



Indigenous archaeology and heritage in Pakistan: Supporting Kalash cultural preservation through education and awareness

Sayed Gul Kalash

To cite this article: Sayed Gul Kalash (2022) Indigenous archaeology and heritage in Pakistan: Supporting Kalash cultural preservation through education and awareness, Journal of Community Archaeology & Heritage, 9:1, 33-43, DOI: [10.1080/20518196.2021.2008444](https://doi.org/10.1080/20518196.2021.2008444)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/20518196.2021.2008444>



Published online: 24 Feb 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 463



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 4 View citing articles [↗](#)

INTERVIEW



Indigenous archaeology and heritage in Pakistan: Supporting Kalash cultural preservation through education and awareness*

Sayed Gul Kalash

Chitral Museum, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

In this article I reflect on work I am engaged in to support heritage preservation within and along with the indigenous Kalash community in Pakistan, as an active member of that community and the head of the Chitral Museum. As a curator and archaeologist, my main aim has been to secure and protect the identity of the Kalasha people and our links to the archaeological past. I also work with the community to improve the recognition of both tangible and intangible heritage, particularly in the context of challenges posed by factors such as socio-economic, environmental, and political issues impacting the livelihood, health, and education of the Kalasha people. The key changes needed are improvements in education done in conjunction with improvements to livelihood and infrastructure – it is through working on all of these needs in concert that we will also be able to do heritage work, as these are all interrelated. Ultimately, I seek to preserve the archaeology of Chitral as well as greatly improve public awareness and education regarding Kalash history and culture – I want every Kalash child to be proud of being Kalash.

KEYWORDS

Kalash; indigenous archaeology; decolonization; cultural heritage; Pakistan

Preface

My name is Gul Kalash. I'm the 'In-Charge' of the Chitral Museum and the Field Officer. I am proud to be from Kalash because we are the only indigenous community in Pakistan. There are many religious minorities in Pakistan, but up until this point, based on the available research, it seems that the Kalash are the only indigenous group within the state. What I will address in this article is close to my heart.

Kalash is Kalash: the community name and community. Kalash is used for three things: it is community; it is place; and it is religion, culture, and language. Kalash means all in one. We use Kalash as our name, even though there are many tribes within Kalash.

When I was younger, I had no idea what Kalash was. In school, we were taught Islamiyat (Islamic Studies) and in those classes, we were told that we (our community) would be sent to hell. This caused a great deal of controversy and we had a lot of fights growing up. I remember once saying to our Islamiyat teacher that I wanted to go to hell and not to heaven because I was so tired of the teachers' constant insistence about our communities' beliefs. These sorts of issues kept coming up in our early education, and we didn't even know why this was happening because we didn't really understand what it meant to be Kalash. When I went to university, my brother used to say, 'Oh, you're the Kalashi for Hazara University; the university has made you

CONTACT Sayed Gul Kalash  gulkalash@yahoo.com

*This text has been compiled by the editor of this special issue, utilizing interviews and shorter pieces by Gul Kalash. The interview was conducted and translated by the editor, Uzma Z. Rizvi.

© 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Kalash.’ He said this because before I went to the university, I had no access to information about what it meant to be Kalash. It was when I went to the university and started reading and learning about the archaeological past that I began to realize what a significant culture I belonged to and how important this work and this understanding were. Once I started engaging in archaeological research and field work, my history began to reveal itself in front of me, and that’s when everything became clear in terms of the significance of my culture and my history.

As a curator and archaeologist, my main aim is to secure and protect the identity of the Kalasha people – in particular the links to the archaeological past that authenticate our community. For the last few years, the research that we’ve been doing has determined that the Kalash is an ancient culture – over 2000 years old. Their lives and cultural heritage need to be understood, to be promoted, and to be preserved, but we have to do these things with the community, listening to the community. This is my main aim, to do this work with the community, taking the community alongside me. This is important because things are changing even within my lifetime, and there is a great risk of losing our traditions. So I continue to reflect on the questions: what can I do that will ensure that some of these things don’t change; how can we preserve these traditions; and how can we preserve this heritage – both the tangible and the intangible heritage.

Introduction

The Kalasha are an indigenous ethnic group living in the three narrow and secluded valleys of Biriu, Rukmo, and Mumore in the Chitral District of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. The Kalasha have a unique culture and speak an archaic form of Indo-European Dardic language called Kalasha Language. With a rich tradition of folklores, epics, love songs, and idioms, the Kalasha demonstrate a unique indigenous experience. This article explores the many relationships the communities of Kalash have with heritage, the complicated tensions with tourism, and the significance of education in relation to preservation and conservation, as well as awareness of indigenous futures.

Background: Archaeology, history, and heritage of the Kalash

There are conflicting theories regarding the origins of the Kalasha community; one hypothesis posits an Indo-Aryan origin and another points to a Greek origin. Kalasha elders the ‘Qazi’s and Dehar’ are of the view that the Kalasha belong to the Tsiam, near Yarkand. According to the elders, long ago the Kalash lived in the area stretching from Asmaar in Afghanistan to Gilgit, even though now the community is confined to the three valleys. Kalash oral tradition also recounts that they are the descendants of Alexander the Great’s brave general, Shalak Shah of Tsiam, to whom Alexander gave the Chitral valley as a reward.

However, DNA tests of Kalasha people have led scientists to believe that the Kalasha are linked to Indo-Aryan lineage (Mansoor et al. 2004). This evidence also corresponds with the archaeological evidence present in the Chitral valley. Archaeological investigations conducted at Parwak (upper Chitral) as well as at Gankoriniotek and Singoor (lower Chitral) have revealed remains of Indo-Aryans in graves. Radiocarbon dates of the bone samples collected from these sites range from 1000 BCE to 1000 CE. Based on the burial traditions of the Indo-Aryans (Gandhara Grave Culture Site), which look very similar to those still practiced by the Kalasha, some archaeologists consider the Kalasha to be the descendants of the Indo-Aryans.

Most research on the origins of the Kalasha has focused on linguistic reconstruction (e.g. Dani 1992; Cacopardo 1996; Parks 1996). The Kalash language is of great interest to linguists, as it belongs to the ancient Dardic branch of the Indo-European languages. By c.1500 A.D., the Kalasha were dominant throughout south Chitral. Oral tradition mentions eight great Kalash kings. Local people outside the Kalashas’ valleys often find the remains of former Kalasha settlements. After the Kalashas’ reign, Islam became dominant in the region. Kalash kings first embraced Islam and

then they converted their subjects to Islam forcibly. The most persistent of the Kalashas in resisting religious conversion took refuge in the less accessible side valleys. As a result, the Kalashas became a marginalized and subjugated people who were forced to pay tributes and *corvée* labour to the Mehtars (Royal House of Chitral).

With the establishment of the Durand Line, the Kalash valleys became part of British India and, subsequently, part of present-day Pakistan. In 1969, what had been the kingdom of Chitral became part of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), and it was at that time that the Kalashas' right to practice their religion was recognized by the state. This protected the Kalash from the forceful conversions to Islam.

Community viewpoints on the history of Kalasha

As the curator at the Chitral Museum, I have been invested in understanding what the local Kalasha communities consider significant. In order to forward the museums' charge, it was important for us to first get a sense of how the local community themselves viewed their own histories (see also Abro et al, this issue). This heritage survey was conducted by the Directorate of Archaeology & Museums Government of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with the British Council, Pakistan. According to the survey, about 70% consider themselves to be descendants of the General Shalak Shah in Alexander the Great's army, arguing that, during Alexander's era, music and dance were part of religious practices, as they were performed as a prayer, which continues as a practice even today in communities. Thus, a large segment of the population utilized a form of intangible heritage to link their histories to certain ideas about the past. This viewpoint also echoes colonial forms of origin story – as researchers came in to 'discover' Kalasha, due to their phenotype of light skin and blue/green eyes assumptions were made that they were of Greek origin. On the other hand, about 10% of the Kalashas surveyed believe that their history was stolen when Reais Mehtar of Chitral took rule from the Kalasha in the 14th – 15th century C.E. 10% of those surveyed were familiar with the archaeological past and claimed an Indo-Aryan past. About 5% of those surveyed had no information about their origin, and the remaining 5% linked their origin with the Arabs who first came to Afghanistan and from Afghanistan to Chitral, even though their own songs and folk stories relate that these communities came from Tsiam and Yarkhand.

Archaeological investigations

Excavations in various parts of Chitral have thrown light on the history and origin of Kalasha people, particularly through the excavations of grave sites. Grave goods revealed during these excavations include ceramics, weapons, jewellery, agricultural tools, and worked-stone pieces. The ceramic category includes bowls, ewers, cooking pots, and spouted goblets. Arrowheads constitute the most abundant variety of the weapons that have been found, frequently lying around the bodies of the deceased. The jewellery category includes hair pendants, rings, earrings, bangles, and a variety of beads. Human terracotta figurines were also found (for more see Ali et al. 2002).

Archaeological research has revealed the presence of Gandhara Grave sites within the Kalash valley, and, due the continuation of the burial tradition, most research argues that there is a link between an Indo-Aryan past and the present Kalashas. The placement of grave goods with the deceased as practiced by the communities of the Gandhara Grave Culture is still the practice of the present Kalashas. Like the earlier inhabitants of that land, the Kalashas also place their dead bodies in various directions within graves. Even today, Kalash women use similar beads and shells as those found in historic Gandhara Grave sites. Within contemporary Kalasha burials, however, arrowheads and spearheads have been replaced with the catapult in terms of weaponry buried with the deceased. And thus, although there are similarities, it is important to note that there are also differences between Kalasha Grave Culture and Gandhara Grave Culture. In spite of some of

these differences, the archaeological record provides enough evidence to strongly suggest a link between the Indo-Aryan past and a Kalasha present.

Returning to the question of local understandings of history, it is worth noting that the majority of those who were surveyed do not know about this archaeological record, nor do they claim such origins. In order to work with the communities and meet them where they are, as the curator at the Chitral museum, I began to do a lot of work with communities in the Kalasha valleys, as well as in Chitral, to make archaeology and heritage more accessible for the various stakeholders.

Preserving the heritage of the Kalash

Kalashas celebrate many festivals in a year. On these occasions Kalashas get together and celebrate ceremonies by holding sacrifices on altars, cooking traditional meals, and dancing and traditional music, which are conducted not only as entertainment but, importantly, as a religious ritual. This relationship between these various facets of practice and spirituality, according to Kalash mythology, manifest themselves in music and dance, which contributes to the pleasure of gods and goddesses within the pantheon.

There are four major festivals commemorating seasonal change and significant events in agro-pastoral life. These festivals are *Joshi*, *Uchal*, *Phoo*, and *Chowmos*. Even though these major rituals are still held today, many everyday rituals are changing. One can see these changes also in our folk songs; it used to be that when Kalash would get angry, they would sing about it. Those songs encapsulated everything: our history, our stories, our everything. The new generation, (and I include myself in this category of Kalash), do not know most (if any) of these songs. When I recently went to Kalash, I recorded some songs from my mother, grandmother, and grandfather. As I listened to the recordings, I realized that I did not understand everything that was being said, which means that, in just one generation, we have already lost parts of our language. We have lost the ways they used the songs as a way to declare their anger, their revenge, all of these things are so unique to our culture; this is all changing and disappearing.

Our new generation is so used to social media that many seem to be quite distant from these practices and rituals. My sister teaches younger children, and we have been working together to ensure these younger kids know Kalash history. As part of this educational initiative, I go and visit classrooms and give motivational speeches to ensure the students understand the importance of preserving this cultural heritage. This is our culture and this is how we are known (*pehchana*) – it is our identity (*pehchaan*). Recently, in another form of public education regarding our heritage, I participated in a travelling exhibition which was sponsored by UNESCO in 2018. The exhibition came to Chitral Museum, then Peshawar, and Islamabad – and involved a lot of public education effort. Since I was on the panel in conjunction with the exhibition, I had a forum through which to advocate for better understanding the significance of a disappearing cultural heritage.¹

Concerns around tourism

Changes in the experiences of the Kalash people are rapid due to the effects of tourism, and, I would argue, these changes are to the detriment of traditional practices. Tourism is a major issue for the communities because of concerns around safety, as well as, of course, a question of livelihood (see also Ibrahim, this issue). For example, when domestic tourists come in from various parts of Pakistan, because they are not taught about Kalash ways or culture, they are typically unaware of why certain dances are done, what these mean, and why certain people in the community do them. Furthermore, tourists sometimes walk into households without permission, which, for the Kalash feels extremely odd and awkward, and it suggests that this lack of education leads to a lack of respect for Kalash communities and local practices regarding the home. Moreover, because the Kalash are not Muslim, there is a sense in the general Muslim public that rules and norms around women and their

safety are not required to be met, and this creates conditions within which Kalash women, in particular, are often victims of sexual assault.

Kalash women used to freely move through spaces. Even in my own childhood, there was a freedom of movement around work, play, ritual, and daily life. For example, there used to be a ceremonial ritual between June 15 and August 22 called *Ratt Nat*, a dance that used to take place at night to mark the cutting of wheat. We stopped having these ceremonial dances because of concerns around safety from tourists and people outside of our community. There were just too many cases of men from outside the community, particularly tourists, who were insensitive to the freedom of women dancing at night, and they would harass women during the dance, or while they were walking home. Because it was at night, the male tourists seemed to continually misinterpret the ceremonial dances from a self-oriented point of view, as if the women were on display for their benefit. They would insert themselves into the dance and the rituals, so much so that it became unsafe for women to conduct these rituals. Because of the harassment and assault, the community decided it was a ritual that could no longer be held.

This is just one example of a ritual that has had to be cancelled or altered. Our lives and heritage included rituals around all facets of agricultural practice, whether it was ploughing the fields, putting the wheat into storage, taking the wheat out of storage, etc. None of these moments have rituals associated with them anymore, predominantly out of concern for safety of women at the risk of sexual assault. Our elders speak of these rituals as ways by which the food had blessing and plenitude. We have had a lot of rituals within daily life that have had to be let go of and/or changed because of tourism and changes in lifestyle.

Kalash valley is visited by a number of international and domestic tourists every year. This has a major impact on the environment as well. The forests and landscape within which we live, where we live in a balance, is consistently negatively impacted by the number of people, the waste they produce, and the ways in which they mistreat the trees and plants. There is little regard for the landscape by the tourists, and, although the local communities are trying to maintain their relationships with nature, it has become increasingly difficult to do so, given the socio-economic conditions of most of the communities.

Concerns around poverty, health, and education as a heritage issue

The communities living in the Kalash valley face many cultural, socio-economic, environmental, and political issues that impact their livelihood, health, and education. It is difficult to isolate a cause for any one of these issues; rather, it is clear that all of them are interrelated. Thus, it is also important to contextualize heritage concerns within these larger socio-economic and political realities.

One factor that makes these conditions feel even more precarious is that the Kalash valleys are right next to Pakistan's border with Afghanistan and therefore experience heightened military presence and possible threats from those crossing the borders. Whenever there are border tensions, not only is tourism impacted, but the impact on daily life cannot be underestimated. Living under a constant threat of violence results in long term negative impact on communities. These impacts need to be understood through various health risks that are shown to statistically increase in areas of high stress, such as heart disease, diabetes, and mental health stresses, for example.

In addition to border tension, since 2010, the valleys have been facing an increased number of floods every year, most likely due to global warming. Each flood uproots and disturbs the already limited infrastructure within the valleys. Roads, pathways, electricity, and sanitation are just a few of the systems that are routinely disturbed after flooding. The floods impact our agricultural fields; it impacts everything from schooling to health facilities in our communities. How can we help our community with concerns around extreme poverty, when everyone is trying to survive the recurring floods?

Another key area of concern is education. Most of the children who are taught in schools in the Kalash valleys are not taught about Kalash culture at all. In the absence of a curriculum for minorities

in government schools, Kalash students are taught Islamiyat and compelled to convert to the majority faith (Islam). There is no instrument, law, or legal protection for the culture, faith, and property of the Kalash minority in the prevailing legal system in Pakistan. These amount to structural and political ways by which the Kalash are being excluded and maintained as a disenfranchised community. For example, in 2014, I went to visit a small (some might say, vanishing) Kalash community called Bereer. At the time there were only 160 Kalash families. As I was talking to the children after one of my speeches, I asked them questions like: 'What do you want to do for Kalash? What does it feel like being a Kalash?' A small child stood up and said to me: 'There is no Kalash, there is nothing in Kalash – if the Kalash was such a good religion, our *Qazi* (Judge of Shariah Law) would not have converted to Islam.' What worried me about this interaction was that if, at such a young age, these kinds of beliefs have become internalized, what can I do to address this and how can I move forward as an educator and an advocate for the Kalash communities and our heritage? It is a very complicated issue and a lot has to be worked out before one can move forward, and this is what a lot of my current efforts are geared towards. It is increasingly clear to me that a good education and a good educational system are very important in order to provide the space and capacity for children to make their own decisions. If people can take the ownership of these issues and histories – it is only then that we can make any advancement in preserving intangible cultural heritage.

As a museum professional, one of the ways I try to work through the mission of our museum is to bring education and heritage awareness to school children (see also Majeed, this issue; Ibrahim, this issue). It is at the level of early education that these sorts of interventions need to be made. I often visit primary and elementary schools to give talks on Kalash culture and heritage, and I invite the students to come to the museums to see for themselves the rich heritage of these valleys. In particular, for the Kalasha children, I tell them, this is our *pehchaan* (our identity) and if we do not take care of it, we will lose it all.

It is important, as we support heritage preservation, however, to recognize that our desire to preserve heritage has to also work with the socio-economic concerns of the community. There are ways (as I describe in more detail below) that we need to think of how best to work with communities, so that rather than selling their heirlooms to antique dealers, we can work with them to support museum collections.

Concerns around preservation of Kalash culture

There are a series of concerns that have emerged around how we might work to preserve Kalasha culture. These include the ongoing conversion of indigenous people to Islam and Christianity. Every year the numbers of the Muslim population increase due to conversions of Indigenous Kalash, and with that it becomes very difficult to find a way to preserve the Kalash culture. In so far as my concern is to identify and preserve tangible material culture, I recognize that through these conversions what is being lost are the intangible forms of heritage. But how can we demand that our communities know about our culture and language and heritage if we are not teaching it to them? At the core of these concerns is one about heritage outreach and education. Whenever I conduct archaeological or heritage work in a region or a community, I reach out and ask the teachers and the schools if I can come in and speak to everyone, particularly the children. Additionally, another way to 'get the word out' is through radio programming. Everyone in the Kalash valley still listens to the radio and so I have been featured on educational segments on the radio about the museum, our collections, and the sorts of heritage that exist in our communities.

Radio shows are remarkable public venues for discussion on issues of heritage. It was on one of these shows that the host asked me, while live on the air: 'If someone comes to you with an antique, how do you assess its value and price? How do you buy stuff?' I responded that I interact with the person in a true and heartfelt way; I make the conversation a real discussion and not just a transaction. When someone brings an antique to me, I tell them it is priceless – how can one put a price on your grandfathers or ancestors' materials? When someone brings an antique to me, I tell

them that we can work together to preserve this and provide it with a safe space, and we can display it, but I cannot buy it. In having this conversation live on air, it brought an awareness to the more affective aspects of heritage and how selling heirlooms may not be the answer to the preservation of heritage. I wanted people to think deeply about what they were doing or what they heard was going on (i.e. museums will 'buy up your heirlooms').

Recently, I received a call at the museum from some community members saying, we have some antiques, we need the money, and so we want to sell these. It is a difficult position to be in because I want to help them as well. It is further complicated because of the regulations, for example, anything over 100 years old would technically be under government purview, but if we go into communities and take things (that is, take possession of artefacts over 100 years old, as per regulation), particularly in Chitral, we can expect the next day for the affected groups to exact revenge. It is not an easy position to be in – where we are concerned with the livelihoods of the community, but also the preservation of heritage, and we are required to stay within government regulation.

Since starting at the Chitral Museum, I have worked within the museum to change things, make it more accessible, and provide more information about what is on display. This includes changing and updating the displays and putting up signage in visible locations. The museum never really had a budget because it was not activated as a space. As I have been working with my staff to create engaged programming and displays, it becomes easier to request a budget having demonstrated all of this work. We can now make some demands and present budgets based on work that needs to happen moving forward.

Some of those budgets can be earmarked for purchasing antiques, as we would rather see these end up in our museum than in private collections. For those who are selling their antiques out of *majboori* (they have no other choice), such a budget would allow us to give them something so that we can help them and, at the same time, safeguard their heritage. But one has to be careful about how one links livelihoods to museums and archaeological or heritage projects. A few months ago, I had gone to visit some protected sites, and, when I got there, the community members were very upset because they said the person who had come there from the Chitral Museum the previous time had assured them that their kids would get jobs on these protected sites, and they said that their kids were still unemployed. They see us as extensions of larger institutions and government and look to us to provide relief. It is always difficult to do, but I had to tell them, as I have told others, I cannot promise you jobs, but I can promise to help protect your ancestors' legacy and landscape. These are very challenging issues and episodes, and unexpected political hurdles tend to make things difficult to complete. We do work hard to try to ensure it all comes together, and sometimes it does. For example, the Museum is trying to buy three Kalasha houses (i.e. typical Kalash heritage houses). We were allocated the money to purchase the houses and were required to go with government officials to go and purchase these properties. In this manner we can protect and preserve these heritage houses (Figures 1–3).

Another project that we have worked on was in collaboration with historian Akram Hussain Sahib. We have started a new project supported by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government; they have provided 60 million rupees to preserve Kalash history, including protection of graveyards and landscapes. Through such collaboration, we were able to put a Section 4 on many of these sites, which is a government recognition of heritage site status, to help with protection. Additionally, we are able to preserve some houses, dancing places, and alters as well.

As the 'In-Charge' of the Chitral Museum, it is important to point out that I do not only focus on Kalash archaeology. I am also committed to, responsible for, and work on the archaeology of Chitral as a whole as well. There has not been sufficient research done on Chitral; the communities in the Chitral valleys have their own unique culture which is also slowly disappearing. I spend a considerable amount of time trying to help support preservation and do work on these issues as well. For example, in 2018 there were some Buddhist rock engravings that people were destroying. I worked to preserve one of these rocks by involving Dr Abdul Samad (Director of Archaeology and Museums, KPK) who sent a team, and secured funds to put a shade on top of it. The other Buddhist



Figure 1. Traditional Kalash house, Kalash valley. (Photograph by the author).

rock feature was actually a stupa on top of large outcrop, with script engraved on it as well. As it was on the side of a major road, some people were breaking it down to make the road. To respond to this risk I used the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Antiquities Act² to ensure we could secure that rock feature as well. I wrote a letter informing the people making the road that if they destroyed or in any way did *nuksan* (hurt/harm) to the Buddhist object, a fine of 'x' amount of rupees would be sent. We have been actively using the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Antiquities Act to stop people from destroying monuments in Chitral. Over the past year (2019), I have worked with the district administration and Dr Samad as well to ensure that we can protect Chitral history.

Moving forward: Strengthening community

My main aim is to secure and protect the identity of the Kalasha people – in particular, the links to the archaeological past that authenticate our community. For the last few years, the research that we have been doing has determined that the Kalash is an ancient culture, over 2000 years old. Their lives and cultural heritage need to be understood and promoted and preserved. It is absolutely necessary that we do such cultural heritage research and programming along with the community, in conversation with and listening to the community. To work with the community, to work alongside the community, is core to my aim.

One of the pivotal ways forward has to do with education. We need a section in classes on history and culture on Kalash. By excluding the Kalash from the standard syllabus we are doing a great disservice not only to the children of the Kalash, but to all children because they are not aware of the beauty of cultural diversity within their own country and region. Currently, we have no institutions where Kalash children can go and learn about their culture. If we can include this history and culture on the standard syllabus, then Kalash children will see, as they learn about the history and culture of Pakistan, that they are also part of this history and they have a culture that is as important. Otherwise, these children come away with a sense of erasure or nonexistence. It is very difficult to find one's



Figure 2. Traditional Kalash house, Kalash valley – Ramboor Kalasha groom. (Photograph by the author).

identity within the broader national context when one is left out of the teachings of history, culture, and society. I think about elders like Kazi Khushnawaz, who had a legendary knowledge of the history of Kalash communities – in one of his last interviews that I had the honour of conducting, he told me so many stories and described so many traditions that were Kalasha that even I had never before been aware of. If there are ways for us to preserve these stories and then pass them along to the next generation, through education and public awareness, we can envision change in the Kalash valley and Pakistan.

I believe we must require that the government be involved in these crucial changes and these steps forward. The community can do a great deal, but it requires some institutional power to



Figure 3. Traditional Kalash house, Kalash valley. (Photograph by the author).

support these kinds of changes, such as changes to the standard school curriculum. The Kalash have been systematically erased over the generations and so it is going to take a lot of work to bring a greater sense of possibility and hope back into the community. The key changes we are focused on moving forward have to be education and public awareness. Linked to that effort, we need to work on improvements to livelihood and infrastructure. It is through working on all of these needs in concert that we will be able to do heritage work as well, as they are all interrelated.

I want every Kalash child to be proud of being Kalash. The pride in our heritage and identity is something we have to foster ourselves. No one can come in from the outside and save us; we have to save ourselves, we have to preserve ourselves.

Notes

1. There are some heritage practices that have been designated with heritage status, for example, Suri Jagek, literally translated as ‘observing the sun’, is the traditional Kalasha meteorological and astronomical knowledge system and practice which was recognized by UNESCO in 2018. See <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/suri-jagek-observing-the-sun-traditional-meteorological-and-astronomical-practice-based-on-the-observation-of-the-sun-moon-and-stars-in-reference-to-the-local-topography-01381> (last accessed 7/9/2020).
2. For the full text of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Antiquities Act, 2016, see: http://kpcode.kp.gov.pk/uploads/2016_4_THE_KHYBER_PAKHTUNKHWA_ANTIQUITIES_ACT_2016.pdf.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Sayed Gul Kalash, from the Kalash valley of the Chitral region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Gul Kalash leads the Chitral Museum. A member of the indigenous Kalash community, she works to preserve the endangered Kalash culture and language. Growing up she was often told what a girl must or must not do as per Kalash culture and those experiences left her determined to study her culture and its history, ultimately becoming the first girl in her region to earn a Master's in Archaeology. She received a human rights defender award from former President Asif Ali Zardari in 2010 and was recognized as the first Pakistani Emerging Explorer of National Geographic in 2013. Gul Kalash has excavated at Taxila. She has participated in many trainings regarding culture and archaeology, as well as in conferences to advance preservation efforts, documenting elements such as villages, language, religion, and music in need of preservation. She works with local schools and institutions to educate regarding the importance of preserving local culture. Along with this work, she also organizes young women in Kalash to promote girls' education, human rights, and women rights.

References

- Ali, Ihsan Ali, Cathy Batt, Robin Coningham, and Ruth Young. 2002. "New Exploration in the Chitral Valley, Pakistan: An Extension of the Gandharan Grave Culture." *Antiquity* 76 (293): 647–653. doi:10.1017/S0003598X00091055.
- Cacopardo, Alberto M. 1996. "The Kalasha in Southern Chitral. Part 1: The Eastern Area." In *Proceedings of the Second International Hindukush Cultural Conference*, edited by Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din, 247–269. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dani, Ahmad Hasan. 1992. "Pastoral-Agricultural Tribes of Pakistan in the Post-Indus Period." In *History of Civilizations of Central Asia, Volume I: The Dawn of Civilization: Earliest Times to 700 BC*, edited by Ahmad Hasan Dani, and V. M. Masson, 395–419. Paris: UNESCO.
- Mansoor, Atika, Kehkashan Mazhar, Shagufta Khaliq, Abdul Hameed, Sadia Rehman, Saima Siddiqi, Myrto Papaioannou, L. L. Cavalli-Sforza, S. Qasim Mehdi, and Qasim Ayub. 2004. "Investigation of the Greek Ancestry of Populations from Northern Pakistan." *Human Genetics* 114 (5): 484–490.
- Parks, Peter. 1996. "Kalasha Oral Literature and Praise Songs." In *Proceedings of the Second International Hindukush Cultural Conference*, edited by Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din, 315–328. New York: Oxford University Press.