

The Kalasha of the Hindu-Kush Valleys, Himalayas

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Part 1

Maps, houses and places of worship

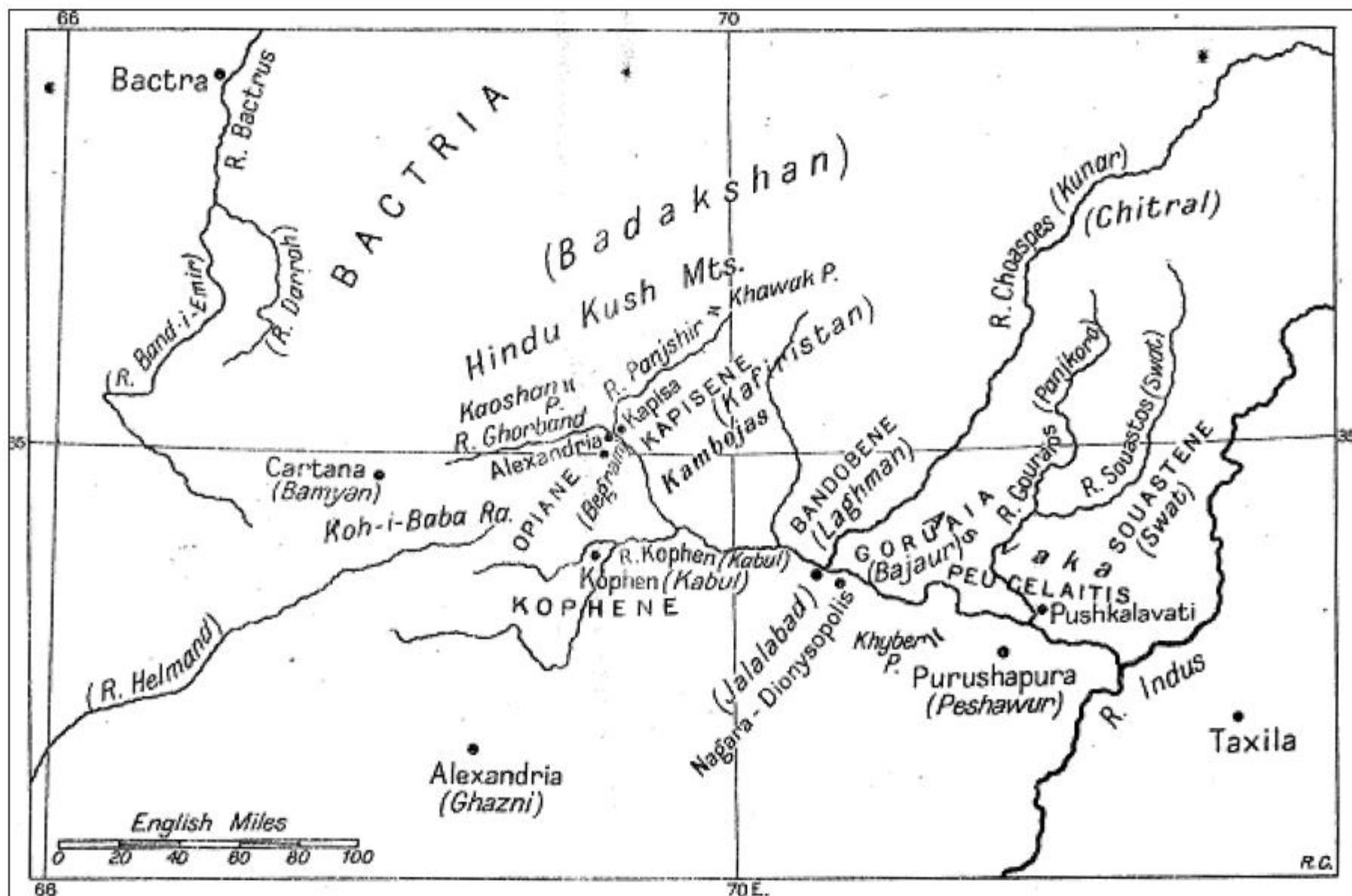
Notion of pure / impure



*The Kalasha valleys in Chitral, Northwestern Province.
(Morgenstierne's map, 1973: 185)*



Part of Asia beyond the Euphrates about 180-150 B.C.
 (taken from Tarn W.W. (1951 : 561) *The Greeks in Bactria & India*, CUP)



The Paropamisadae and Gandhara (enlarged)
 (taken from Tarn W.W. (1951 : 562) *The Greeks in Bactria & India*, CUP)



A village in the Kalasha valleys.



The writer Mela-Athanasopoulou



A typical Kalasha house with storage room.



Detail of a Kalasha house with veranda.



Traditional ladders with steps carved on logs leading to the first floor.



Door of a community center with geometrical designs



A prayer place, called Kus'umay, where only men are allowed.



An offering to the Dewa sanctuary during a ritual, Brun, Bumburet.



A sanctuary of Mahandew at Batrik, with wooden horse heads and fire below (juniper burning offering).



Jes'tak Han temple.



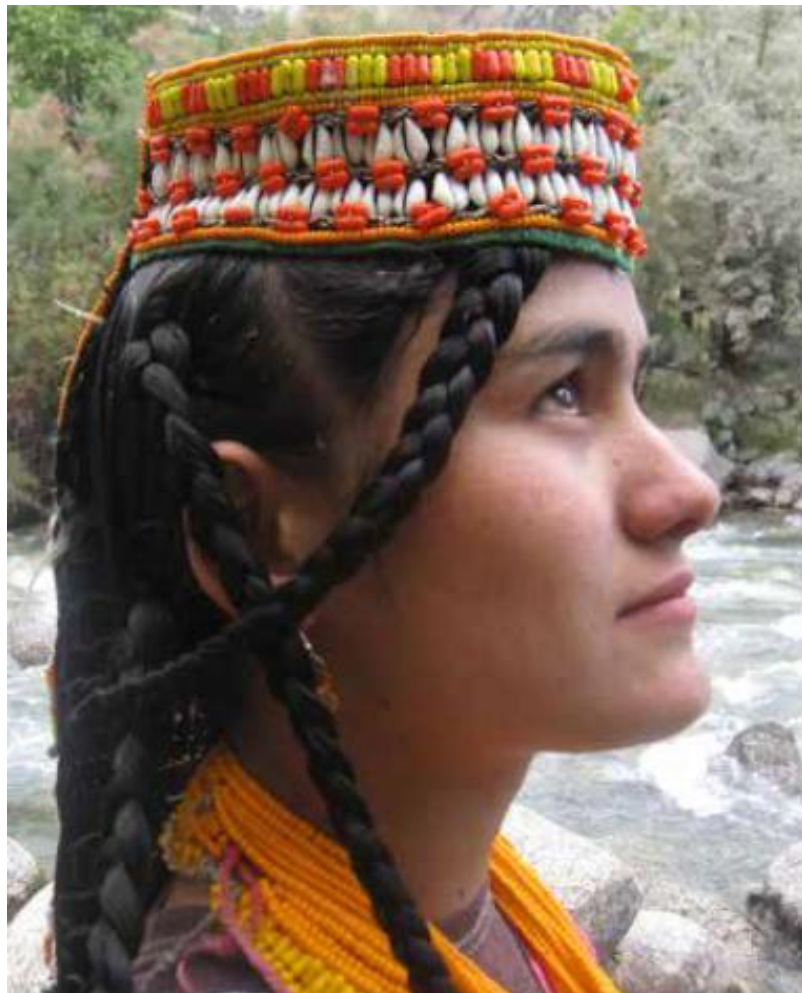
Jes'tak Han temple.



A four-horn sheep (ritually 'pure').



Kalasha women washing by the river and combing their hair (the notion of 'impure').



Kalasha women's hair style.



A Kalasha woman drinking water from her cupped hand.



The birth ritual. The woman who accepted the five t'at'ori from the newborn's father is going to hand them in to the mother of the newborn.



Cawmos, S'is'au adua: The holy moment of purification of a woman by a man of her family.

Part 2

Customs and Rituals:
Birth, Marriage and Death

Birth



*A scene of the ritual of purification
of the new-born baby and its mother.*



Purification of mothers and recently born babies, with goat milk sprinkling.



Preparing for the purification of mothers and recently born babies: one of the fathers burns juniper branches while the rest of them will drop into his hands dry fruit and walnuts which he will pour onto the fire.



Milk sprinkling.



Fathers of the recently born with a generous amount of walnuts and dry mulberries to be distributed to the mothers participating in the ceremony.

Marriage



The wedding celebration. Al'as'ing 'marriage by elopement'. The girl elopes with the boy she is in love with and is taken to his father's house. The girl's relatives (father or brothers) are asking her: 'Have you been brought here by force or by your own will?'. And the girl answers: "Yes, I have come here by my own will."

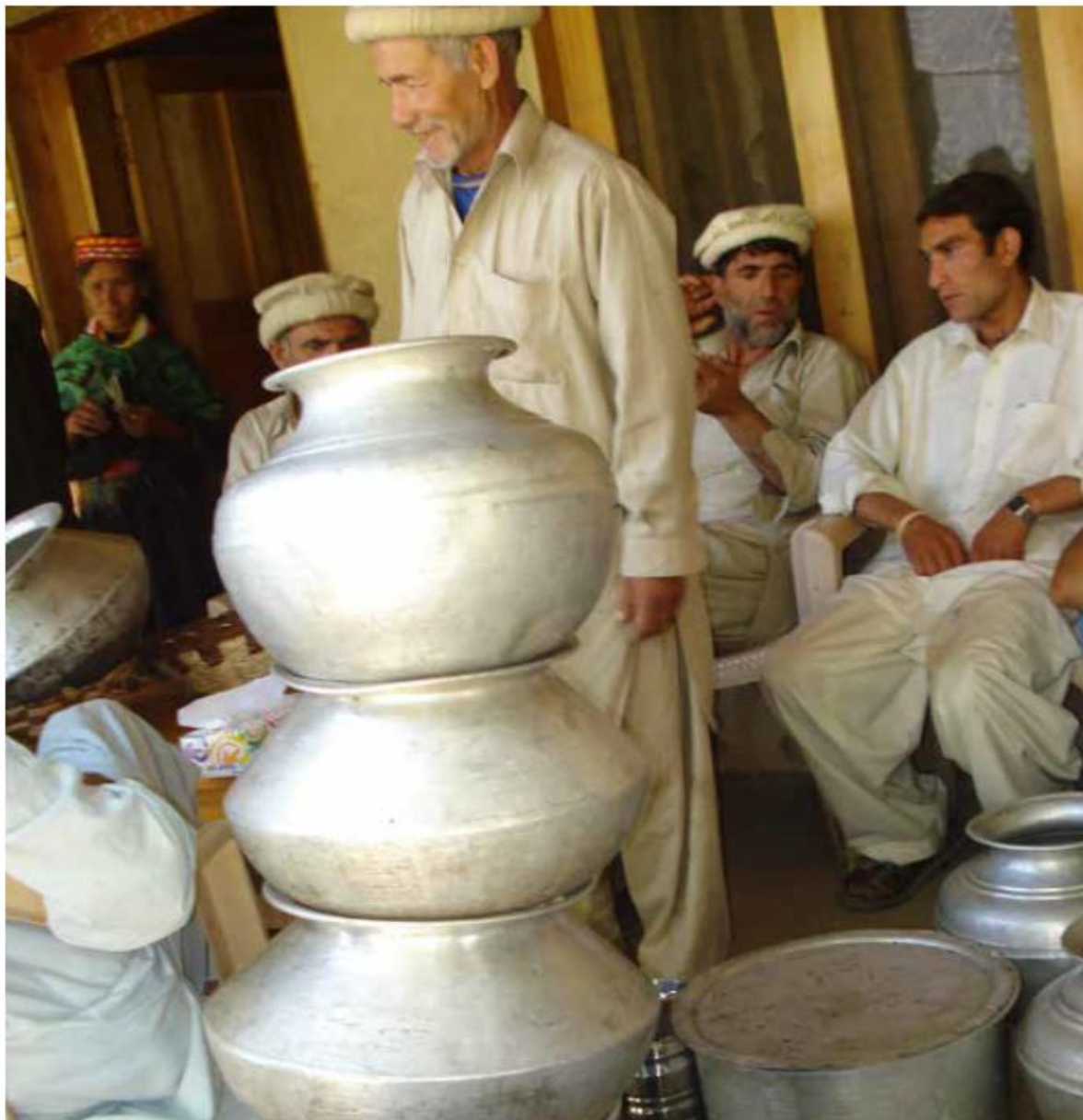


The wedding celebration. At the boy's house: The girl's relatives are offered hospitality: boiled male goat, ka'i; meat soup, preconá 'purified butter' and lots of cheese and tasili.





The wedding celebration. Making precona 'purified butter' in a goatskin bag.



The wedding celebration. Gift giving: The girl's relatives are given many presents by the boy's father: large pots, idon 'tripods', guns and money.

Funeral Rituals



The lament day (bas'ikek 'to lament') On the 3rd day of the funeral the relatives of the dead man gather around the corpse and cry, eulogizing him. The women, relatives of the deceased, remove their headdresses.



The death and funeral ritual. The funeral of a male person: Forty or fifty goats must be sacrificed at the funeral of a male person. The meat must be enough to feed the hundreds of people from the three valleys coming to the funeral.



About 400kg of wheat must be cleaned and ground for making hundreds of tasili.



The watermill where 400kg of wheat will be made flour during the three days of the funeral.



All the women of the dead man's village must be involved in the preparation of the tasili bread to feed the hundreds of visitors during the days of the funeral.



The tasili must be collected and put into 100 sawew 'round baskets' and taken to a special room near the temple.



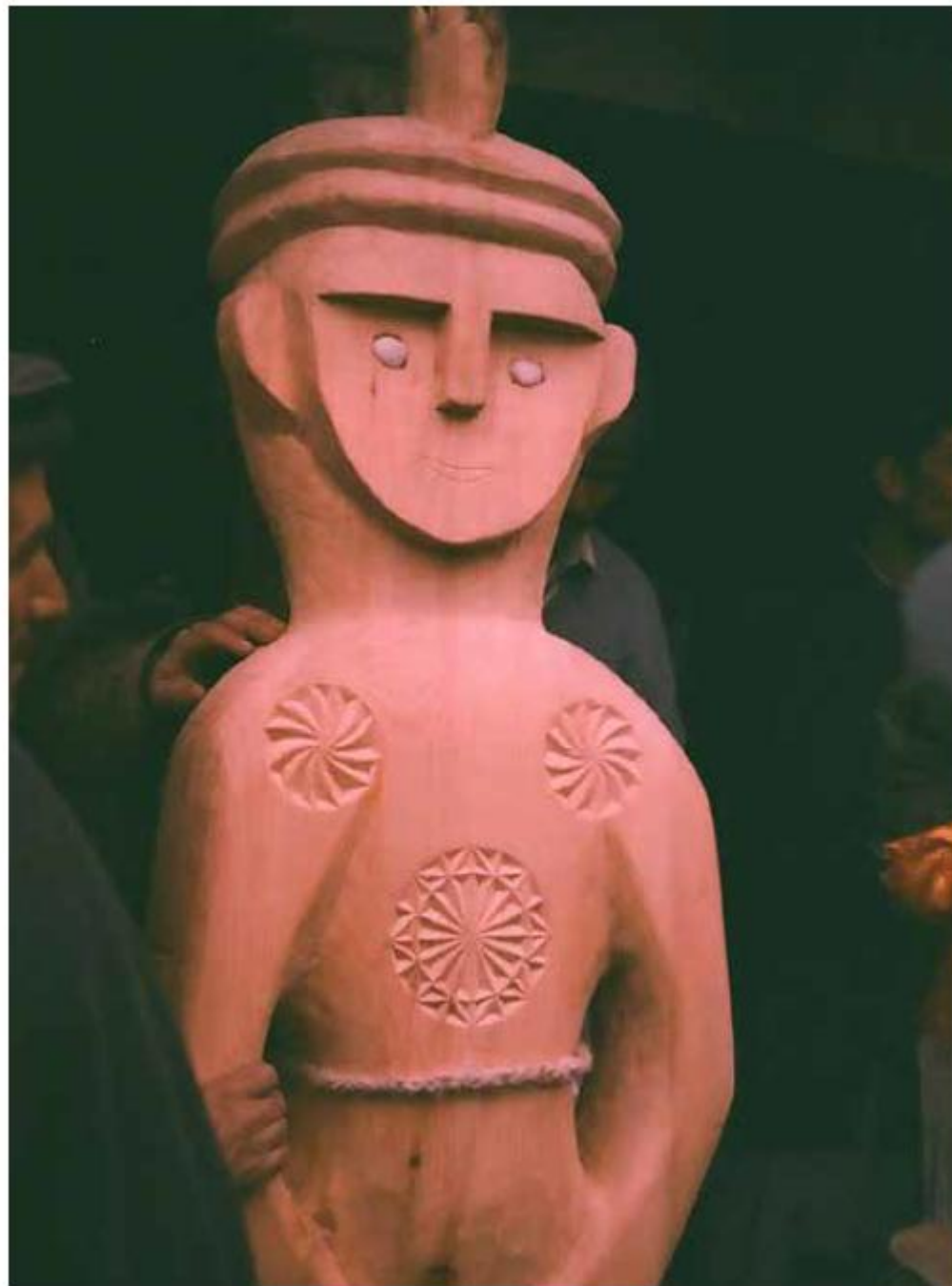
On the 3rd day of the funeral a big feast is held: It consists of tasili, boiled male goat meat, ka'i, precona and lots of wine.

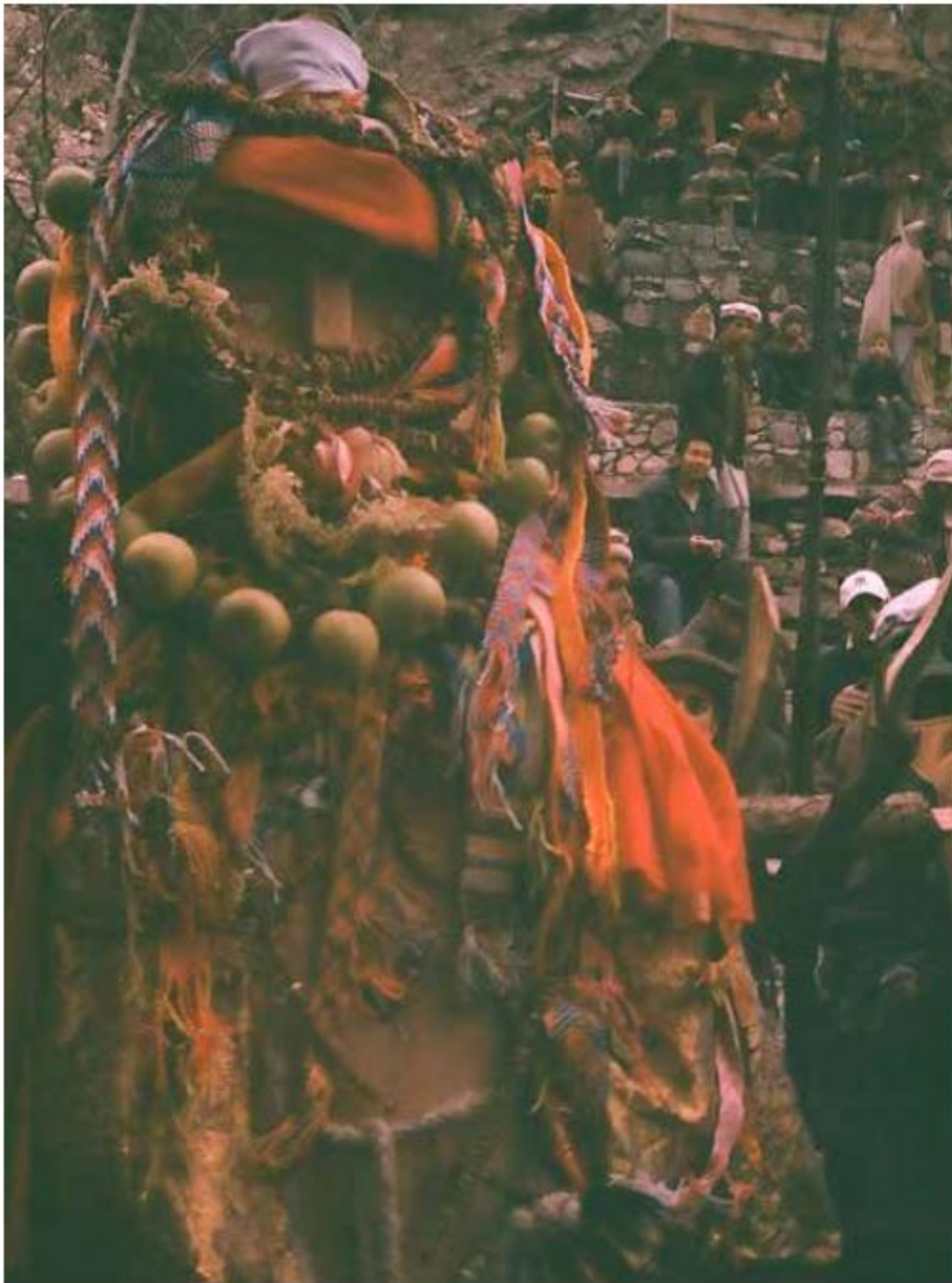


After being inside the temple for three days, the deceased is taken to the mandawjaw 'cemetery' and is placed into a wooden coffin which is thoroughly buried. In the past coffins did not use to be buried.



S'is'badhaik copa 'the morning of shaving heads and beards'. All the men in mourn must have their heads and beards shaved (by their relatives). They will not shave or cut their nails until the following festival starts (Kil'a'a saras, Zhoshi, Ucaw or Cawmos).





The gand'aw: a funeral wooden statue, an image of the dead person or ancestor erected by a son to honor the memory of his father or uncle. It is carved on wood in the forest or at a distant goat shed, usually a year or longer after the funeral.



The procession of the gand'aw fully decorated, entering the village on a man's shoulders. There is lots of shooting in the sky, drum beating and dancing at the funeral dancing place.

Part 3

The Kalasha Annual Celebrations

Zhoshi: The Spring Festival (13-16 May)

Ucaw: The Harvest Festival (18-22 August)

Chawmos: The Winter Solstice (9-22 December)

Zhoshi: The Spring Festival



The Kalasha festivals. Zhoshi. A kazi 'a respectable old man' is handing in flowers or branches to those mourning the death of a relative, an indication of the end of the mourning and the beginning of a festival.



The Zhoshi 'spring festival' starts with the bis'a 'yellow flowers' collected by children from the mountains at dawn.



Jes'tak Han temple decorated with bis'a.



Baking t'at'ori 'kind of bread with walnut meat filling', to be used for the women's purification and other important events.



Baked tasili, kind of bread similar to a large pancake baked on a convex griddle, the onza.



Sacrificing, burning juniper branches and praying at the sanctuary of Dewa, Brun village.





Zhoshi, May 14 is the milk offering day (c'hirik pipi).

Unboiled milk distributed by shepherds only at their goat-sheds.





Purification of mothers and recently born babies, with goat milk sprinkling.



The ritual of burning juniper branches and throwing dry fruit and walnuts on the fire, near Dewa sanctuary.



Preparing for the purification of mothers and recently born babies: one of the fathers burns juniper branches while the rest of them will drop into his hands dry fruit and walnuts which he will pour onto the fire.



Walnuts and dry mulberries distribution.



A kazi holding a stick is improvising his own song, usually eulogies and hymns about his ancestors or about the philosophy of life.



A kazi singing his own song of praise.



*The kazi gathering in groups, with one man at a time singing an improvised slow Zhoshi song.
Some of them wearing taffetas on top of their clothes.*



Women dancing the drazhahilal 'a slow dance', in a very large circle, in the open air.



Kalasha women dancing the d'hushak dance by holding each other's shoulders, during the milk offering day.



Kalasha men, women and children rushing to another dancing place, shaking walnut leaves.



Men and women shaking walnut leaves ready to go to the dancing place at Batrik.



Kalasha women dancing the tren dance by forming three large circles, with the inner circle almost squeezing the drummers in the middle.



They are all dancing the sha'gha'yak dance: They form a long circular line and pull one another by holding a shuman 'knitted ribbon' or willow tree branches.



The Kalasha men and women are enjoying the Zhoshi Festival by singing and dancing all kinds of dances.



Offerings and prayer at Mahandew sanctuary (a stone wall with four wooden horse heads at the top). Men only pour flour on the fire they have lit in front of the altar and smoke the holy place with burning juniper branches. They also offer cheese made at their goat-sheds the previous evening.

Ucaw: The Harvest Festival



Women and men at Ucaw 'Autumn Festival'.



Dancing and singing at Ucaw.



Enjoying the Ucah 'Autumn Festival' by singing and dancing.

Chawmos: The Winter Solstice



Chawmos. Juniper branches handed in to the mourners by a kazi, an indication of the end of mourning and the beginning of a festival.



Cawmos, Sarazari: Collecting cedar tree branches to make a fire.



Cawmos, Sarazari: Children as well as young boys and girls are performing the Sarazari ritual of burning freshly-cut cedar braches and pouring walnuts, dried mulberries and jujube on the fire,



Cawmos, Cuinari: A young boy is going to pour walnuts and dried mulberries onto the fire – offerings to god.



Cawmos, Cuinari: Singing and dancing by forming a chain as they hold one another from the back of their waist.



Cawmos: Young men, women and children singing and cheering are heading to the village.



Cawmos, Sarabirayak: Making goat-like statuettes from plain flour and water baked on a stove and then placed on a shelf called onjas't'awā 'holy place', banned to women.



Cawmos, Mandahik: Outside the temple a man is making the kot'ik, a wooden construction from pine tree sticks.



Cawmos, Mandahik: Baking t'at'ori and tasili.



Cawmos, Mandahik: Absolute silence inside Jes'tak temple, They are all holding a burning pine tree stick, the luc.



Cawmos, Mandahik: The fire of the burning kot'ik outside the temple has gone off, The spirits have left. Now inside the temple the people are enjoying the food they had brought earlier.



Cawmos, on the following morning of Mandahik: After the ritual inside the temple they move out to the dancing area and dance individually by clapping and singing until evening.



Cawmos, Sawel'ik hari: Purification ritual, with t'at'ori, performed by a young girl, celebrated at Krakal village. After washing her hands and rolling up her sleeves, a young girl lights juniper branches meant for purification, while a woman drops into the girl's hands some pieces of the bread which the girl will drop onto the fire.



Cawmos, Sawel'ik hari: Krakal village. After the purification ritual they all indulge in singing and dancing individually..



Cawmos, S'is'au adua: A man of each Kalasha family will have to make six t'at'ori 'flat walnut bread' for each woman or girl in his family. The preparation is done on the goat shed roof, the daranõ', which is considered 'pure'.



Cawmos, S'is'au adua: A man performing the ritual of purification of women and girls from the age of five, outside in the open air. After he has handed in to each one of them five t'at'ori, which they hold stacked in between their palms, he sways a burning juniper branch around their heads. The smoke will purify them.



Cawmos. Gos'nik copa. In the evening of this ceremony, the little girl is taken near the goat shed with her relatives to be purified. A man will perform the s'is'au ritual on her (as it is done for all women on 18 December every year). For the boys purification is done by sacrificing a male goat and sprinkling its blood over the boy's head.



Cawmos. Gos'nik copa. The maternal uncles of the 5-year-old Eliniki are dressing her the Kalasha clothes while her parents are offering them presents, such as necklaces made with walnut meat or apricot kernels, cotton handkerchiefs, woolen woven bands, the shuman, and lots of aluminum pots. A huge amount of food –flat baskets full of large t'at'ori and fruit- is placed in front of the uncles. Many children coming to the celebration are offered woven bands, handkerchiefs and lots of fruit and t'at'ori. The ceremony finishes with drinking lots of wine, eating, singing and dancing.



Cawmos. Gos'nik copa. Kalasha children proud and happy with their clothes.



Cawmos. C'anj'arat 'the night of lights'. Making the grohonyak 'a conical basket made from willow tree branches' dedicated to Balimahin's (In's) daughter, one of their gods.



Cawmos. C'anj'arat. Grohonyak contest. A group of women celebrating their victory as they have finished their basket first.



Cawmos. C'anj'arat. Kalasha men preparing the c'anja 'huge torches made from pine wood' to be used as torches leading their way at the night of lights.



Cawmos. C'anj'arat. The procession of the Kalasha holding c'anja, singing and dancing are climbing from the mountain down to Brun village, Bumburet valley.



Cawmos. C'anj'arat. Crowds of Kalasha men holding c'anja , from all villages of Bumburet valley, are heading to Brun village to join the procession of Brun.



Cawmos. C'anj'arat. At dawn all men move to Batrik village holding one another from their waist and chanting ha-ha-ha.



Cawmos. L'awak bi'ik ;the circling of the fox', men, women and children from the nearby villages meet at Brun village and enjoy dancing while singing and clapping.

Part 4

Family Life: Men and Women's Work





A primitive way to level the ploughed field



Ploughing the land is normally done with one ox and two people, one holding a wooden bar fastened on the ox's neck and the other holding the wooden plough. Ploughing can also be done by one person holding the plough and two oxen joined with a yoke.



A Kalasha woman digging her cornfield.



A Kalasha woman digging while holding her baby.



Kalasha women watering their fields by changing the water flow with a hoe. Another Kalasha woman is thinning the corn.





A Kalasha woman and children collecting mulberries.



In June, both men and women (sometimes children, too) will reap the wheat with a scythe or a sickle.



Preparing the goat shed roof for wheat threshing. The goat shed roof is thoroughly swept and four wooden bars are placed on its four edges. Then a mixture made from cow excrement and water is spread all over the surface with leafy branches.



Sheaves of wheat are carried from the fields to the goat shed roof, an already dry and smooth surface.



The sheaves of wheat are untied and spread on the goat shed dry roof. The four bars on the edges of the roof will protect the wheat seeds from falling off.



Three cattle (cows or bulls) and a donkey harnessed together, tied with a rope by the head, are treading on circles on the dry wheat stalks spread on the roof.



Straw winnowing. After the wheat threshing, the straw must be winnowed with a wooden pitchfork. The writer Taleem khan is also involved in this heavy task.



After straw winnowing, the wheat grain, collected in goatskin bags, is taken home and emptied into a large wooden or stone container (the tohon) kept in a storage room of the house. Women also get involved here with cleaning the wheat grain.



According to their needs or demands of their customs the wheat grain is poured into goatskin bags and taken by men to the watermill to be ground. Once it is ground into flour, it will be used immediately. The Kalasha never store flour.



In a corn field, baby by her side, this Kalasha woman is peeking off corn.



Men cut the corn stalks with a sickle and place them in the field. After the corn is peeled off (by women and men) the stalks are taken home –feed for the cows. The corn seeds are spread on the flat roof of the goat shed to dry and then to be pounded by men.



Wine making. A Kalasha man crushing grapes by hand to make wine.



Wine making in the Kalash valleys.



Work with goats. A Kalasha goat herder watching his flock in the high pasture.



Men only will make porridge with goat milk and flour.



Enjoying tasili dipped in porridge outside the goat shed, before taking the goats to the high poasture.



On the way to the high pasture. Crossing the river on a log bridge.



Goat sheds on the high pasture.



Goats and goat herders on the high pasture. Milking the goats is a daily routine.



Making goat cheese on the high pasture is exclusively a man's task.



Washing the dishes in the open air next to a stream.



After the clothes are thoroughly washed they are spread on a fence to dry.



Kalasha women making the patterns on their dresses with a hand sewing machine, outside in the open air.



Women's handicrafts. A Kalasha woman making a shuman 'decorative woven band' on a forked stick.



A young girl is weaving the pati 'long, wide woven belt', an integral part of the Kalasha uniform worn by girls and women.



Making their clothes on the loom is a heavy but pleasant task. The tron 'loom' and the traku 'spindle' are always done outside the house.



Making a kupas 'headdress' with cowry shells, beads, buttons, and bells, worn by Kalasha women at the big festivals or special events.



Men's handicrafts. The essential pieces of the Kalasha furniture are beds and four-legged stools. The frames are made of walnut and cedar tree wood and the seat of the stools are woven bull or cow skin.



Men's work. The Kalasha make their own houses themselves. The main materials are stone and wood.



Childtren at work. In Spring, children climb up mulberry trees and help harvesting the mulberries by shaking the branches of the trees.



In June Kalasha children help their fathers in wheat reaping.



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