [Kalashamon: religion and tradition]. However, *gandau* and *gundurik* installing ceremonies have been assimilated for socio-economic pressure, the Kalasha traditional graveyards have been shrunk not only in the converted valleys, but also in three practicing valleys.

The Kalasha is a Dardic people genetically belong to Aryan stock of the mighty Hindu Kush (eastern) region; in the

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- 1 Conard Phillip Kottak, *Cultural Anthropology*, 9th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 92-93.
 - 2 Muhammad Kashif Ali, "A History of the Kalasha in Pakistan: its Origin, Change and Continuity" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of the Punjab, 2019), 66-67.
 - 3 Din Muhammad Kalash, Interview by the author, Bumburet Valley, August 23, 2007.
 - 4 Kalashamon is the language of the Kalasha people and belongs to Dardic branch of Indo-Aryan family.

district Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.⁵ The genetic scientists have significantly studied the Kalasha community, collected some samples of DNA from the community for investigation and are not convinced that the Kalasha community has any Greek ancestry,⁶ as claimed by some authors and by some of the Kalasha themselves. The Kalasha is the sole pre-Islamic community of the region. They live in three mountainous valleys: Birir, Bumburet and Rumbur. Bumburet is their largest valley; orthodox to some extent while Rumbur is considered the cultural hub. The Kalasha is a micro-ethnic and religious minority of Pakistan with approximately 4000 population.⁷ The road infrastructure helped a lot to Kalasha to be familiar with the modern world, otherwise they were living in a prolong isolation till 1970s when the valleys were connected with Chitral town via a jeep-able road.⁸

The early history of the community is shrouded with different myths and folklores which suggest that the tribe migrated to current valleys from an unknown region called Tsaym in the Kalasha traditions.⁹ On the other hand, some historians from the time of the British Raj suggest that the tribe has some connections with Alexander of Macedonia or at least with Greek. John Wood identifies them as European race,

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- 5 Qasim Ayub, *et al.*, "The Kalash Genetic Isolate: Ancient Divergence, Drift, and Selection," *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, 96, no 5 (May 2015): 775-783, accessed August 16, 2015
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0002929715001378>, and for detail see, Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 41-48.
 - 6 Atika Mansoor *et al.*, "Investigation of the Greek Ancestry of Populations from Northern Pakistan," *Human Genetics*, 114, no. 5 (Apr. 2004): 484-485, accessed May 26, 2007.
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/cu0k72w3mhlb45tv/fulltext.pdf> and Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 47.
 - 7 Muhammad Kashif Ali & Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, "Socio-Cultural Life of the Kalasha People of Chitral: A Study of their Festivals," *Pakistan Vision* 20.2 (2019): 42.
 - 8 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 167.
 - 9 Saifullah Jan, "History and the Development of the Kalasha," In *Proceeding of the Second International Hindu Kush Cultural Conference*, ed., Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 239.

Holdich suggests Greek connections with the Kalasha tribe and George Robertson, one of the renowned and early classical researchers of the Kafir Studies of the Hindu Kush, also suggests that Kafirs of the Hindu Kush are some western race, and he suspects Greeks.¹⁰ However, today we have the support of modern sciences to post-mortem the myths and facts. The genetic studies refute the western, European or Greek origin for the Kalasha people of Pakistan and identify them as early Aryan, and other sciences like linguistics and archaeology support the idea.¹¹

The Kalasha Traditions and Customs of Death

“One occasion which defies the cycle of season, is the ritual of death. It is a celebration, unlike the mourning in other societies.”¹² The Kalasha is the most unique tribe of Pakistan in terms of their customs and traditions; their traditions and rituals of death are remarkably different from other ethnic groups of the country. The community celebrates the death as they celebrate the birth.¹³ They accept the death as the will of God; therefore, they arrange a farewell funeral with feast.¹⁴ Peter Parkes elaborates the feasting giving, “The giving of feasts (cast, jire) is one of the central institutions of the Kalasha culture. Together with their religious festivals, and their practices of wife-elopement, it is stated to be one of the ‘three great customs’ (treghonadastur) that defines Kalasha identity in relation to their neighbours.”¹⁵ Mytte Fentz writes, “The souls of the deceased, weather having lived in Rombur, Momburete or Birir, will all go to Palar the white mountain above the Rombur valley. It is even said that

10 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 39-41.

11 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 47-48.

12 Alaudin, *Kalash: The Paradise Lost* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1992), 171.

13 Meeta Gull, interview by the author, May 13, 2008, Grom Village, Rumbur.

14 Muhammad Kashif Ali, “A Happy Farewell: Kalasha Community is Unique — it Seeks Merriment in Death,” *The News International*, July 31, 2011.

15 Peter S. C. Parkes, “Alliance and Elopement: Economy, Social Order and Sexual Antagonism among the Kalasha (Kalash Kafirs) of Chitral” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Oxford, 1983), 482.

heroes from the society, who are associated with the fairies, are welcomed at the peak of Tirsch Mir.”¹⁶

The Jestak-han [Kalashamon: temple] (Fig. 1 & 2) is the temple of the Jestak female divinity (Fig. 3) of the community and the functionality of the Jestak-han is not less than a community hall. During performing the death rites, the male tribe fellows dance around the dead body, which is kept, most of the time, in Jestak-han. The deceased is praised by the mourners especially by the Kazis¹⁷ [Kalashamon: headmen of villages] of three valleys.

Before 2010, all the three valleys of Kalashdesh were poorly interconnected via any phone or mobile services; therefore the whole tribe was informed by the informers sent to other two valleys in order to convey the death news so that they could participate in the funeral rites. Generally, the body of the male deceased is kept for three days¹⁸ while Alaudin claims the body of the female deceased is kept for one day only.¹⁹ Late Shah Jawan, a key informant from village of Rumbur valley, clarifies that no dance is performed as death rites at the female funeral or those children who died before their *goshnik* [Kalashamon: the ritual of passage] as per the Kalasha *dastoor*. The ritual dance is called *pala'e* [Kalashamon: a type of dance] and Shah Jawan called the celebration *jashan* [Kalashamon: festivity].²⁰ The death of a child in the Kalasha society is considered very unlucky and melancholy. Therefore, no celebration of death is observed, and the dead body is taken to the graveyard without rituals as observed for the adult deceased.²¹

16 Mytte Fentz, *The Kalasha: Mountain People of the Hindu Kush* (Humblebæk: Rhodos, 2010), 422-23.

17 Basically, the Kazi is considered a religious leader and custodian of the Kalasha *dastoor*.

18 Ali, *A Happy Farewell*.

19 Alaudin, *Kalash: The Paradise Lost*, 171.

20 Shah Jawan, Interview by the author, May 13, 2008, Grom Village, Rumbur.

21 Irum Sheikh, "Traditional Culture as a Space for Identity (A Case Study of Village Bumburet Kalash Valley)" (PhD Diss., Quaid-i-Azam University, 2013), 75-76.

It is quite natural and emotional that the family members of the deceased mourn (especially women) over the death when all the tribe fellows sing, perform the *pala'e* around the *charpoy* [Urdu/Kalashamon: bed] and take their share from the feast of death *jashan*. The primary author observed in 2017 that wife and daughters (of Taroon Kalash) were sitting around his dead body with gloomy faces and were mourning. Three colours, traditionally, are very sacred for the community; Red, Black and the White.²² Therefore, during the *pala'e* dance performing, the red flag is waved and later is placed on the grave (Fig. 4) of the deceased.²³

The funeral *jashan's* feast for the tribal society is a pricy and luxurious feast which is managed by the family of a deceased for one to three days as per their economic conditions. Different edibles like mutton, purified butter, local wine, cheese and wheat are consumed in great quantity during the feast. In older days, it was common to bury the belongings (gun, dagger, knife, jewellery) with the departed soul, but people have ceased this practice due to vandalization of graves or coffins²⁴ and now they keep their tradition alive with symbols of spear, sword, knife, dagger, axe (Fig. 5) etc. carved on the coffins.²⁵

The traditional *Chapan* [Kalashamon: robe] and *kaus* [Kalashamon: leather shoes] are put on to the deceased after the bath on the first day of death, a *dastar* [Kalashamon: headgear] is also used to cover the head of deceased and the same day the deceased is taken to the Jestak-han of the clan where the relatives and tribe fellows of nearby villages join the assembly; they start beating the drum, sing the songs and perform the *pala'e*. As the time passes and news of death reaches to different corners of

22 Generally, red is associated with religion, black with Bashali and white with settlement.

23 Akiko Wada, *Kalasha: Their Life & Tradition* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publishers, 2005), 98.

24 Wazir Zada Kalash, Interview by the author, May 16, 2008, Batrik Village, Bumburet.

25 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 162.

three valleys, people come in little groups, and on the arrival of each group a brief praising address is given by some elder to recall the good deeds and virtues of the deceased, his clan and ancestors. On the first night of death, the tribe fellows from the same valley perform the *pala'e* for the whole night and they are offered food by the family of the deceased. The other tribe-fellows, male and female, start to reach on the funeral on the second day in smaller groups. On arrival of each group, the leader of the group gives a brief praise address followed by *pala'e* along with songs on beats of the drummers. The first day, most of the time, bread and cheese is offered as funeral food while on the second day mutton is prepared as a funeral feast offered to the Kalasha and the Muslims participants. The sheep and goats are sacrificed in the Muslims way. Again the whole night mourners dance and sing, but this time only those coming from other two valleys. The wooden coffin for the deceased is prepared on the third day and for first time the family members for a short time perform the *uzhul'ek* [Kalashamon: a type of dance]²⁶ the ritual dance with heavy hearts. On the same day, the coffin is taken to the graveyard, women are forbidden to go with the funeral procession.²⁷ Akiko Wada writes that one day after the burial *Khushurik Histik* [Kalashamon: burial ritual] ritual is performed and some guests and family members go to the graveyard to spread bread and cheese for the departed soul.²⁸ The spouse of the deceased starts the *shok* [Kalashamon: mourn]²⁹ which lasts to the upcoming festival of the Kalasha tribe, and when it ends the female spouse gets some fresh flowers while the male spouse is allowed to get shaved his head or beard.³⁰

26 The literally meaning of *uzhul'ek* is goodbye.

27 Arab Gul, "Funerary Rituals and Sites of the Ancient Kalasha Tribe in Pakistan," (Masters thesis, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2015), 14-18 and Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 163-64.

28 Wada, *Kalasha: Their Life & Tradition*, 101.

29 The mourn period.

30 Wada, *Kalasha: Their Life & Tradition*, 102-103.

Din Muhammad Kalash, a key informant and headmaster in a public school from the Anish village of Bumburet valley, grumbled during the interview in the summer of 2008 that death is natural, but its rituals are very expensive for the poor tribe, and he considered it a major tool or reason for the conversion. He expressed that in the early years of the 21st Century some progressive Kalasha met with elders to convince them to reduce the expenses of death customs but they failed.³¹ Arab Gul, a graduate Kalasha, endorses Din Muhammad and writes that in 2001 some young Kalasha members of a local and indigenous welfare organization³² met with the Kalasha elders to convince them on the matter but they failed.³³ Sher Alam, another informant of the primary author, is also a school teacher and hails from the Sarikjaw village of Bumburet valley and he nullifies Din Muhammad and Gul and he claims that the wealthy family manages the funeral feast while a meagre family is supported by the whole community.³⁴

Participation in a Kalasha Funeral

In June 2017, the primary author attended the sorrowful funeral event when an old folk named Taroon Kalash passed away. He was hailed from Bumburet, the largest Kalasha valley, and his ancestor was the legendry Kalasha ruler Raja Wai. The Kalasha tribe is further divided into clans and every clan has its own Jestak-han or at least separate emblem of deity Jestak in the Jestak-han. His dead body was kept (Fig. 6) in the Jestak-han of his clan situated in Batrik village. As the mourners (from all three valleys) were getting news of the death. They were proceeding towards the death assembly of Taroon in small packs. Every group was headed by an elderly person who addressed the assembly, gave his

31 Din Muhammad Kalash, interview by the author, August 23, 2007.

32 Kalasha Culture and Saving Society (KCSS).

33 Gul, "Funerary Rituals and Sites of the Ancient Kalasha Tribe in Pakistan," 20.

34 Sher Alam, interview by the author, August 23, 2007, Sarikjaw Village, Bumburet.

words of praise to the departed soul, his clan and forefathers and after the silence of a few minutes the new group already present there started to perform the *pala'e* with songs over the beats of drummers. Meanwhile, daughters, wife and other female relatives of Taroon were shedding tears, seated around the *charpoy* of Taroon. The young boys were offering the funeral food to the mourners outside the community hall.³⁵

Change in the Burial Practice

The cultural change and cultural assimilation are the major reasons behind the practices of burial. Historically, it is established that in the past the tribe was used to put the coffins on the ground under the skies as Alexander Burnes observed and recorded in 1838;³⁶ Halfdan Siiger also verifies it.³⁷ However, we know that now the Kalasha bury their dead bodies as their neighbouring the Muslim do and this is due to indirect pressure from the majority, education and tourism. The community has been burying their dead for the last three to four decades under the ground as Muslims do.³⁸ Still, we can observe the leftovers of human bones, skulls and coffins in the old cemeteries in different valleys of the Kalashdesh. Turab Khan (aka Irfan), a Kalasha spokesperson of Birir and key informant, recalled the far historical tradition regarding burial practice that in past (time unknown) there was some pandemic in the Kalashdesh which resulted in the high death toll and it was not possible to bury them, so the dead bodies were kept in open space on the ground and gradually it became the burial trait of the

35 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 162-63.

36 Alexander Burnes, "On the Siah Posh Kaffirs with Specimens to their Language and Costume," *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, no. 76 (April 1838): 327, accessed December 16, 2016, <https://ia601207.us.archive.org/28/items/journalofasiatic776asia/journalofasiatic776asia.pdf>.

37 Halfdan Siiger, *Ethnological Field Research in Chitral, Sikkim and Assam: A Preliminary Report* 36. no. I Kommission Hos Munksgaard, 1956, 18, accessed June 7, 2017, http://www.royalacademy.dk/Publications/High/623_Siiger,%20Halfdan.pdf.

38 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 164.

community.³⁹ Akram Bulasing Kalash, another informant and officer at the local museum in Bumburet, has another version of burial tradition as he expressed in the summer of 2017 that open graveyards were not the original Kalasha way of burial. He could not specify the period but claimed that in the past the community had to face invasion or attacks by opponents who were greater in numbers compared to the Kalasha people; therefore, the tribe had to take refuge in caves of high mountains, and in the crucial period it was not possible to bury their deceased and a new tradition emerged.⁴⁰

A Brief Survey of the Kalasha Graveyards as Dying Tradition

In the Kalashamon, the language of the Kalasha tribe, the graveyard is called *mandaw-jaw*, which is a compound word⁴¹ with literally meaning a place of many coffins.⁴² According to local traditions and customs, the graveyard is the second most impure space after the Bashali,⁴³ therefore it is not a good idea for them to visit it on routine days. They visit it only for funeral or when they celebrate installing a new wooden memorial or ancestral effigy.⁴⁴ Today, in Jinjeret Kuh, Birir and Bumburet valleys the leftovers of old graveyards as their tangible heritage can be seen, however, Rumbur valley is an exceptional case with no open graveyard. The tradition of open graveyard was in practice till 1980s in two valleys of the Kalashdesh; Birir and Bumburet. The largest ancient graveyard (Fig. 7) of the tribe is in the Bumburet valley in the western village Karakal.

39 Turab Khan, Interview by the author, August 24, 2007, Guru Village, Birir.

40 Akram Bulasing, Interview by the author, June 25, 2017, Batrik Village, Bumburet.

41 Mandao means coffin while jao or jaw reads as many.

42 R .C. F. Schomberg, *Kafir and Glaciers: Travels in Chitral* (London: Martin Hopkinson Limited, 1938), 49.

43 A Bashali is like maternity home where the Kalasha ladies give birth to their babies and spend their menstrual period, it is built outside the village on the bank of the river.

44 Schomberg, *Kafir and Glaciers*, 49.

There are hundreds of old coffins with human remains scattered in decaying coffins and on the ground. It is a major attraction for the tourists, however, unfortunately, some of them become destroyers of the heritage. Recently, there were pieces of news that the Directorate of Archaeology, KP was planning and funding to preserve the local heritage. There are two traditional graveyards in Birir valley; one is in Guru Village (Fig. 8) the other in Grom Village (Fig. 9) both are in pathetic condition and decay is speedy. The smallest cemetery with old coffins and human leftovers is in the Jinjeret Kuh valley, in the village named Zozorik.

Today, Jinjeret Kuh is a valley of Muslim population, but it was a Kalasha valley south to Birir; the process of its Islamization was completed between 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁵ There are still some built-up heritage leftovers of the Kalasha period including remains of a traditional graveyard, one *gandau* and two *kot*⁴⁶ [Kalashamon: watchtower]. There were total five *kots*, but Karl Wutt counted them only three in 1970s. The author found only two in 2017, other have been vanquished. In one *kot* some old articles like metal utensils, wooden pots, axe, walking sticks, sacred horns of *markhor* [Urdu/Kalashamon: Capra falconeri] etc. are preserved by an English welfare activist Maureen P. Lines,⁴⁷ while other *kot* has been encroached on by the Muslim community and two loudspeakers (Fig. 10) of the nearby mosque have been installed on it. The Cacopardo brothers, Italian researchers, reported in 1980s that the cemetery of Zozorik was fairly larger⁴⁸ (Fig. 11) but when the author visited the same village of Jinjeret valley, there was only one coffin (Fig. 12)

45 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 52.

46 In fact, the kots were multi-functional. Their usage was as watchtower and fortress.

47 Muhammad Kashif Ali, "Jinjeret: Apni Tarikh say Inkari Chitral ki aik Wadi," [Urdu: Jinjeret: A Valley of Chitral Defiant of its History] *Dawn*, July 25, 2017.

48 Alberto and Augusto Cacopardo, "The Other Kalasha: A Survey of Kalashamun-Speaking People in Southern Chitral: Part III: JineretKuh and Problem of Kalasha Origins," *East and West*, 42, no. 2/4 (December 1992): 347-48.

left which sooner would be disappeared. The land of the graveyard has been taken as a cultivation land.

The Dying out Ancestral Effigies of the Kalashdesh

The tradition to install the ancestral memorial wooden effigies in the cemeteries of Kalash and Nuristan (formerly, Kafiristan in eastern Afghanistan) was common, but it has been ceased in the Kafiristan completely after its conversion while the tradition is near to extinct level in Kalashdesh. The ancestral wooden statue of human size is called *gandau* and it had been a common trait of the community for centuries to install it in the memory of well-known Kalasha, and was made from the wood of cedar or pine.⁴⁹ There had been a variety of *gandau* in the Kalash; a *gandau* on one horse, one *gandau* on two horses, seated statue and a standing effigy. The *gandau* seated on the horse is called *istori* [Kalashamon: horse mounted statue] (Fig. 13) while one standing is called *poin* [Kalashamon: standing statute] (Fig. 14).⁵⁰ It has never happened to see an ancestral effigy of a woman in any Kalasha valley. However, Lockhart recorded a female memorial statue in Kafiristan in his work at the closing of the 19th Century.⁵¹ Later, Robertson gives a detailed account of *gandau* of women in Kafiristan in his classic work published in 1896.⁵²

The installing of a *gandau* is a very expensive tradition. Though they get the log free from their forests and most of the time woodcarver caved the statue free of cost. Indeed, the feast of merit makes it very pricey and expensive. The feast given on the occasion is called *sharuga* [Kalashamon:

49 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 213.

50 Max Klimburg, "Status Culture of the Kalasha Kafirs in Chitral," *Journal of Asian Civilizations*, XXXI. no. 1-2 (July and December 2008): 172.

51 Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *The Gilgit Mission, 1885-86* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1889), 90.

52 George Scott Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindukush* (London: Lawrence & Bullen Ltd., 1896.), 224-25.

feast of merit]⁵³ while the world *namus* [Persian/Kalashamon: respect] is used in the Kalashamon for a feast of merit which is offered to gain the rank of the clan or family of the feast giver.⁵⁴ Shah Jawan, the custodian of the Kalasha *dastoor* and informant from Grom village of Rumbur, reveals that the *gandau* can be installed any time after the death of some notable Kalasha even after some months or years.⁵⁵ But Alaudin writes in his work that it can be mounted after one year of death.⁵⁶ Shah Jawan is more reliable than Alaudin because he was a Kalasha himself and secondly he was a keeper of his *dastoor*. French anthropologists Loude and Lievre⁵⁷ and Schomberg⁵⁸ endorse Alaudin. Darling writes, "One full year after the death of his high-ranking individual, wooden figures are carved representing him".⁵⁹

The feast giver and some members from his family fetch the neat and spotless log of a tree from the nearby forest and hand it over to a woodcarver who carves out the life-size statue from the raw log. If it is a standing *gandau* it could be 160 to 180 cm in height.⁶⁰ Though there is not a fixed rate for the labour, but woodworker is offered a new dress and some food by the feast giver,⁶¹ Fal-i-Azam, Kazi from Grom of Rumbur, adds cap⁶² and shoes and sometimes sheep or

53 Max Klimburg, "Status Imagery of the Kalash: Some Notes on Culture Change," in *Proceedings of the Third International Hindu Kush Conference*, ed. Israr-ud-Din (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131.

54 Max Klimburg, *Status Culture*, 171.

55 Shah Jawan, interview by the author, May 13, 2008, Grom village, Rumbur.

56 Alaudin, *Kalash: The Paradise Lost*, 12.

57 Jean Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, *Kalash Solstice: Winter Feasts of the Kalash of North Pakistan* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, 1988.), 163.

58 Schomberg, *Kafir and Glaciers*, 51.

59 Elizabeth Gillian Darling, "Merit Feasting among the Kalash Kafirs of North Western Pakistan" (M.A Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1979), 112.

60 Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 166.

61 Shah Jawan, interview by the author, May 13, 2008, Grom Village, Rumbur.

62 Locally called *pakole*.

goat in reward.⁶³ Schomberg gives the rates of labour in his work, "...cost five rupees for a plain standing figure, twenty rupees for a mounted one, and forty rupees if the horse has two heads."⁶⁴

The feast giver manages to have two types of statues; *gandau* which is installed in the graveyard and other is *gundurik* (Fig. 15) which is a small statue carved on a high wooden pool and is installed nearby the village of the feast giver. Before installing the *gandau* in cemetery, the elders give praise to the deceased and the participants dance while marching towards the graveyard. Loude and Lievre records, "As night falls, the praise giving and the dance start. The statue is set up in the field, and the dancers turn around it. The sturdiest of them pick it up, carrying it on their backs as they dance with heavy steps. The hymns to the glory of the deceased say that he is moving back and coming back to life."⁶⁵

Wazir Zada Kalash, an important informant from Chat Guru village of Rumbur Valley and MPA-KP assembly, believes and speaks that the tradition of *gandau* making is borrowed from Kafirs of Nuristan, it is not originally associated with the Kalasha people. He claimed that it was borrowed from Red Kafirs after giving them sheep and goats a long time ago as a price to use their trade mark.⁶⁶ Bulasing endorses Wazir Zada that the funeral system and memorial statue making was adopted from Kati, a pre-Islamic tribe of the former Kafiristan.⁶⁷

History of Existence of the Gandauin Kalash and Decline

The northern areas of the modern day Pakistan were visited by a British military office Captain (later Brigadier-General)

63 Fal-i-Azam, Interview by the author, June 23, 2017, Grom Village, Rumbur.

64 Schomberg, *Kafir and Glaciers*, 51.

65 Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 166-67.

66 Wazir Zada Kalash, Interview by the author, June 23, 2017, Chat Guru Village, Rumbur.

67 Akram Bulasing, Interview by author, June 25, 2017, Batrik Village, Bumburet.

Charles Granville Bruce in the last decade of the 19th Century and he reports some ancestral effigies in the Bumburet valley, "We passed through many Kalash Kafir villages, and occasionally saw their idol. The weird wooden figures on horseback, many of which see where the true Kafirs lives, are, I believe, not made or erected by the slave tribes, but are purely grave monuments in memory of prominent men belonging to free Kafir tribes."⁶⁸ However, Bruce did not give any detail about the clan or feast giver. In fact, his stay in Bumburet was very short when he was marching towards Kafiristan.

R. C. F. Schomberg paid a detailed visit to the Kalashdesh, compared to Bruce, and his work was published in 1938 and gives some detail of the graveyard of the Rumbur valley. He tells about many seated and standing *gandau* in the *mandaw-jaw* of Rumbur and also identifies the notables of the Kalasha for whom the *gandaus* were erected. Achayak was a notable Kalasha, his *gandau* was mounted on a double-headed horse and the feast giver had offered the grandeur feast of merit, 200 bullocks were offered as the feast; the largest feast of the valley. Other than Achayak, he records the *gandaus* of Safar, Kalash Amir, Mahomuret and Khush Beg. The feast of Mahomuret was another lavish and splendour saved in the folk legends. During his visit, only in the Rumbur valley he sees around a dozen *gandau*.⁶⁹ However, with the passage of the time all effigies from Rumbur have been disappeared, stolen, broken or sold to foreigners in greed of earning as recorded by Loude and Lievre in the 1980s.⁷⁰ Max Klimburg, historian and ethnographer, is known as an expert of cultural studies of the Hindu Kush, especially Nuristan. He believes that in all three Kalasha valleys, "...still in the 1950s and 1960s there

68 C. G. Bruce, *Twenty Years in the Himalaya* (London: Edward Arnold Publisher, 1910), 256-57.

69 Schomberg, *Kafir and Glaciers*, 49-51.

70 Jean-Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, "Report on the Kalash Culture," In Alaudin, *Kalash: The Paradise Lost* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1992), 275.

must have existed several dozens of *po'in-gandau*, at least six *istori-gandau*, and, in addition, probably up to two dozen *gundurik* topped by either a mounted or standing or sitting figure."⁷¹

Late Shah Jawan from Grom village of Rumbur was one of the finest woodcarvers. He told in 2008 that he had carved two *gandaus* and the last one was erected in Rumbur in the 1990s by Bashara Khan who gave the feast of merit for his late elder brother, however, later the effigy was stolen from the *mnadaw-jaw*, claimed Shah Jawan.⁷²

Karl Wutt found one *gandau* in Jinjeret Kuh in the 1970s and it was narrated by Cacopardo brothers,⁷³ while during field visit in 2017 the author could not find the ancestral image recorded by Karl Wutt. But found another ancestral effigy (Fig. 16) in Grom village; the new name of the village is Sheikhandeh after conversion. It was being used as a supportive plank of the trail. The trail was damaged on the side of the gorge so to maintain the trail a flat ancestral effigy was placed there.⁷⁴ It already been discussed that about a century ago the JinjeretKuh was a Kalasha adobe.

Faizi Kalash of Brun village Bumburet valley struggled hard to revive the dying tradition of installing of *gandau* after a feast of merit. He spent 20 long years collecting the resources and offered the reasonable feast of merit and installed two life-sized wooden effigies (Fig. 17) in the cemetery of his village in 2008. He installed one ancestral effigy for his father and the other for his uncle,⁷⁵ both the standing *gandau*. For the first time in the history, both statues are protected in an iron cage. As we have discussed, the *gundurik* is an integral part of the feast of merit, therefore

71 Max Klimburg, *Status Culture*, 172-73.

72 Shah Jawan, interview by the author, May 13, 2008, Grom Village, Rumbur.

73 Alberto and Augusto, *A Survey of Kalashamun-Speaking People in Southern Chitral: Part III*, 348-49.

74 Ali, *A History of the Kalasha*, 217.

75 Luke Rehmat, interview by the author, June 24, 2017, Anish Village, Bumburet.

Faizi has installed two *gundurik* (Fig. 18) as well in his village; Brun.

Conclusion

The tradition of giving the feast of merit and installing *gandau* and *gundurik* is very vulnerable these days and near to extinct for several reasons. The major factor behind the decline is the economic pressure. The population of Kalasha valleys, both the Kalasha and Muslims, has been increased while they are losing their pastures due to smuggling of wood, deforestation and environmental menaces. Sheep, goats or bullocks are offered in great numbers in such feasts but they now have least pastures, which mean least flocks or herds. They have the least chances to collect the surplus wealth to announce and offer the *sharuga*. Max Klimburg believes that the educated Kalasha can be influential in the community, so they do not need feast of merit for their ranks in the society, this may be called another major reason of decline of *gandau* and giving the feast. It is a fact, there are some fairly educated and graduated young Kalasha in different fields; MPA-KP Wazir Zada is a graduate in political science, Sayed Gul is the first archaeologist of the community, Nabaig Sharakat is the first advocate, Feroze Kalasha is an information technology graduate and there are many more examples from three practicing Kalasha valleys. Therefore, it seems that the way of gaining the rank in the primitive society is being under change through education. This change is natural in the pace, however, we should preserve the burial tangible heritage of the tribe which existed in the form of *mandaw-jaw*, *gandau* and *gundurik*. One *gandau* which is dumped in the Jinjeret Kuh valley should be shifted to some museum; the last coffin (with the leftover) of Zozorik should be protected in the valley or shifted to Bumburet in Kalashadur Museum. All three ancient cemeteries of Birir and Bumburet should be preserved with protective walls and there should be some instructions at the entrance for tourists to respect their faith. The study has observed that the cultural heritage of Pakistan is facing a serious challenge because it is eroding gradually, and one

such case is the Kalasha burial practices and their tangible cultural material. As observed, many *gandaus* and *gunduriks* in the all Kalasha valleys have been vanquished, stolen and sold illegally. Some are preserved in different museums of Pakistan including Lahore Museum, Peshawar Museum, National Museum Karachi and Chitral Museum. Schomberg counted the number of *gandau* in Rumbur and Bruce in Bumburet as we have discussed. Today, in three practicing Kalasha valleys we have only three *gandau* and two *gundurik*. Two *gandau* are in Bumburet and one in Rumbur. Only the Bumburet valley possesses two *gundurik*. Birir valley, in this context, is poor, having no *gandau* or *gundurik*. The different departments/ministries of the country related to culture, archaeology and minority affairs should look after the micro-ethnic minority to preserve their culture and tangible cultural material.

FIGURES



Fig. 1: Exterior of Jestak-han, Birir Valley (Photo: Muhammad Kashif Ali, 2017).



Fig. 2: Interior of Jestak-han, Birir Valley (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 3: Three planks of emblem of Jestak in Jestak-han of Grom, Rumbur (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2015).



Fig. 4: Kalasha graveyard of Rumbur with red flag (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2012).



Fig. 5: Carving of symbols on a Kalasha coffin, Bumburet (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 6: Dead body of Taroon in Jestak-han, Bumburet (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 7: Karakal Graveyard, Bumburet (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 8: Guru Graveyard, Birir (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 9: Grom Graveyard, Biri (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 10: Watchtower (Kot) of Jinjeret Kuh Valley (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 11: Zozorik Graveyard in 1980s, Jinjeret Kuh Valley, the photo was taken by Karl Wutt, a German researcher, in 1976 and was reproduced by Alberto and Augusto Cacopardo (December 1992).



Fig. 12: The last coffin of Zozorik village, Jinjeret Kuh Valley (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).

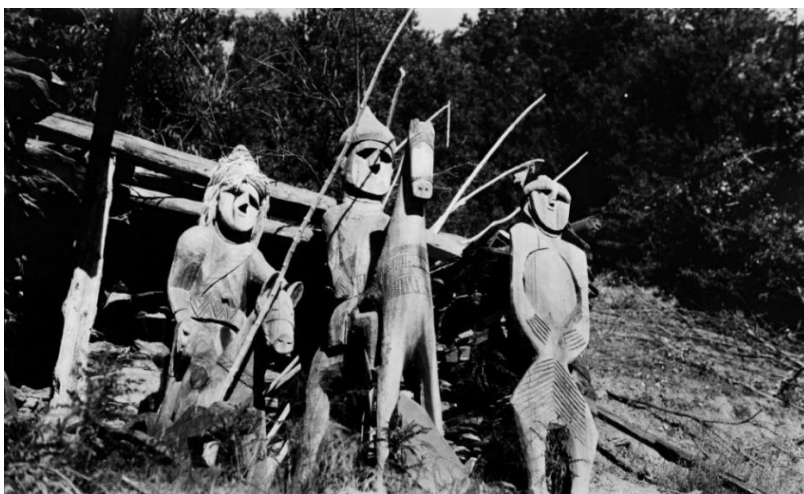


Fig. 13: *Istori Gnadau*, seated on horse, the photo is adopted from Georg Morgenstierne, Norwegian National Library, reproduced by Wikimedia (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NO-NB_BLD_SA_GM2b125n.jpg) (Photo: Georg Morgenstierne, 1929).



Fig. 14: *Poin the Standing Gandau*, Grom Village, Rumbur (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2008).



Fig. 15: *The Gundurik*, Bumburet Valley (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 16: The dumped *Gandau*, Grom, Jinjeret Kuh Valley (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 17: Two standing *gandau* installed by Faizi, Brun Village, Bumburet (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).



Fig. 18: Two *gundurik* installed by Faizi, Brun village, Bumburet (Photo: M. K. Ali, 2017).