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History and Development of the Kalasha the Sole pre-Islamic Indigenous People of Pakistan during the Rais and Katur Dynastic Eras

ABSTRACT: This article attempts to probe into the history and development of the Kalasha people under the Rais and Katur dynasties of Chitral. The Rais dynasty ruled over Chitral from 1320 AD to 1595 AD, while Katur reigned from 1595 AD until 1969 AD. The research has been separated into two sections. The status of the Kalasha people under Rais is detailed in one section, while the status and condition of the Kalasha community under Katur is revealed in the other. Due to the lack of Kalasha's own recorded sources, the research relied heavily on Kalasha oral traditions, as well as the *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral* (Chitral chronicles). Shah Nadir Rais first took Mastuj, Upper Chitral, and Chitral proper, and the Kalasha were forced into various valleys in lower and southern Chitral. The Kalasha people of lower Chitral were converted in the 14th century. The establishment of Pakistan (1947) was a watershed moment in history, and the Katur era lasted until 1969. During the regal period, the Kalasha people's overall status was not very spectacular. They were the Mehtar's 'third estate,' and they bore a great weight of many forms of taxes as well as forced unpaid labour. They have many legends in their oral traditions about unpaid labour and taxes paid to the State of Chitral.

Keywords: Dardistan, indigenous people, islamization, Kafiristan, Kalasha

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Introduction

The Kalasha is a Dard-Aryan tribe from the northwest of Pakistan, living in three deep valleys of the Hindu Kush for centuries. Once ruling over the entire Chitral valley, from the fringes of Lowari Pass in the south to Boni, Mastuj, and other villages in the north, the tribe is now confined to three valleys known as Rumbur, Birir, and Bumburet. They speak a Dardic language called Kalsha-mon, also known as Kalasha and Kalashwer. The Kalasha-mon language belongs to the Indo-Aryan languages.⁴ They are still sticky to their pre-Islamic faith and culture, despite the whole area from eastern Afghanistan to Baltistan having been Islamized, gradually. The Kalasha have never been counted separately in any census of Pakistan. However, Wazir Zada Kalash, MPA KP-Assembly, believed that the population of the three valleys in 2017 was 12,000 and the Kalasha were only 4,000 approximately.⁵

According to the tribe's oral tradition, Raja Wai and Bulasing were two powerful Kalasha rulers who ruled from Upper to Lower Chitral. Raja Wai even had sway in Afghanistan's Kafiristan. He is said to have launched a successful attack on the Bashgal valley (Kafiristan) according to folklore.⁶ There are many Kalasha chiefs or rulers who are discussed and mentioned in Kalasha oral history and in their legends.⁷ Raja Wai and Bulasing, on the other

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⁴ Muhammad Kashif Ali, "A History of the Kalasha in Pakistan: Its Origin, Change and Continuity" (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Punjab, 2019), 2.

⁵ Wazir Zada Kalash, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, June 23, 2017, Chat Guru village, Rumbur.

⁶ Muhammad Kashif Ali, A History of the Kalasha in Pakistan: Its Origin, Change and Continuity, 53-54.

⁷ For detail about the Kalasha rule in Chitral see Chapter 2 in Ali, 2019.

hand, were the last famous and notable kings of Upper and Lower Chitral, respectively, and following Bulasing's defeat, Rais became rulers. The Kalasha reign came to an end in Chitral.⁸ Following the fall of Kalasha in Chitral, especially in Upper Chitral and Chitral proper, the Rais dynasty (1320 AD to 1595 AD) emerged, followed by the Katur dynasty (1595 AD to 1969).

Literature Review

To investigate the time period under question, there are primarily two sources: (1) Kalasha traditions; (2) chronicles of *Mehtars* (Khowar: chief or ruler) of Chitral; *Tarikh-i-Chitral* (Persian) and *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral* (Urdu). Mirza Muhammad Ghufuran originally wrote the *Tarikh-i-Chitral* in Persian in 1893. Mirza Ghufuran revised it in 1921, and his son Mirza Ghulam Murtaza added more events to extend it. The *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral* (henceforth NTC) first ever was published in 1962 by Mirza Ghulam Murtaza.⁹ Mirza Muhammad Siar (Baba Siar) is regarded the first historiographer of Chitral history, according to Prof. Mumtaz Hussain, a local Chitrali renowned writer. He was an 18th-century classical poet who utilised his writings to memorialise various historical events. Siar's poetry recounts the events of the Katur reign¹⁰ while the Kalasha rule or dealing with them by the *Mehtars* of Chitral is missing. We mainly rely on *Tarikh-i-Chitral*, *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral*, and traditions alluded to by the Kalasha people to create a deeper grasp of Kalasha history and progress throughout the Rais and Katur eras. However, Mytte Fentz criticizes it, "However, one of the fundamental social and political transformations, the infiltration of Islamic civilisation into Chitral, appears to be rather opaque in this historiographic tradition."¹¹ Prof. Mumtaz criticises Mirza Ghufuran for not documenting as many Rais rulers' names or narratives in any detail in the early version of *Tarikh-i-Chitral*. Ghulam Murtaza, on the other hand, went into great depth about the Rais era and stretched it across three centuries. Hussain is also suspicious of Murtaza's sources.¹²

Research Methodology

To comprehend the regional and folk history of the Kalasha tribe of Chitral, this study used a historical and descriptive method with an analytical approach. To have a better knowledge of the background and history, primary and secondary sources, as well as oral traditions, were evaluated and reviewed. Because the Kalasha are the only pre-Islamic tribe in the Hindu Kush, extensive time was spent interviewing the community to get first-hand information and data. Three Kalasha valleys (Birir, Bumburet, and Rumbur) were surveyed, as well as one converted valley, Jinjeret Kuh.

The Kalasha during the Rais Era in Chitral

According to Dani, Raja Torra Khan (1241-1275) was the native chief of Gilgit and the founder of the Trakhan dynasty, whereas Shah Rais Khan (Shah Nadir Rais?) was his stepbrother who fled Gilgit¹³ to seek asylum from him. Tajdar-i-Moghal or Taj Moghal helped Shah Rais Khan to seize Chitral.¹⁴ Taj Moghal, Dani holds, was the ruler of Badakhshan who assisted Shah Rais in establishing the Rais dynasty.¹⁵ Shah Nadir Rais invaded Chitral from Turkistan in the early half of the 14th century A.D., according to Baig (and also mentioned in the NTC).¹⁶ In Chitral, he formed the Rais Dynasty, conquering the region's indigenous chiefs and ruled from 1320 until 1595. Mastuj and the Upper Chitral Valley were captured by Shah Nadir Rais. Sumalik¹⁷ was the ruler of Mastuj in Upper Chitral, according to legend. Sumalik's people, despite the fact that they were not Kalash, were also *kafirs* or pagans.

⁸ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral* (Peshawar: Public Arts Press, 1962), 29.

⁹ Hidayat Ur Rehman, "Mirza Muhammad Ghufuran: A Chitrali Courtier, Historiographer and Poet 1857-1926" *Chitral News*, September 11, 2011. Accessed April 21, 2017. <http://www.chitralnews.com/MirzaGhufuran-11-Sep-2011.htm>.

¹⁰ Mumtaz Hussain, "Tarikh-i-Chitral Ka Ibtidai Door: Kuch Masail" Mahraka Blog, January 01, 2016, accessed August 02, 2017, <http://www.mahraka.com/ChitralEarlyHistory.html>.

¹¹ Mytte Fentz, *The Kalasha: Mountain People of the Hindu Kush* (Humblebæk: Rhodos, 2010), 34.

¹² Mumtaz Hussain.

¹³ For details of war of succession and relations between Torra Khan and Shah Rais see Dani, 2007, 172-175.

¹⁴ A.H. Dani, "The Western Himalayan States," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: Vol. IV: The Age of Achievement: AD 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century: Part One: The Historical, Social and Economic Setting*, ed. M.S. Asimov and C.W. Bosworth (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1999), 223.

¹⁵ Ahmad Hasan Dani, *History of Northern Areas of Pakistan (Upto 2000 AD)* (1989; repr Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2007) 174.

¹⁶ Rehmat Karim Baig, Firuza Pastakia (Ed.), *Chitral: A Study in Statecrafts (1320-1969)* (Karachi: IUCN, 2004), 3.

¹⁷ Perhaps, Raja Sau Malik II who was a pagan ruler (1275-1345 AD) of Gilgit and he was son of Torra Khan, for detail see Dani, 2007, 175.

The remnants of Sumalik's fort may be seen near the Upper Chitral settlement of Uchuti.¹⁸ After taking Upper Chitral, which belonged to a Kalasha chief named Bulasing, who was assassinated during the Rais assault, Shah Nadir Rais moved on to Southern Chitral.¹⁹ Shishi Kuh, Drosh, Jinjeret Kuh, Nagar, and Urtsun valleys in southern Chitral were also under the command of another Kalasha ruler, Kriznook. Baig believes he was stronger than Bulasing and reigned over several Bashgal valleys. Nadir Shah Rais raided Kriznook as well, but he was unable to take his estates.²⁰

Nadir Shah Rais's son Jan Rais (1341-1356) succeeded his father as the ruler of Chitral in 1341 until 1356 AD. Jan Rais does not appear to have attacked the Kalasha of Kalashdesh (Rumbur, Bumburet, and Birir), and his main aim may have been the consolidation of his rule rather than kingdom expansion.²¹ In regards of the Kalasha-Jan Rais relationship, the NTC and oral Kalasha traditions are deafeningly silent. Khan Rais was successor of Jan Rais; he ruled over Chitral from 1356 to 1420 and during this period never attempted any military campaign in the Kalasha area.²² It's worth noting that he never raided Kalashdesh once during his 64-year rule. There might be two explanations for this: either he did not enter Kalasha land, or his 64-year rule was overstated. During the Rais rule in the 14th century, Wazir Ali Shah claims conversion in the valleys of lower Chitral. He asserts that during a 150-year period, the whole land of Shishikuh's main valleys, as well as large portions of its side valleys, were converted to Islam.²³ However, he made no mention of the conversion process, whether it was peaceful and gradual or engineered by the Rais. Rais later had a difficult time as a result of the Mongol invasion. The Rais *Mehtars* remained at the forefront of the Mongol invasions. The new Chitral ruler, Shah Akbar Rais (1491-1520), made it his mission to improve the state's internal organisation.²⁴ During the reign of Shah Tahir Rais, there is evidence of a Kalasha invasion of Chitral proper (1520-1531). During Shah Tahir's reign, Raja Wai attacked Chitral but was defeated and never tried another such excursion again.²⁵ Raja Wai's fight, on the other hand, reveals the rifts between Rais and the Kalasha chief. Shah Nasir Rais' reign (1531-1574) effectively ended the Kalasha chieftdom; Nasir led an offensive expedition to southern Chitral, capturing Bumburet, Ayun, Jinjeret Kuh, Birir, Shishi Kuh, and Rumbur. Many Kalasha were converted to Islam during this period, and those who refused were subjected to a tax known as *qalang*.²⁶ Shah Nasir Rais also dispatched an expedition to Bashgal valley, led by Muhammad Baig. The Bashgal valley was conquered by Muhammad Baig and Rais placed a levy on the valley's Red *Kafirs* that they had to pay for many generations.²⁷

The last *Mehtar* from the Rais family was Shah Mahmood Rais (1574-1595). He was the extremely young heir to his late father; therefore, an oligarchy had arisen, which indirectly dominated governmental matters. During Shah Nasir's rule, Sangin Ali's sons, Muhammad Raza and Muhammad Baig, enjoyed immense authority, but the new oligarchy toppled them and drove them to distant districts of Chitral. Despite their isolated position, Baig and Raza kept a watch on political happenings in and around Chitral. On the other side, they began to mobilise local sentiments in the places where they were ordered to dwell. Finally, Muhammad Baig's sons, Mohtaram Shah-I and Khushwaqt, started an uprising. Both were quietly restoring power and rallying local support. Due to unrest in Chitral and oligarchy incompetence, they stormed Chitral and conquered it after a bloody war in 1595. That war was a watershed episode in Chitral history, sealing the destiny of the Rais dynasty and ushering in the "Katur" dynasty.²⁸

Although the Rais era was not ideal for the Kalasha people but the religious persecution was minimal. During the Rais era, their economy was particularly stressed. The *Mehtars* made no significant efforts to convert them because they could enslave them, as Loude and Lievre stated in *Kalash Solstice*. They go on to claim that in Nuristan (or erstwhile Kafiristan), it was common practise for the strongest to enslave the weakest.²⁹ In terms of

¹⁸ Alberto Cacopardo, "Some Findings of Archaeological, Historical and Ethnographic Interest in Chitral," *East and West*, Vol. 57, No. 1/4 (December 2007): 382, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2957735>.

¹⁹ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 36-37.

²⁰ Rahmat Karim Baig, *Hindu Kush Study Series*, Vol. II (Peshawar: Rehmat Printing Press, 1997), 1-2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²³ Wazir Ali Shah, "Notes on Kalash Folklore," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 70.

²⁴ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 39-40.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁷ Rahmat Karim Baig, *Hindu Kush Study Series*, Vol. II, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁹ Jean Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, *Kalash Solstice: Winter Feasts of the Kalash of North Pakistan* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, 1988.), 21-22.

slavery, it is worth noting that in the late nineteenth century, while collecting anthropological data from North-West India, G. W. Leitner was informed of *Kafir* slaves that could be acquired near Peshawar.³⁰ According to legend, the Kalasha *Kafirs* were enslaved and sold in both Afghanistan and British India. In the confidential gazetteer, Captain Barrow reveals that slave trading was the third most important source of income for *Mehtars*. He believes that the slave trade used to make a lot of money, but that Russian conquests in Central Asia, as well as the prohibition on slavery in Kabul, devastated the market. Prices vary based on age and gender and range from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300.³¹ The slave trade was a source of wealth for the erstwhile state of Chitral, according to Hermann Kreutzmann's research.³² Except for Adam Zada³³ the *Mehtars* could enslave anybody, which was the state's principal source of revenue. Enslavement, according to Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, was abolished in 1895.³⁴ Augusto and Alberto also confirmed the enslavement of the Kalasha people, writing that the Kalasha, or Shiah Muslims, were the most prevalent victims of this trade by the *Mehtars* of Chitral.³⁵

The Kalasha under the Katur Era in Chitral

Mohtaram Shah and Khushwaqt (grandsons of Sangin Ali-I) overthrew the Rais dynasty in 1595, and Mohtaram Shah established the Katur dynasty.³⁶ In NTC, lineage information has been provided, in ascending order, from Mohtaram Shah-I to Amir Taimur (Tamerlane).³⁷ During the time of Shah Akbar Rais, Baba Ayub Tiamuri (Timurid) travelled from Herat, and he is characterised in the NTC as a *dervish* (Persian: saint). Sangin Ali-I was raised by Shah Akbar Rais and he gave his daughter in marriage to Sangin Ali-I. Sangin Ali-I was given a high position in *Mehtar* Akbar Rais' army. Sangin Ali-I had four sons, two of whom became famous: Muhammad Baig and Muhammad Raza. Though Muhammad Baig had six sons but two are famous in history: Khushwaqt and Mohtaram Shah.³⁸ There was a large tribe, according to the NTC, called Katur that existed between Chitral and Kabul. When Mohtaram Shah and his brothers captured Chitral, locals referred to them as Katur.³⁹ Ahmad Yusuf Nurastani also believed that Tamerlane (Timur) named Nuristan Katoor, and that the reigning family thereafter took the same title.⁴⁰ There is deviation in the accession date of Mohtaram Shah-I; in NTC there are two dates 1590 and 1595, Dani suggests 1585⁴¹ while Baig suggests 1590.⁴² With critical mind, Mohtaram Shah-I might have been *Mehtar* between 1590 and 1595. Mohtaram Shah-I took the title Katur, which is alternatively spelled Katoor and Kator.⁴³ He had become the *Mehtar* of the whole Chitral valley, and the Kalasha were now his subjects. His brothers were made overlords over various territories in Chitral. Wirishikgum, also known as Worshigum, is presently Yasin valley in Ghizer district of Gilgit and Ayun's *jagir* (Persian: land) was given to Khushwaqt.⁴⁴ The three Kalasha valleys of Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur are all accessible from Ayun.

The first reference of Katur and Kalasha conflict we may find in the Kalasha oral history is associated to the reign of Mohtaram Shah- I's brother; Khushwaqt who was governor or overlord of Yasin and Mastuj. Dhondi, a Kalasha who was Shurasai's grandson and Shuasai's son, was an official or sub-lord of Khushwaqt. According to Kalasha folklore, Khushwaqt killed Dhondi and flung him into the river. Mother and brothers of Dhondi took refuge

³⁰ G. W. Leitner, "Siah Posh Kafirs," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. (1874): 347, accessed July 03, 2007, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2840908>.

³¹ Captain E.G. Barrow, *Gazetteer of the Eastern Hindu Kush* (Simla: Government Central Press, 1888), 85.

³² Hermann Kreutzmann, "Trade Links in the Eastern Hindu Kush: The Chitral Route," in *Proceedings of the Third International Hindu Kush Conference*, ed. Israr-ud-Din (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 310. And Rehmat Karim Baig, *Chitral: A Study in Statecrafts*, 12.

³³ There were three classes in the Chitrali society; *Adam Zada* (elite class), *Arab Zada* (middle class) and *Faqir Miskeen* (lower class).

³⁴ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 150.

³⁵ Alberto M. Cacopardo and Augusto S. Cacopardo, *Gates of Peristan: History, Religion and Society in the Hindu Kush* (Rome: IsIAO, 2001), 59.

³⁶ A.H. Dani, *The Western Himalayan States*, 225.

³⁷ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 49.

³⁸ Rehmat Karim Baig, *Chitral: A Study in Statecrafts*, 4-5 and Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 40-49.

³⁹ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 49.

⁴⁰ Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani, "Emergence of Ulama as Political Leaders in Waigal Valley: The Intensification of Islamic Identity" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1994), 39, accessed December 03, 2015, <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/186967>.

⁴¹ A.H. Dani, *The Western Himalayan States*, 225.

⁴² Rehmat Karim Baig, *Chitral: A Study in Statecrafts*, 5.

⁴³ Rahmat Karim Baig, *Hindu Kush Study Series*, Vol. II, 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

in Kamdesh or Bashgal valley where Dhondi's son Latharuk was born. It is recorded in the local Kalasha tradition that Dhondi was called by the "king" (governor Khushwaqt?) who bestowed upon him the *jagir* of Gahiret and Shishi Kuh valley and forbade the selling of Kalasha slaves.⁴⁵ The second key reference for the Kalasha-Katur connection comes from the NTC. Chitral was ruled for forty years by Shah Mohtaram Katur-I, and in the interim, Shah Mahmood's Rais of the Rais Dynasty besieged Chitral to retake the throne. The Kalasha of Kalkatak (a town in the lower Chitral valley) assassinated the Katur *Mehtar*, Mohtaram Shah-I, in 1630 AD.⁴⁶ Sangin Ali-II, Mohtaram Shah's eldest son, was forced to seek refuge in the Mughal Empire of India. The Rais' rule endured scarcely thirty years. Aurangzeb Alamgir, the then emperor of the Mughal Empire, financially helped Sangin Ali-II to regain his lost chiefdom. Now, in 1660, the Katur dynasty had regained the control of Chitral and Kalash.⁴⁷ Once, when he had regained Chitral, went Drosh for hunting and when he reached Kalkatak, he recalled assassination of his father, in revenge he ordered the killing of the whole town's folks, subsequently all Kalasha in Kalkatak were killed. Albeit the number of deaths is not indicated in the NTC, it is expressed that Kalkatak was a jam-packed settlement at that time.⁴⁸

Another major reference of the Kalasha during the Katur period can be derived from the oral history of Qazi Khush Nawaz which was documented by Peter Parkes that Barik and his son Juar Beg, belonged to the Kalasha community of Rumbur, were *asaqals* (Khowar: town head man) to *mehtar*. Barik was Sirangs *asaqal*, Sirangs was a pagan chief of Wirishikgum (now Yasin Valley). Bulasing, a Kalasha chief, ruled Chitral at the same time, although no dates are mentioned. Juar Beg and his family were forced to evacuate Rumbur following a conflict with Sirang, and they sought safety in Bashgal valley. They returned to Rumbur after twenty years, according to folk tradition, and were pardoned by "mehtar Sangal" (Sangina Ali).⁴⁹

According to this construction:

- I. When Bulasing was ruler of Chitral and Sirang was ruler of Yasin valley, Juar Beg and his family escaped to Bashgal valley.
- II. They spent twenty years in the Bashgal valley.
- III. It was the Sangin Ali's rule over Chitral when they returned.

Ambiguity and Comment: Because Bulasing ruled over Chitral in the early 14th century, the Rais Era should have been utilised rather than the Katur Era or Sangin Ali's reign. No doubt, Sangal (Sangin Ali?) is mentioned in the Kalasha tradition but the construction of a chronology or order of the local history raises several historical challenges. We find two Sangin Alis (Sangin Ali-I and Sangin Ali-II) in the history of Chitral and both are recorded in NTC and are associated with the Katur family. Now, if Sangal is Sangin Ali-I then he is from middle or late 16th century and if this Sangal is referred as Sangin Ali-II then he belongs to 17th century and is documented in NTC. Later, he sought asylum in the Mughal Empire, and after a twenty-five-year stay, he reclaimed Chitral in 1660 AD with the financial assistance of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir, as discussed above. Unfortunately, oral traditions (apart from the Kalasha folk tales) cannot validate the Bulasing version. The plot revolves on three key characters: Juar Beg, Bulasing, and Sangal (Sagin Ali). Qazi Khush Nawaz, the informant of Peter Parkes, has, in my judgement, combined two stories into one. Despite the fact that Khush Nawaz was a Kalasha man with a rich intellect and an excellent memory, there is a potential that the two stories were mixed up, when it was recalled after three/four hundred years. It's also plausible that Sangal isn't Sangin Ali-I or Sangin Ali-II, as there's no way to verify it. Wolfgang Holzwarth, an expert on Chitral historiography, also voiced concerns about the omission of several major kings or rulers and characters from the *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral*.⁵⁰

According to Kalasha legend, once the Rais ousted the Kalasha from their reign, the Kalasha were subjected to a variety of levies. Apart from *thangi* and *qalang* two major taxes, *bristau* (Kalash-mon: forced labour); forced labour was also required for the Kalasha. After a while, Katur took Rais' place, and they both wanted the same taxes. Katur's Khushwaqt brothers were causing difficulty, so Katur told Kalasha that taxes would be reduced on one condition: Kalasha would back Katur against Khushwaqt. Tradition has it that while Khairullah of the

⁴⁵ Peter Parkes, "A Minority Perspective on the History of Chitral: Katore Rule in Kalasha Tradition," in *Proceedings of the Third International Hindu Kush Conference*, ed. Israr-ud-Din (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 352 and 372.

⁴⁶ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 50-51.

⁴⁷ Rahmat Karim Baig, *Hindu Kush Study Series*, Vol. II, 8.

⁴⁸ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 51-54.

⁴⁹ Peter Parkes, 353.

⁵⁰ Wolfgang Holzwarth, "Chitral History, 1540-1660: Comments on Sources and Historiography," in *Proceeding of the Second International Hindu Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 124-25.

Khushwaqt lineage was warring with Katur *Mehtars*, Katur was assisted by Kalasha. Kanek and Ksaruzhi, two Kalasha, safeguarded "Shah Katur" in a cave of Kalash valley and subsequently assisted him in fleeing to the Bashgal. When Khairullah learned this type of backing, he assassinated both Kalasha. Khairullah raised the taxes and *begars* as a result. Khairullah boosted the total number of unpaid labourers from the Kalasha valleys for Chitral from 05 to 60. Meanwhile, *kafirs* in the Bashgal valley supported Katur and revolted against Khairullah. As a result, he invaded Bashgal, but the raid was thwarted due to snowfall, and he was assassinated⁵¹ (Parkes, 2008) as told by the source of Peter Parkes; Shah Jawan⁵² of Rumbur Valley. According to the oral history, two Kalasha warriors from Khairullah's army, Amir Kalash and Adraman, were covertly aiding Katur. The rivalry between Katur and Khushwaqt chiefs is briefly documented in the NTC. Katur *Mehtars* Shah Fazil (1754-1760), Shah Nawaz Khan (1760-1761) and Mohtaram Shah had to face the conflict of Khairullah, a Khushwaqt *Mehtar*. Khairullah was, finally, killed by Mohtram Shah Katur.⁵³ The clashes between Mohtram Shah and Khairullah are also verified by Wazir Ali Shah.⁵⁴

Amanul Mulk ruled over Chitral from 1857 till his death in 1892. One British official described him as a "truculent old savage".⁵⁵ In the Kalasha traditions, he is also remembered though the relations between the Kalasha and Amanul Mulk were not optimal, as a result of their support for Sher Afzal Khan as *Mehtar*. Amanul Mulk is regarded as an oppressor of the Kalasha tribe. Amir Kalash along with his son and some of his tribesmen were enslaved and sold in Kabul by Amanul Mulk. During the aforementioned period, the *asaqal* of Amanul Mulk was Mahamurat who belonged to Dremese clan of Kalasha from Rumbur valley. Mahamurat was doing everything he could to keep his tribesmen from being sold into slavery.⁵⁶ The NTC has remained silent about the Kalasha's relationship with Mehtar Amanul Mulk. It was a crucial time ever as the British Empire was developing; consequently, key occasions are documented in the NTC. In any case, the NTC momentarily makes reference to a battle with the *Kafirs* of the Bashgal valley; however, the Kalasha are not referenced.⁵⁷ The Mehtar Nizamul Mulk and his rule⁵⁸ are displayed as really terrible for the Kalasha individuals in Shah Jawan Kalash's narration. It was an unpleasant age; charges had been raised, and Kalasha ladies and youngsters had been mishandled, oppressed, and sold. Because of the strife, Nizamul Mulk was killed in the Broze⁵⁹ area by a Kalasha worker of Amirul Mulk named Sherjang of Lawi.⁶⁰ According to G. W. Leitner, the *Mehter* of Chitral, a British ally, was switched to gemstone mining after quitting the slave trade of the Kalasha and Shia (Shiah) Muslims, but the gemstone mining did not work out, and Chitral was forced to revert to slave trading.⁶¹ The Kalasha narrative, as narrated by Shah Jawan of Rumbur and documented by Peter Parkes in 1972, may be verified with a slight diversion via *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral*. Nizamul Mulk was assassinated at Broze on January 1, 1895, by Amirul Mulk's servant. The murderer, according to the NTC, was a Kalasha named Ahmed Jan from Lawi. However, he was known as Sherjang Lawi in Kalasha legend. Amirul Mulk became the new *mehtar*, but his rule was cut short in March 1895 when he and his Kalasha servant were slain.⁶²

The British Imperialism and its Impact on Chitral

⁵¹ Peter Parkes, 354.

⁵² Parkes misspelt his name as Sherjuan, but according to National Identity Card, his name is Shah Jawan. The primary author interviewed Shah Jawan twice in Rumbur Valley, in August 2007 and May 2008. He was the guardian of the Kalasha *dastoor* and belonged to the Kalasha tribe's Dremese clan.

⁵³ For detail see: Mirza Ghulam Murtaza 60-72.

⁵⁴ Wazir Ali Shah, "Invasions Preceding the Conquest of Nuristan," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 24.

⁵⁵ John Harris, *Much Sounding of Bugles: The Siege of Chitral, 1895* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1975), 11.

⁵⁶ Peter Parkes, 355-56.

⁵⁷ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 124-25.

⁵⁸ Nizamul Mulk ruled Chitral from 1892 to 1895, for detail see Baig, 2004.

⁵⁹ A village between Chitral and Ayun

⁶⁰ Peter Parkes, 356.

⁶¹ G. W. Leitner, *Dardistan in 1866, 1886, and 1893: Being an Account of the History, Religions, Customs, Legends, Fables, and Songs of Gilgit, Chilas, Kandia (Gabrial), Yasin, Chitral, Hunsa, Nagyr, and Other Parts of the Hindukush, as Also a Supplement to the Second Edition of the Hunza and Nagyr Handbook and an Epitome of Part III of the Author's The Languages and Races of Dardistan* (1893; repr., Karachi: Indus Publication, 1985), 6, Appendices-I.

⁶² H. C. Thomson, *The Chitral Campaign: A Narrative of Events in Chitral, Swat and Bajour* (London: William Heinemann, 1895), 5 and Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 160-165.

The British emerged as a new political power on Chitral's political landscape in the late nineteenth century. The British Indian government besieged Chitral in the late nineteenth century. The British government's main goal was to shut the north western part of India with this advance post. The British administration favoured the establishment of a buffer state between British India and Tsarist Russia as a result of the difficult, if not disastrous, occupation of Afghanistan.⁶³ After Amanul Mulk's death in 1892, the political situation in Chitral was exceedingly tumultuous. His son, Afzalul Mulk, declared himself as the new *Mehtar*. Nizamul Mulk, Amanul Mulk's eldest son, was the claimant to the throne, according to customary law. When his father died, he was away from the capital, leaving a hole for Afzalul Mulk to fill. When he learnt of his brother's announcement of himself as *Mehtar*, he went to Gilgit to seek British Agent support for his own installation as *Mehtar*. Umra Khan of Jandol, a Pathan chief from Dir, on the other hand, supported Afzalul Mulk against Nizamul Mulk. *Mehtar* Afzalul Mulk's uncle, Sher Afzal, marched from Drosh to Chitral at the same time. Afzalul Mulk was slain in the battle, and Sher Afzal took over as *Mehtar* for a short period. Nizamul Mulk beat Sher Afzal with British assistance, and Sher Afzal escaped to Afghanistan.⁶⁴

Chitral was becoming increasingly important to British imperialism because it allowed them to keep a close watch on Afghanistan and Russia. In early 1893, *Mehtar* Nizamul Mulk invited a British Mission to Chitral. Despite the expedition's return to Gilgit in May 1893, Captain Younghusband was deployed to Chitral to gather correct information for the British Government of India.⁶⁵

Durand Line Agreement (1893): A Blessing in Disguise for the Kalasha Tribe

During the Katur Era, the British Government had signed an agreement with Afghanistan Government; the Durand Line Agreement (1893).⁶⁶ It was fruit of long efforts from both sides (Afghanistan and the British Government) to reach an agreement to define the borders, Amir Abdur Rahman and Henry Mortimer Durand were the signatories.⁶⁷ The Durand Line Agreement (1893) was later found to be completely beneficial to the Kalasha of Chitral while disastrous for Red Kafirs of Afghanistan. Marx writes that Mortimer Durand, a British agent, signed an agreement with the Amir of Afghanistan in 1893 to create a border between Afghan and British territory.⁶⁸ Loude and Lievre believed that the event was a blessing for Kalasha people; they summarize the event:

They [British] therefore encouraged the unifying aims of Abdur Rahman, the charismatic leader of Pathans, and remained deaf to pressing proposals for an alliance with Kafirs. They washed their hands, so to speak, of the Kafirs' fate so as not to jeopardise the plans for a *pax Britannica* that would involve the establishment of frontiers and satisfaction of the expansionist designs of emir of Kabul. The Durand Line, drawn through peaks of the Hindukush, set a limit on his demands but at the same time cut arbitrarily through a geographical and cultural entity. One result was the collapse of Kafir arrogance. The Kalash, thanks to last pass, escaped the threat of Afghan domination. Chitral remained in the orbit of India before passing into that of Pakistan.⁶⁹

Islamization of the Red Kafirs of Afghanistan

In 1895, shortly after the creation of the Durand Line, Abdur Rahman, Amir of Afghanistan, attacked and occupied Kafiristan.⁷⁰ Kafiristan was renamed Nuristan (Land of Lights) by Amir Abdur Rehman.⁷¹ Sardar Azar,⁷² a former Kafir, is witness of Amir Abdur Rahman's invasion during his father's chiefdom, Sardar Kashmir. Azar explains in his autobiography that Afghanistan's king, Amir Abdur Rehman, attacked his country.⁷³ After heavy

⁶³ Loude and Lievre, 23.

⁶⁴ Mohammad Afzal Khan, *Chitral and Kafiristan: A Personal Study*, (New York: Ishi Press International, 2013), 13-14.

⁶⁵ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 159-160, Muhammad Afzal Khan, 14-15.

⁶⁶ For details regarding Forward Policy and Durand Line Agreement see, H.H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of India: The Indian Empire 1858-1918* Vol. 6, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 61-63.

⁶⁷ Sultan-I-Rome, "The Durand Line Agreement (1893): Its Pros and Cons," *JRSP*, Vol. XXXI, No 67. (2004): 6, for detail see Bijan Omrani, "The Durand Line: History and Problems of the Afghan-Pakistan Border," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 40 No. 2, (2009): 177-195.

⁶⁸ Edward Marx, "How We Lost Kafiristan," *Representations*, No 67. (Summer 1999): 48-49, accessed March, 22 2007, <http://www.jstor.org/cgi-bin/jstor/printpage/07346018>.

⁶⁹ Loude and Lievre, 23.

⁷⁰ Edward Marx, 59.

⁷¹ Sultan Mahomed Khan, ed., *The Life of Abdur Rahman: Amir of Afghanistan*, Vol. I (London: John Muray, 1900), 287-291 and Edward Marx, 60.

⁷² Azar was the Kafir Chief of Kafiristan, later he converted to Islam and was named Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah.

⁷³ Kafiristan, however Azar denotes to Bashgal valley.

battle, Amir overcame them. "Rivers of blood began to flow" as a result of the amount of blood spilt. It is difficult to realize how many heroic and determined individuals sacrificed their lives for their country and their people.⁷⁴ Many *kafirs* were slain and forced to serve as slaves in Amir Abdur Rahman's army.⁷⁵ According to Augusto Cacopardo, Amir Abdur Rahman utilised modern British weapons to destroy the Hindu Kush's pagan stronghold.⁷⁶ Although they had previously resisted Amir Taimur, Jalal-ul-Din Akbar⁷⁷ and Mahmud of Ghazni,⁷⁸ the *Kafirs* were unable to withstand the modern development in warfare. Karl Jettmar comparing the surrender of *Kafirs* of Kafiristan and Kalasha of Chitral writes that in reality, the Afghan *Kafirs* succumbed to Islamic pressure faster than the Kalasha of Chitral. The Kalasha can still be examined as pre-Islamic or a traditional pagan community.⁷⁹

When Amirul Mulk captured the Chitral fort after the assassination of Nizamul Mulk in 1895, the fort called the Assistant Political Agent, Lt. Gurdon, in Chitral to recognise him as the Mehtar. Meanwhile, Umra Khan marched his army from Dir to Chitral to lay siege Chitral. George Robertson, the Political Agent, resisted Umra Khan. George Robertson successfully captured the Chitral Fort. Now, Kalash and Chitral were indirectly influenced by the British Raj.⁸⁰

Mehtar Shujaul Mulk's reign (1895-1936) is seen as a period of relative tranquilly in Kalasha folklore as recorded that the Kalasha elders convened with *Mehtar* Shujaul Mulk and briefed him about how the Kalasha favoured the Katur and begged that the *begar* be reduced. They said that *begar* was very low during the Rais period, and that *Mehtar* Khairullah boosted it. Shujaul Mulk ordered that the Kalasha tribe's taxes and *begar* be decreased, and that just fourteen people from the three Kalasha valleys be assigned for *begar*.⁸¹ Unfortunately, the oral tradition stated above is not recorded in the NTC and has yet to be substantiated by any recorded source. Despite the fact that *Mehtar* Shujaul Mulk ruled Chitral for over forty years, there are no references to the Kalasha's links with Shujaul Mulk in the NTC. Shujaul Mulk was more concerned in *usher* tax than *thangi* and *qalang* taxes, according to only one indirect comment in the NTC.⁸² It seems he had withheld some taxes from the Kalasha tribe. Because of the Great Game, Shujaul Mulk's reign appears to be a period of transition; the British Empire and Russia were vying for sovereignty over Central Asia. Chitral was a strategically significant geographical entity for both colonial empires. Because he was busy with both external (such as the adventure of Umra Khan of Jandol, the Siege and Relief of Chitral⁸³) and internal (such as the rivalry of his lineage brothers for the throne⁸⁴) matters, *Mehtar*, in my opinion, followed a gentler stance toward the Kalasha in order to garner their support and safeguard his western frontiers. The rule of Shujaul Mulk is revered in the Kalasha folklore. Shujaul Mulk was foretold to be king by a Kalasha *dehar* (Kalasha-mon: shaman) called Sindi, and it was also predicted that during his time in power, a king from the east (perhaps via Gilgit) would come and put iron beams on rivers, causing the kingdom of Chitral to dissolve. According to Peter Parkes, the folklore foreshadows the arrival of British rule or meddling in the region.⁸⁵

⁷⁴ Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah Khan Azar, *My Heartrendingly Tragic Story*, ed. And trans. Albert M. Cacopardo and Ruth Laila Schmidt (Oslo: Novus, 2006), 69-70.

⁷⁵ Fosco Maraini, *Where Four Worlds Meet: Hindu Kush 1959* (London: Haish Hamilton, 1964), 242-243.

⁷⁶ Augusto S. Cacopardo, "A World In-between: The Pre-Islamic Cultures of the Hindu Kush," in *Borders: Itineraries on the Edges of Iran*, ed. Stefano Pello (Venice: Ca' Foscari University, 2016), 46, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://doi.org/10.14277/978-88-6969-100-3>.

⁷⁷ Augusto S. Cacopardo, *Pagan Christmas: Winter Feasts of the Kalasha of the Hindu Kush* (London: Ginko Library, 2016), 26. And Israr-ul-Din, "The People of Chitral: A Survey of their Ethnic Diversity," *Pakistan Geographic Review*, Vol.24 No. 1 (January 1969): 49.

⁷⁸ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Pakistan Society: Islam, Ethnicity and Leadership in South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 23.

⁷⁹ Karl Jettmar, *The Religions of the Hindu Kush Vol. I The Religions of the Kafirs: The Pre-Islamic Heritage of Afghan Nuristan*, trans., Adam Nayyar (Warminster: ARIS & PHILIPS Ltd., 1986), 8.

⁸⁰ Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 166-179.

⁸¹ Peter Parkes, 356.

⁸² Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, 218.

⁸³ For details see: George S. Robertson, *Chitral: The Story of a Minor Siege* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), H. C. Thomson, *The Chitral Campaign: A Narrative of Events in Chitral, Swat and Bajour* (London: William Heinemann, 1895) and G. J. Younghusband and Frank E. Younghusband, *The Relife of Chitral* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895).

⁸⁴ For detail see: Murtaza, Ch. 11 and 12.

⁸⁵ Peter Parkes, 357.

From 1936 to 1943, Nasirul Mulk ruled Chitral, and from 1943 to 1949, Mohammad Muzzafarul Mulk reigned. Nothing is known about the Kalasha's relations with these two *Mehtars* Chitral from Kalasha tradition or the NTC. The last Chitral's *Mehtars* were Saifur Rehman (1949-1954) and Saiful Mulk (1954-1969).⁸⁶

The Katur era appears to have been a difficult time for the pagan people of Kalashdesh, with forced labour and different types of levies enforced on them. The lords or *asaqals* were assigned by the *Mehtars* to collect the taxes and to call the Kalasha tribesmen for the forced labour. The *Mehtars* ate the skin of their backs, according to Kalasha legend.⁸⁷ According to Kalasha legend, Komander⁸⁸ was a brutal lord who was used to assault the Kalasha people whenever they complained about *begar* (ibid.). A member of the Chitral royal family, Shahzada Tanveerul Mulk⁸⁹, admits that the Kalasha were compelled for the forced labour. It was obligation of the Kalasha, he continues by stating, to deliver wood for fuel to the royal homes in Ayun, Upper Chitral, and Chitral proper. They were sometimes forced to stay away from their homes for two months for forced labour, he said. He comes to the conclusion that the Kalasha's condition under *Mehtars* was one of slavery.⁹⁰ Enslavement was particularly popular throughout the Rais and Katur eras. H.G. Raverty also documented enslavement of individuals during the Katur period.⁹¹ The unconverted Kalasha were suitable for *Mehtars* to enslave. The *Mehtars* who claimed to be Tamerlane's successors, made no significant attempt to convert the Kalasha to Islam in order to more easily subjugate them. The Kalasha describe those times as brutal and painful. This semi-slavery status de-structured the Kalasha society, and their warrior impulses were mostly used for self-defense.⁹²

High taxation and slavery had a devastating influence on the Kalasha people's social and economic existence. It would be appropriate to provide Kalasha spokesperson Saifullah Jan's point of view, he wrote that Shah Kator conquered Kalasha kingdom following the Rais, Kalasha was subjected to severe tyranny at the time, and the overlords forced to labour and demanded tribute from them. They would take a bull from them at the ceremony of a Kalasha wedding. That kind of oppression persisted for a long time. The rulers, for example, desired a kid-goat and several pounds of honey from each clan, which they transferred from each residence to the ruler. An *asaqal* collected the dues in their society, and the *asaqal* would seize and punish anybody who did not provide these services (Jan, 1996).

Despite the oppression indicated in the preceding paragraph, Saifullah Jan from Rumbur valley acknowledged that the *Mehtasr* forbade coercive conversion during the understudied time.⁹³ Wynne Maggi believes that the Kalasha pagan tribe's beliefs were permitted because the Kalasha were frequently contacted by *Mehters* for prophecies. Wynne Maggi is alluding to the Kalasha *dehar* called by *Mehtar* for forecasts and prophecies.⁹⁴ Baig recounts the annual taxes and demands that the Kalasha must pay to the authorities:

- Throughout the year, the Kalasha was required to transport wood to *Mehtar* for fuel usage
- Five to ten kg honey
- A large-size basket
- Six to twelve goats
- Ten kg butter per family
- Plough and yoke
- Wooden cot
- One rope
- A large cheese bread⁹⁵

⁸⁶ For detail see Ali, 2019.

⁸⁷ Peter Parkes, 358.

⁸⁸ It seems manipulation of Commander

⁸⁹ Shahzada or Prince Tanveerul Mulk is an advocate, poet, historian and writer. He belongs to Royal family of Chitral.

⁹⁰ Shahzada Tanveerul Mulk, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, Chitral town, June 21, 2017.

⁹¹ H. G. Raverty, "An Account of Upper Kash-kar, and Chitral, or Lower Kash-kar, together with the independent Afghan State of Panj-korah, including Talash," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, No.2 (1864): 127, accessed October 19, 2017, <http://pahar.in/wpfb-file/1865-upper-kash-kar-and-chitral-or-lower-kash-kar-and-panj-korah-from-jasbv33-s-pdf>.

⁹² Loude and Viviane, 22.

⁹³ Saifullah Jan, 230-240.

⁹⁴ Wynne Maggi, *Our Women Are Free: Gender and Ethnicity in the Hindukhus* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 23.

⁹⁵ Rahmat Karim Baig, *Hindu Kush Study Series*, Vol. I (Peshawar: Rehmat Printing Press, 1994), 113.

The Kalash controlled their bodies, but the *Mehtars* kept their souls, according to C. G. Bruce, a British Army Major.⁹⁶ When they were in power in Chitral, they were rich and had enormous numerical dominance, according to Kalasha legend, but the Muslims gradually outnumbered them. Augusto Cacopardo says that hundreds of people gathered for the spring festivities in the main valley of the vast plain near Nagar. He also adds that the Kalasha herds were so numerous that they filled up a long length of the Chitral River's broad valley when out grazing.⁹⁷ According to Dr. Faizi, the Kalasha and *Mehtars* had a "sheep and wolf" relation.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, the Kalasha are convinced that before being *Mehtars*' subject, they had a golden period, "the age when they were kings".⁹⁹

Conclusion

Based on the Kalasha traditions, we may assume that prior to the arrival of Islam in Chitral, the Kalasha were in better condition and represented a clear majority group in the region. Kalasha ruled over the whole Chitral valley, including Upper Chitral, Lower Chitral and central or Chitral proper. However, there does not appear to have been a single or centralised Kalasha monarchy; rather, Chitral's Kalasha dominion was fragmented into multiple chiefdoms. As previously stated, separate local rulers dominated different principalities, such as proper Chitral, which was ruled by Bulasing, and lower Chitral, which was ruled by Raja Wai. The Rais dynasty ended the Kalasha chiefdom, and by the 14th century, Kalasha conversion had begun, limiting them to the southern sub-valleys. The transitional period of Kalasha's Islamization, on the other hand, was very long, gradual and slow, and mainly peaceful. Under *Mehtars*, the Kalasha had a vulnerable social and economic standing; they were subjected to hefty taxes, unpaid labour for the royal family, and were occasionally enslaved and sold. They were; however, free in terms of culture and religion, and there was minimal intervention into Kalasha life. They had cultural connection with *Kafirs* of Kafiristan over the Afghan border. Despite outnumbering the Kalasha, the *Kafirs* of Kafiristan were unable to sustain. The Kalasha were fewer in number than the *Kafirs* of Afghanistan, yet they persevered. The Amir of Afghanistan and the British Government of India agreed to demarcate the Durand Line in the early 1890s. The Red *Kafirs* fell into Afghanistan and converted to Islam after a few years of incursions by the Amir of Afghanistan. In British India, the Kalasha, on the other hand, were subject to Mehtar of Chitral and hence survived.

⁹⁶ C. G. Bruce, *Twenty Years in the Himalaya* (London: Edward Arnold Publisher, 1910), 254.

⁹⁷ Augusto S. Cacopardo, *Pagan Christmas*, 31.

⁹⁸ Prof. Dr. Innayatullah Faizi, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, Chitral town, June 21, 2017.

⁹⁹ Alberto and Augusto, *Gates of Peristan*, 74.