

Traditional Costumes of the Kalasha Kafirs of Chitral, Pakistan

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Abstract

The Kalasha Kafirs sometimes referred to as Siah-Posh (the black-robed) Kafirs in relation to their traditional black dress, inhabit the three remote and isolated valleys of Chitral District in the militancy-hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province of Pakistan. An endangered living culture, at the verge of extinction, there are only 3,000 to 4,000 left in the three Kalasha Valleys according to a recent estimate (Ali 2013:2).

A most distinguishing feature of the Kalasha ethnicity and their unique cultural identity is the elaborate costumes (Cew and Piran) adorned with belts (patti) worn by Kalasha women, their unique and ornate headdresses (kupas and shushut) and heavy beaded jewellery (sulki, mahik, lish, kapaban and gadu'lay). The traditional Kalasha clothing bears meaning to its wearers and reflects skill, creativity, status, wealth, celebration and mourning.

My study indicates that both Kalasha men and women have almost abandoned their traditional woolen costumes and switched over to the Pakistani dress for men and women i.e. the new version of the traditional black-robe dress piran. The newly established Kalasa Dur Museum and Cultural Center in Bumburet Valley provides a unique opportunity for the study and documentation of the traditional costumes of the Kalasha Kafirs, and to preserve their rich material cultural heritage through pictorial archives and digitisation for future generations.

Introduction and Background

The Kalasha Kafirs sometimes referred to as *Siah-Posh* (the black-robed kafirs) in relation to their traditional black dress, inhabit the three remote and isolated valleys (Bumburet, Birir, and Rambur) of Chitral District. The meaning of the word Kalash is controversial, but according to a recent study the most commonly accepted meaning of the word Kalash is wearer of black (Sheikh 2013: 29). Also it is commonly believed that the word *kawer* (kafir or kapher from Arabic) means unbeliever (in God) (Trail and Cooper 1999:154).

Their dwindling numbers and endangered ancient culture along with unique costumes and body adornment practices have placed Kalasha Kafirs in a unique

local and global spotlight to preserve their fast disappearing culture and to revive their ancient cultural practices. Every year, huge crowds of tourists are drawn from around the globe to the three Kalasha Valleys to observe the major Kalasha festivals *Chillim Jusht* or *Joshi*, *Uchal* and *Chaumos*, and to have a glimpse of their exotic culture and in particular the captivating colourful costumes of the Kalasha women.

The increasing interest in Kalasha Kafirs as an endangered living culture is also evident from the Folk Festival of 2012 in Islamabad, where for the first time two Kalasha booths run by the Kalasha men and women were set up by the sponsors of this very popular yearly Folk Festival held during April and May. On these booths Kalasha headdresses (*kupas* and *shushut*) and the new dress (*piran*) were on display and sale. Also one shop had a pair of traditional Kalasha soft leather moccasins called *kalun* for sale (Rs 3,000) not worn anymore in the Kalasha Valleys. Unfortunately during this year's Folk Festival in Islamabad (2013) not a single Kalasha booth was setup. The National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, Islamabad, had also arranged a one day workshop in March 2012, on dossier preparation for inscription of the Kalasha Valley culture on the World Heritage List for safeguarding Kalasha people and their ancient heritage (Ali 2013:2).

Coming to the traditional costumes of the Kalasha Kafirs, the study indicates that over the period of time, Kalasha men have adopted to the usual Pakistani dress for men (*shalwar qameez*) and are rarely seen wearing the old traditional dress, handspun woolen baggy pants, upper garment and leather moccasins (*kalun*), other than on major Kalasha festivals in extremely small numbers. The Kalasha women, on the other hand, have clung on to the old customs and continue to wear traditional-style clothing in black, which seems to be an extension of the old and traditional black-robe, (**Figs. 1a** and **1b** for a comparison) but with more elaborate decorations and embellishments, using their acute sense of fashion, beauty and personal identity, as Kalasha women.

The analysis indicate that the traditional woolen dresses *cheo* in black (for women) and shades of beige and white (for men) which involved months of labour of spinning and weaving by hand from pure wool of the local sheep and goat varieties have almost disappeared and replaced with lighter cotton and synthetic materials readily available from the nearby markets.



Figure 1a: A Kalasha Family in their Traditional Costumes



Figure 1b: A Young Kalasha Couple in Rambur Valley, Dressed in their Fineries and Flower and Feather Accessories during Joshi Festival

What one observes in costumes today in all the three Kalasha Valleys is what I would like to call the extension of the traditional woolen black-robe of the Kalasha women, with much more variation in material, style, embroidery and decorations. But for men, one hardly sees any man wearing an old traditional

woolen costume or footwear other than a woolen Chitrali cap and some of the accessories, as the subsequent sections of the paper will highlight.

This is my third paper since my first visit to the Kalasha Valleys in May 2011, to attend spring festival *joshi*. The other two papers deal with Kalasa Dur Museum, (Malik 2013) and the role of Silk Route Trade in constructing the Kalasha identity in reference to their dress and body adornment practices, presented at the International Conference on Rediscovering the Silk Route held in the Hazara University, Mansehra (from 4-7 September, 2012).

Given the lack of resources on traditional costumes of Kalasha Kafirs, I have heavily relied on earlier researches on Kalasha as a major source for the present analysis and comparison, using visuals and old photographs, following Schuyler Jones lead on the research value of the old photographs (Jones 1996: 105-107).

Two important studies that extensively deal with Kalasha dress and body adornment practices are by Sperber (1996) and Maggi (2001). Also Darling's (1979) study of Merit Feasting among the Kalasha Kafirs, gives very important clues to the system of meaning attached to various dress practices among the Kalasha Kafirs. In fact I found Darling's work to be most useful in terms of coverage for men's traditional costumes, because references and especially visuals for men's dresses are not found in any other studies that I have consulted so far. Robertson's study (2001) 'The Kafirs of the Hindukush' also provides elaborate details on some aspects of dress practices for both men and women that I have found extremely useful for analysing traditional dresses of pre-Nuristan (1891-1892) Kafiristan. Also a review of Morgenstierne's trip contributions of 1929 and the wealth of information and diverse documentation including 3000 photographs, moving images and audio of Kalasha culture as discussed by Wlodek (2005: 50) were useful for the study.

The traditional costume collection at the newly established Kalasa Dur Museum, at Bumburet Valley, and Folk Heritage Museum in Islamabad has also been utilised for the current analysis.

Traditional Kalasha costumes for both men and women were elaborated in the previous section as shown in **Fig. 1** and a lot needs to be written about each aspect of the unique style of dressing of the Kalasha Kafirs, especially women, but I would not go into much details. I would discuss the costumes under two separate categories, costumes for women and costumes for men.

Traditional Costumes of Kalasha Women

Kalasha women's traditional costume will be discussed under three major categories:

- Dress(es),
- Headdress(es) and
- Beaded jewellery and Accessories.

1. The Old Dress of Kalasha Women *Cheo* (Cew)

The traditional dress of Kalasha women *cheo* was a black woolen robe-like garment, tucked around the waist with a long woolen belt or *paTi*, with almost no or little decorations at the neck, sleeves or hem, as shown in **Figs. 1 to 6**. Interestingly about the use of colour black in their dress, Sheikh notes,

Black is also a symbol of equality that is practiced in Kalash society. It is an egalitarian society without any social stratification on the basis of lineage, dress, status or economic prosperity. (2013: 97)

Similar black woolen dresses for women are also reported among some other mountain communities like Merag in Bhutan (Karchung 2011: 23).

Talking about old Kalasha women's dress, Maggi (2001) notes, twenty years ago, women wore heavy woven woolen dresses that they made from the wool of black sheep, carded and spun over the long winters, called *cheo*, then a dramatic change in women's dress came in the late 1970s when a group of young Kalasha women were taken to Karachi to dance in a folk festival, and due to the heat felt in their heavy woolen dresses, they bought lighter cotton material and sewed replicas of this lighter material (108). On their return they continued wearing these very comfortable dresses and soon they became popular throughout the valleys and according to Maggi (2001) only two to three women were 'keeping up custom,' by wearing woolen dress in Rumbur Valley at the time of her research (1973-77). Not a single Kalasha woman was seen wearing a traditional woolen dress, during my visit to Kalasha Valleys on *joshi* festival of May 2011. It has almost disappeared from the Kalasha Valleys and has become a collection piece.



Figure 2: Old Traditional Costume of Kalasha Women Cheo (cew) with Accessories, Metal Neck Ring Gringa, Waist Chains Shagay and Headdress Kupas



Figure 3: A Kalasha Woman in her Heavy Woolen Traditional Costume Cheo and Headdress Shushut Weaving a Belt Shuman



Figure 4: Traditional Kalasha Woman's Woolen Dress Cheo in Folk Heritage Museum, Islamabad



Figure 5: A Traditional Kalasha Woman's Dress Cheo with Waist Belt Patti in Folk Heritage Museum, Islamabad



Figure 6: The Bottom of a Traditional Kalasha Woman's Dress Cheo with Little Embroidery at the Hem in Folk Heritage Museum, Islamabad

Sperber's study also supports this change in dress. But she states that the woolen dress "... is still considered special and very beautiful," (Sperber 1996: 385). And in 1983 she notes many of the old and a few of the young women were still wearing the woolen dress in the summer time, and about 80 percent during winter festival (*chaumos*) whereas in 1987 winter festival only about 20 percent of the women were wearing the woolen dress (Sperber 1996:385). The woolen dress *cheo* was very simple and had almost no or little decoration at the hem neck or shoulders. The dresses worn by the Kalasha women in the 1960s show almost no decoration at hems, shoulders or necks as is clear from the photographs by Graziosi (1964) and the dress collections at the Kalasa Dur Museum and the Folk Heritage Museum in Islamabad (**Figs. 1-7**).

About the labour involved in weaving of the woolen dress, Sperber (1996) notes, the woolen dress due to spinning and weaving, needed six huge balls of fine dark woolen yarn and two to three months of work, but it could also survive at least two years of hard daily use (383-4).

Unfortunately at present, due to total abandonment of the old dress, specimens of traditional black woolen dress of Kalasha women are only found in the museum collections for further study and documentation. To observe women wearing *cheo* in reality in the Kalasha Valleys cannot be envisioned any more.



Figure 7: A Kalasa Dur Museum Exhibit Showing Old Traditional Dress of Kalasha Women with Jewellery, Minor Headdress Shushut and Traditional Woolen Shawl Charusti with Sumac Borders

2. The New Dress of Kalasha Women: *Piran*

The new cotton and mixed material dresses called *piran* are in vogue now and worn by almost all Kalasha women; older, younger and even little girls. *Pirans*, like the old woolen dress *cheo* have always been black as well, as noted by Sperber. The word *Piran* probably derived from the Persian word for dress *perahan* and is very colourful and elaborate having decorated hems of ten inches and more of *chot* (*cot*) or decoration. According to Maggi this trend started in 1993, when on spring festival *joshi* two of her respondents, who claimed to be the first one, decorated the hems of their dresses with a solid ten inches or so of decoration (Maggie 2001: 9). The decorative patterns (floral or geometrical) on a *piran*, are primarily embroidered designs in bright colours using knitting yarn, available in valley shops, made by hand on manual sewing machines. *Piran* takes a lot more yarn and skill to make exquisite designs and motifs with expense on various cloth materials, hence shows a woman's creativity, skill and wealth, highly prized among the Kalasha Kafirs.

As noted by Sperber (1996), with some initial criticism the new style of dress *piran* became very popular throughout the valleys (383-4), and looks like the trend is on the rise, with more and more innovations and embellishments added each passing year, observed on major festivals. After the first use of the *piran* dress in 1974 it swept across the valleys and has almost taken over the place of

the traditional woolen dress *cheo* completely. A May 2011 participation in *joshi* festival showed almost every woman was wearing a *piran* with beautifully designed floral and geometrical hems, necks and shoulders in brilliant colours, as shown in **Figs. 8-14**.



Figure 8: Kalasha Women's New Dress Pirans during a Dance at the Spring Festival Joshi



Figure 9: Kalasha Women in Piran Dress with Heavily Decorated Hems (Chot) Necks and Shoulders Dancing at Joshi Festival



Figure 10: Back View of Kalasha Woman's Dress Piran showing Various Cloth Material used



Figure 11: Front Decoration Chot of a New Kalasha Dress Piran worn by a Kalasha Woman during a Conference in Hazara University, Mansehra



Figure 12: Front Decoration Chot of a New Kalasha Dress Piran worn by a Kalasha Woman during a Conference in Hazara University, Mansehra



Figure 13: Back View of a Piran showing Shoulder Decoration and use of Two Waist Belts SpaTi on top of each other



Figure 14: A Colourfully Embroidered Sleeve of a Piran Dress using Knitting Yarn

When compared the durability of the *piran* as a dress with the old dress *cheo*, it is not very durable. According to Sperber (1996), *pirans* are less heavy and more comfortable during the hot summers (384-7). They can be much more heavily decorated, and are made in only three to five days, but after about four months of daily use, they need to be renewed-perhaps with other decorations. That way *piran* as a new dress promotes changes, and reinforces new fashion sensibilities among Kalasha women than the simple *cheo* dress of the bygone times. *Pirans* cost more money, so they give higher status to their owners than the old home made woolen dress of the past (Sperber 1996: 383). Earlier, following local custom, Kalasha women would only make a new dress before *Joshi* festival, now many women make new *pirans* also for the other big festivals, like *Uchao* and *Chaumos*. A two piece *piran* dress; a loose black-robe with baggy pants, requires five to six meters of cloth in any material, readily available from the nearest market in Chitral town.

The changes in traditional Kalasha women's woolen dress *cheo* and the newly added decorations on *piran* dress are truly indicative of more opportunities that are brought to the valleys with increased accessibility to all-season roads, education, economic opportunities, tourism and effects of globalisation. I would

like to quote Sperber, who traces the complete history of how the new dress *piran* came into existence:

The *piran* has always been black. The first of them were decorated with thin machine borders in red and green cotton thread. six or seven years ago, skeins of fine synthetic yarn in vivid colors came to the shops in the valleys, and they were very soon used, as bottom thread, because the synthetic thread repels dirt and does not absorb dye from the cotton cloth. She further notes, recently, colour-fast polyester cloth has come into use. Five or six years ago various ribbons reached the shops and began to be used as decorations on the *pirans*. Then two to three years ago, thick knitting yarn reached the shops. It was machine-stitched onto the material with fine thread. The introduction of this soft thick thread inspired the women to make more gently curved designs, like flowers above the hem (Sperber 1996: 385)

The loose and heavy *piran* like *cheo* dress is tucked at the waist with beautiful ornate coloured *paTi* or belts of cotton or wool, hand-woven by the Kalasha women (about 360 cm in length and 13-16 cm in width, plus 2 x 45 cm lish-bound fringes at the ends) (Sperber 1996: 387), as seen in **Figs. 5, 11, and 13.**

Headdress(es) of Kalasha Women

1. The major Headdress: *Kupas*

Kalasha women wear one of the most elaborate and ornate serpent style headdresses called *kupas*. *Kupas* is the major headdress of women. *Kupas* is a woolen headdress hanging down the back, covered with eight to ten rows of cowrie shells or *chakash* (*cakas*), with two rows folded upward on each side of the *Kupas*, and other tail decorations, as shown in **Fig. 15**. It is similar to the *perak* headdress worn by women in the Ladakh region, as documented by Aggarwal in her very interesting article, *The Turquoise Headdress of Ladakh* (2005:57). As noted by the late curator Haberlandt in 1906 (Gerlach 1971: vii) the Kalasha adornment is also thoroughly a jewellery of nature, produced and collected from natural surroundings and species of animals, trees, birds and flowers. Put together by women using high level of skill and labour over days and months using bone, feathers, seeds, plant materials, sea shells, coral beads and local cloth material from spinning and weaving from hair of the local goat and sheep.



Figure 15: Women Wearing Walking Shoes under their Beautiful Piran Dresses

Kupas is an ornate headdress very heavily decorated with cowrie shells, beads, bells, buttons, metal ornament *chamas*, feathers, flowers (*gamburi*) and with mountain pheasant feather plumes called *cheish*. *Kupas* holds an important position in Kalasha culture, worn on all important ceremonies, festivals and during periods of mourning. The little girls get their first *kupas* in a ceremony during the winter festival *chaumos*. Its front corners are named *singoia*, from *sing* meaning horn, which may have some relation to the horned cap worn by women in Bashgal Valley in Nuristan before their conversion in 1895-96. The earlier *kupas* had no folds on the sides, as shown in **Fig. 21, 22, and 23**, but in 1956 one Kalasha woman had the idea of rolling the edges of her *kupas* upward to rest it more firmly on the head and soon it became a fashion and part of the tradition (Sperber 1996: 378-9), as shown in **Figs. 16-20**.

Sperber (1996) notes that the character of the *kupas* is ceremonial and solemn (378-9). Generally every woman makes her own *kupas*. A woman can only weave a new *kupas* before *joshi* (the spring festival) in the month of May. Sperber (1996) has also pointed out the use of *kupas* during death of close relatives, and further states, if a person dies, all women of the same clan take off their *susut*, and only wear *kupas* until the end of the mourning period, two days before the next festival (378-9). During the death of a close relative, females also take off the *kupas* for three days to bare their heads as a sign of deep grief. On death of her husband a

widow removes everything from her *kupas* other than cowries. And when a woman dies most of the decorations are removed from her *kupas* other than cowries and distributed among other women. A woman is also buried with her *kupas*. Perhaps that is the reason the Kalasha coffins lying open in the burial grounds had cowrie shells in many of them, observed during a May 2011 visit to Bumburet Valley.

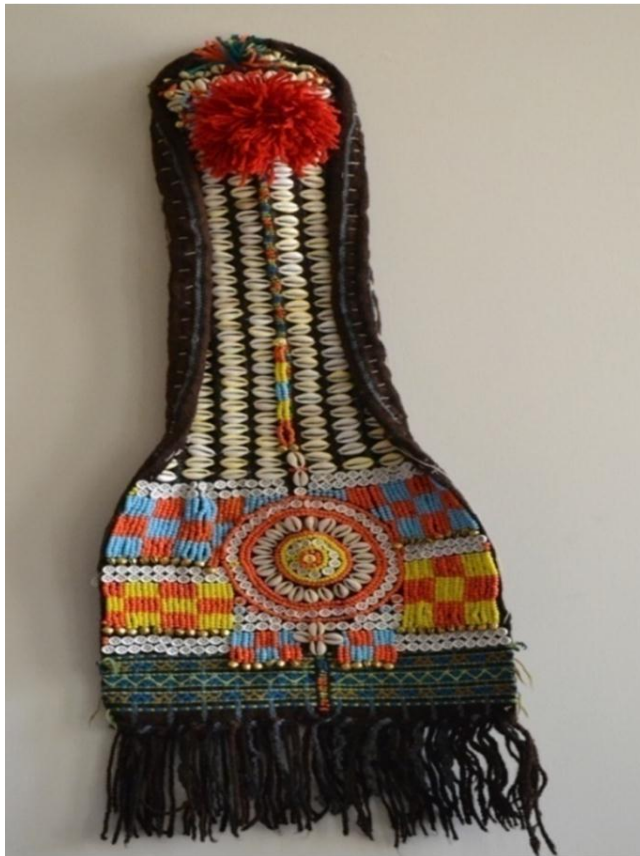


Figure 16: Kalasha Women's Headdress Kupas with Cowrie Shells and other Decorations



Figure 17: A Kalasha Mother and a Baby Girl in their Kupas all set for Joshi Festival



Figure 18: The Decorations at the Back of a Kupas with a Shield Design Kera in the Middle



Figure 19: A Specimen of an Ornate Kupas worn by a Kalasha Woman in Rambur Valley



Figure 20: A Kalasha Woman Wearing Kupas showing Folded Sides



Figure 21: The Traditional Kupas with Unfolded Corners



Figure 22: The Traditional Kupas with Unfolded Corners



Figure 23: An Old Kupas exhibited at the Folk Heritage Museum, Islamabad. It Shows No Folds on the Sides.

As mentioned earlier, the tail end of a *kupas* headdress has multiple decorations, including a shield design sewn in the middle of the decorations called *kera*, as shown in **Fig. 20**. Darling notes that traditionally shield design was reserved for ‘*ley moch*’ or man-killer rank, in Bashgal Valley. Later this was given to a woman in Bumburet Valley who killed a bad spirit and achieved the rank of ‘man-killer.’ She was the first *ja.mi.li* (clan daughter) permitted to wear the shield symbol on her *kupas* (Darling 1979: 178). Sperber also notes that only the daughter of a big man could wear the *kera* or shield design or *chish* on her *kupas* in the past. At present all women wear them irrespective of their father’s status, as shown in various photographs. This trend started more recently, as noted by Sperber, quoting one of her respondents (interviewed in 1990) who said that it started ten years ago, “Our customs are disappearing” (Sperber 1996: 380).

2. The Minor Headdress: *Shushut* (*Susut*)

Shushut (*susut*) is also called minor headdress, because it is just a head band with a tail at the back called *tagalak* decorated heavily with cowrie shells, red and

other multicolour beads, buttons and colourful bead patterns and flowers, worn underneath the major headdress *kupas*, as shown in **Figs. 24** and **25**.



Figure 24: Minor Kalasha Headdress Shushut with Tagalak, the Horizontal Piece with Cowrie Shell Flowers and Elaborate Bead Work Patterns, and Buttons, seen during Joshi Festival



Figure 25: Minor Headdress Shushut shown beneath the Major Headdress Kupas. The Woman Second from Right is wearing an Embroidered Cloth to Cover Her Head instead of Shushut

Shushut is worn all the time by Kalasha women. The only time a woman takes off her *shushut* is when she is going to bed at night. *Susuts* also have *tagalak* (Trail and Cooper 1999: 295), the horizontal section on women's headband consisting of buttons, beads and bells. These decorated sections are on the tail piece of the *shushut* and vary in number and patterns depending on the length of the piece. Studies indicate that both *kupas* and *shushut* have become much more elaborate and ornate with the passage of time. An old specimen of *shushut* displayed at the Folk Heritage Museum, Islamabad, is shown in **Fig. 26**, and the new *shushut* in **Fig. 24**, showing tremendous change in decorations of the *tagalak* or the horizontal section of a *shushut* overtime.

Sperber, while talking about making *susut* (*shushut*) states “fringes stitched together transversely with big needles bought from the Nursitani smiths” (1996:382). Those produced for selling to tourists are much lower in quality and decorations as compared to those worn by the Kalasha women themselves, made with lot of labour, skill and passion for special occasions and major festivals.



Figure 26: An Early Specimen of Shushut Displayed at Folk Heritage Museum, Islamabad with No Tagalak and Back Tail Piece Bead Decorations

3. Beaded Jewellery and Accessories

One of the most striking features of the Kalasha dressing is the lavish use of beaded neck jewellery, especially red oblong coral beads used in the recent past, brought from Iran, Afghanistan and other countries through Silk Route Trade in

the historic Chitral town. Now these are available as synthetic beads in various colours of red, yellow, orange, white and shades of blue. Glass beads are also now more frequently used by Kalasha women. A girl child is first given a bead necklace (s) at a tender age of two to three years in a formal ceremony called *gostnik*. Her bead collection grows as the time goes and as noted by Maggi, “A woman’s bead collection may weigh as much as fifteen pounds” (Maggi 2001: 97-98).

The old photographs show that the use of beaded necklaces was very limited among Kalasha women as compared to the one observed today. To make a comparison, I have used the old photographs from the Italian Mission’s study of the Kalasha Kafirs in the early 1950s, by anthropologist Paolo Graziosi (1964), as shown in **Figs. 27** and **28**, and photographs by Darling (1979) for the comparison of beaded jewellery use, as shown in **Fig. 31**, and other more recent (May 2011) photographs from my own visit as shown in **Figs. 29- 30**.



Figure 27: An Old Photograph of a Kalasaha Woman, showing use of Buttons and Coins Strung with Round Beads. It also shows her wearing a Gadu'lay with Simple Round Beads instead of Classic Red Oblong Beads



Figure 28: An Old Photograph of a Kalasha Woman with Big Round Bead Necklaces



Figure 29: Young Kalasha Women with Bead Hanks Lish and Sulki in Colours other than Traditional Red Oblong Beads



Figure 30: A Young Kalasha Woman Wearing Multiple Hanks of beads Lish and Sulki, a Choker called Kapaban, and Eight-strand Garland Gadu'lay



Figure 31: Kalasha Women in their Traditional Costumes and Pricy Accessories, including Feather Plume Cheish, Neck Ring Gringa, Silver Waist Chain Ornament Shagay (Sagay) and Big Red Oblong Bead Necklace Gadul'ay, during a Merit Feast Biramor

A study of Kalasha costumes show a gradual but considerable increase in embellishment of the dress *piran*, of headdresses both *kupas* and *shushut* and a lavish use of beaded neck jewellery pieces and various types of accessories. **Fig. 31** shows women wearing heavy beaded jewellery, dressed for a merit feast *biramor* (Darling 1979: 166).

This picture shows all signs of wealth and status shown in their dresses; *cis* (*chish*) with multiple feathers, silver chains on the waist *shagay*, silver neck piece *gringa* or torque jewellery, small necklaces *lish*, *mahik*, *sulki*, and choker *kapaban* and the big eight-strand red oblong bead necklaces *gadul'ay*. It is very interesting to note that as per Darling's work on Kalasha *Kafirs*, many of these jewellery items in the past "were reserved for the highest ranking warriors in Bashgal Valley (now in Nuristan, Afghanistan) which are slowly adopted widely by Kalasha women at present (Darling 1979:166).

Robertson in his study also mentions about dress and accessories of dance of Kalasha men and women during a three day ceremony, in connection with the erection of two wooden effigies to deceased people-one to a man, and other to a woman, in Birir Valley. While describing dancing women's dress and jewellery, he notes, "Of these during the dance, about two dozen, including little girls, the seniors wearing horned headdresses...All the women and little girls were shockingly dirty and unkempt, their garments being much torn. The women wore the large serpentine earrings, and two or three had on silver blinkers also," (Robertson 2001: 220).

Traditional Costumes of Kalasha Men

Kalasha men's traditional costumes will be discussed under three major categories:

- Traditional Dress of Men
- Jewellery and Accessories
- Traditional Footwear of Men (*kalun*)

1. The Traditional Dress of Kalasha Men

The traditional costume of a Kalasha man of rank *namusi moch*, as shown in **Fig. 32**, using Darling's descriptions, consisted of various pieces denoting various

symbols of rank. The woolen Chitrali Cap with plume or *cheish* (a symbol of leopard or man-killer); the loose white sheep's wool pants, called *bhut* or *boot* (a symbol of his membership in the *growei* (sacred male community of the Kalasha)); bands called *shumans* around his chest, a symbol of honour, and apricot seed garlands called *jajey ghu* around his neck (the symbols of prestige); markhor hide moccasins (*shara kandali kalun*) only worn by men of rank who have given merit feasts (like *biramor*); and *puttees* around his calves are woven with symbols of horns of the sacred male goats (Darling 1979: 186).

The traditional woolen dress of men consisted of three pieces. A woolen baggy pant called *bhut* or *boot*, as shown in **Figs. 32** and **33**, a woolen upper garment as shown in **Fig. 1**, and a Chitrali cap. Woolen pants *sualak* (*shualak*) and goat hair cloak called *ghui* or *walghui* were also worn by goatherders. Silk and brocade robes as signs of rank were and are still worn on important occasions as shown in **Figs. 34** and **38**. Belts or *pattis* of various types, length and colours were also used by men, as shown in **Figs. 35, 36** and **37**. Different studies give different terms for various pieces of traditional dress for men (Sheikh 2013: 115) but I have tried to consult the Kalasha Dictionary (Trail and Cooper 1999) to find out the proper use of the Kalasha dress terms as far as possible.

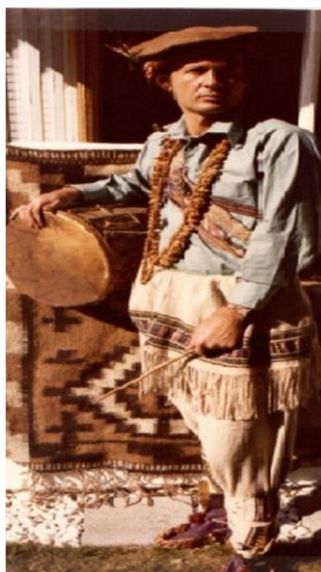


Figure 32: Traditional Costume Worn by a Kalasha Namusi Moch (Man of Rank)



Figure 33: A Kalasha Shaman, in Traditional Woolen Pants Boot (Bhut)



Figure 34: Traditional Orator Qazi during Joshi Festival, wearing Brocade Robe, a sign of Rank and Bands in his neck called Shuman given to honour a person. Money in his cap is given by the Audience as he narrates Traditional Stories



Figure 35: A Kalasha Dur Museum Exhibit showing Men's Dress and Accessories



Figure 36: Traditional Leather Moccasins for Men in Kalasha Dur Museum



Figure 37: A Successful Aspirant for the Rank of Birmor (a Type of Merit Feast) Kata Singh, wearing Multiple Garlands of Apricot Seed called Jajeyghu, given by ja mi li or (Clan Daughter/ Sisters) to honour the Ranked Men, as shown in the background



Figure 38: The 1977 Birmor hosted by Kata Singh, in Rumbur Valley, dedicated to his father Buda, who is mounted on horseback. A privilege for those who have hosted Birmor, he is wearing Symbols of Rank; a Silk Robe, Neck Bands and Garlands, and a Mountain Pheasant Feathered Cap Plume Chish (Cis)

2. Jewellery and Accessories

Although, Robertson (2001) mentions the use of jewellery pieces and ornaments by Kalasha men, a May 2011 visit in all three Kalasha Valleys revealed that it was not observed by men anymore. Almost all young and old men, however, were wearing *Chitrali* woolen cap, some decorated with mountain pheasant feather plume *cheish* and also many with ordinary feathers from various other types of local birds dyed in beautiful colours. The *cheish* with multiple feathers of the mountain pheasant is a pricy dress item for men nowadays, costing three to four thousand rupees for a small 3-to-4-feather *cheish*. The more the number of feathers in a *cheish* the more pricy it gets.

It is very interesting to note here, that in the past the *cheish* was a symbol used only by high ranking men. If a man was a leopard killer, the *cheish* had 3-feathers or stalks, or if the victim was a man, then the plume, called *asemal* had nine feathers (Darling 1979: 179). At present, men wear it frequently more as a decoration piece on their caps. Only few men were spotted wearing small *cheish* with only few feathers during 2011 *joshi* festival. In fact, more Kalasha women were observed wearing very heavy *cheish* as compared to Kalasha men.

Robertson's study gives further clues into men's accessories, and notes during a dance of celebration:

While their male relations in the dancing crowd were distinguished from the others by wearing bright-coloured clothes and all the bravery they possessed, and by each carrying a dancing-axe. They wore gorgeous sham kinkob chappans or long robes [of honor worn on special occasions] and white cloth turbans ... In the ears they wore long silver earrings ... while the neck was frequently circled by a silver, or what looked like a silver ornament, solid and heavy, such as those worn by Hindu women. If an individual were the proud possessor of two chappans, he wore them both, exposing some of the glory of the one underneath by slipping an arm out of a sleeve of the one above. The waist was girded by a narrow shawl, or the usual metal-studded leather belt of the country, supporting a dagger. (Robertson 2001: 220-21)

3. Traditional Footwear of Men (*kalun*)

The traditional soft leather moccasins *kalun* were part of the traditional Kalasha footwear for men, worn on various important and ceremonial occasions. The traditional ornate leather moccasins called *kalun*, were used about 50 years from

now (Personal communication: Farman, April 2012). No use of *kalun* was observed during my May 2011 visit to Kalasha Valleys.

A good brand was *shara (sara) kandali kalun*, as seen in **Fig. 39**, the decorative moccasins made from markhor leather (Trail and Cooper 1999: 147-287). During death rituals a male dead body is dressed with *kalun* as well. At present, both men and women use sandals and sneakers, as shown in **Fig. 15**. Ordinary *kalun* were told to be used inside as well as outside as they were carefully made using layers of raw leather as a base or sole. The moccasins were tied with colourful thin woven tape with colourful pompoms at the ends. Various studies indicate that moccasins were of different colours including red leather *watsas* (Robertson 2001: 221), prepared in Kamdesh by slaves and some in natural beige and browns with woolen embroidery around the shoes, as shown in **Fig. 36**.



Figure 39: Shara Kandali Kalun, the Traditional Markhor Hide and Hair Moccasins of Kalasha Men of Rank

A literature review shows that there were many types of soft leather moccasins, having different names, as indicated by Robertson and Darling (Robertson 2001: 220-1, Darling 1979: 176). While talking about men's shoes and dress in a dancing ceremony Robertson notes:

The feet were covered with curiously worked dancing-boots... and that almost everybody wore “*watsas*” the soft reddish leather boot of the country with red woolen rosettes on the instep while from the long, soft drab-coloured uppers, which reached nearly half-way to the knee, there depended a long fringe of white goat’s hair, dyed red at the tips. The boots were secured to the legs and ankles by narrow tapes of list. Above them appeared Chitralli stockings, into the tops of which the loose, baggy trousers of coarse white cotton cloth were carefully tucked. This, with a dancing-axe, completed the full dress of a swell, but there were all gradations in attire, according to the wealth or position of the wearer. (2001: 220-1)

There is even a mention of *mochost* (*mocost*) or moccasins made of human skin (Trail and Cooper 199: 202). The *KAL’AS’A DUR* Museum has some very fine specimens of various types of *kaluns* at display, as shown in **Fig. 36**.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to infer that the traditional Kalasha costumes for men and women were elaborate as my review shows from Robertson’s study of 1891-92 to my own visit to all three Kalasha Valleys in May of 2011. The changing time has taken its toll on Kalasha costume traditions and the study indicates a total disappearance of men’s traditional costumes. Kalasha women’s traditional woolen dress *cheo* is also almost replaced by the new dress *piran*. There is an urgent need of documentation of the traditional costumes of the Kalash Kafirs, a living endangered culture, using collections of the Kalasa Dur Museum. Creating a pictorial archive and digitising the collections for preserving them for future generations needs to be done on priority basis, given the precarious security situation of the militancy-hit environment of the KPK Province, where the Museum is located.

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