

Jean-Yves Loude / Viviane Lièvre

Kalash Solstice



Kalash solstice : winter feasts of the Kalash of
DS 380 .K34 L68513 1988 3 AHR00008477Z



Loude, Jean Yves.

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LOK VIRSA PUBLISHING HOUSE



CS-TR-D1287
Lok Virsa Publishing House
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ISLAMABAD - PAKISTAN

Price 

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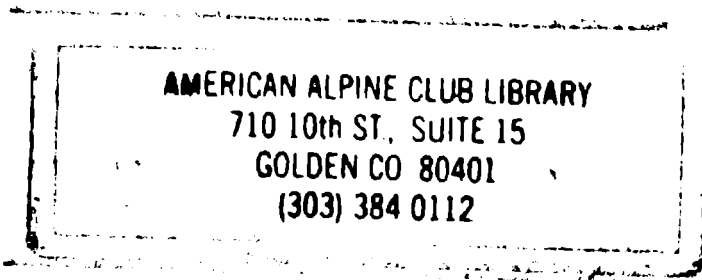
VIVIANE LIEVRE

Kalash Solstice

WINTER FEASTS OF
THE KALASH OF NORTH PAKISTAN

Photographs and drawings by HERVE NEGRE

Translated from the French by GRAHAME ROMAINE and
MIRA INTRATOR



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This book is dedicated to
the Kalash of Rumber, Birir and Bumburet.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of institutions and individuals have helped us with our field research and the preparation of this book. We gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance of the Government of Pakistan which granted us permission to undertake our expeditions to the Kalash valleys. We should particularly like to thank Mr. Shakil Durrani, Deputy Commissioner of Chitral in 1981-82 for his valuable assistance and close personal interest in our work.

We should also like to express our appreciation for the support shown by Mr. Uxi Mufti, Executive Director and Mr. Mazhar-ul-Islam, Director, Publications of LOK VIRSA.

We should like to thank the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in particular, *la Sous-Direction des Sciences sociales et humaines de la Direction générale des Relations culturelles, scientifiques et techniques*, which supported our field research during the winter of 1982-83 and the autumn of 1985, as well as the preparation of the French and English versions of this book. We would personally like to express our gratitude to Mr. Philippe Guillemin, *Sous-Directeur des Sciences sociales et humaines*, for his interest and assistance in our work.

Additional thanks are also due to Jean-Marie Gibbal, Pierre Molimard, Christine and Denis Nardin, Grahame Romaine and Peter Spain for their friendship and support.

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A NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION OF LOCAL TERMS

To facilitate reading, normal English transcription has been used throughout the book with no specific phonetic system. Thus "lutch mut" (tinder wood) instead of "luč mūt" and "shishao" (bread for women's ceremony) instead of "šišao". All Kalasha terms are cursive throughout the text. Proper nouns are not pluralized, nor is gender indicated. The Kalasha language does not use plural or gender forms.

I
THE
APPROACH OF THE SOLSTICE



THE FORTRESS

Only a madman, surely, would so much as have dreamed of penetrating that labyrinthine chaos of rocks and mountains, the Hindu Kush, the north-west frontier of British India. As for wanting to become king of "Kafiristan", even Kipling was at a loss for words to qualify such an enterprise, which was in fact a synonym for suicide. At the end of the 19th century, no Englishman would have dared to venture into this stronghold, an area unknown to geographers but with a reputation as terrible as it was imprecise: a land of pagans, worshippers of 32 idols, pillagers of caravans, ferocious fighters who laid ambush for their prey, fearless archers, hardened wine bibbers. . . It was also said that their women were strangely beautiful and that Alexander the Great, in his day, had crossed the high passes of the Hindu Kush, as attested by persistent legends.

That was enough for Kipling, who placed the two heroes of his short story, "The man who would be king", in this mythical setting and left them to their grandiose but tragic destiny. The two men, both deserters from the English army, attempt the perilous venture: only one returns, carrying the decapitated head of his friend under his arm, himself lost in the mists of irremediable insanity.

A hundred years later

We had of course read Kipling's story. Kafiristan no longer existed, or hardly at all, except in the memories of a few old men. Nevertheless, the body of knowledge on that strange land had grown. A few books and a number of studies had been published on the culture of the Kafirs, a culture engulfed by Islam, but paradoxically very little on the Kalash, the last "pagan" people surviving in those mountains.

In 1976 we made our first journey to the Hindu Kush. Barely can one guess at the consequences of certain decisions; fortunately, perhaps.

Seven years later we had made four trips there and back, spending long periods with the Kalash, with intervals for research at home. During the whole time our thoughts remained with them in the high valleys. Such continuity creates a bridge. Our aim, initially, was to assemble information for a monograph that would bear witness to a threatened culture, then leave again. But this is a game in which the ethnologist cannot escape his own transformation. By the last winter (1982-1983), the relationship had changed. We were no longer simply Westerners passing through a country and then returning home again; the gap between us had narrowed and the parting rituals demanded that we safeguard the tradition, that we teach it to the "Kafirs" of the West – the "pagan" Franci, Englesi beyond the Moslem belt encircling their land. We had become "Kalash from abroad" who would come back again to Rumbur, "our" valley, to Kalashagrur, our adoptive village, among the Mutimire, our adoptive lineage, our family. This was the first hurdle passed on the road to belonging. This story is one that takes time to be learned and told.

Let us return once more to Kipling. In London, on 25 June 1894, the lecturer at the very select Royal Geographical Society, Sir George Scott Robertson, applauding Kipling's talent for fantasy as brilliantly displayed in "The man who would be king", said that the story was neither more imagina-

tive nor less true to life than all the other accounts about Kafiristan.¹ Robertson went on to suggest that all the stories concerning the region had been embroidered upon a backcloth of fables born of the impossibility of penetrating the land. At the slightest approach, the Moslems of the adjoining areas were massacred by their implacable Kafir foes. In return, they made every effort to prevent any contact between the pagan rebels and Western travellers. So much the better for the respectable Geographical Society: it saw itself condemned to close its doors once Kafiristan – regarded as the most remote corner of the globe – was visited and explored. As another eminent member of the Society had previously remarked, there would be no new studies left to undertake.²

Robertson was the first to penetrate the frontiers of the region and spent a year “among these wild and interesting people”. The book he published in 1896³ remains the most precious reference work on the pre-Islamic religions of the Kafirs. The same year saw the fall of the Hindu Kush stronghold before the pressure of Afghan nationalism. The Pathan emir of Kabul, Abdur Rahman, on the pretext of a holy war, exterminated those unruly pagans to the east and at the same time resolved his frontier problems with British India. Any surviving Kafirs had the choice between death and conversion. They foreswore their beliefs and Kafiristan succumbed, a victim of the famous Durand Line.⁴

A number of fugitives found asylum in the neighbouring province of Chitral, which remained under the aegis of the Empire. Three of the frontier valleys were inhabited by a group of people who were still pagan, the Kalash. Survivors of

1. G.S. Robertson, “Kafiristan”, in *The Geographical Journal*, vol. IV, September 1894, p. 193.

2. W.W. Mc Nair, “A visit to Kafiristan”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, January 1884, p. 1.

3. G.S. Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush*, London, 1896.

4. The Durand Line of 1893 remains a classical example of an artificial political frontier cutting through areas of homogeneous cultures. It was designed to provide the nascent Afghanistan with frontiers and to establish a no-man’s-land between British India and Tsarist ambitions.

the Afghan massacres established themselves in the Kalash valleys without asking leave of the existing inhabitants: these subjects of the king of Chitral had long been in general disrepute.

Kafiristan, a land now lit up by the "light of Islam", had become Nuristan, but it had not given up all its secrets. The Royal Geographical Society could therefore keep its doors open.

Today, at the end of the 20th century, the Kalash continue to resist domination. This "degenerate and servile race", as Robertson described them in the most Victorian of fashions, continues to meet constant pressure for conversion with a tradition adept at bending before the onslaught but never breaking.

The Kalash lay claim to a land of steep slopes, including three channels between Afghanistan and the province of Chitral, through which pour the waters of torrents that open onto the small administrative town of Chitral, some 20 kilometres to the south. Since 1959, when the kingdom of Chitral was attached to the newly formed Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Kalash have become citizens of Pakistan.

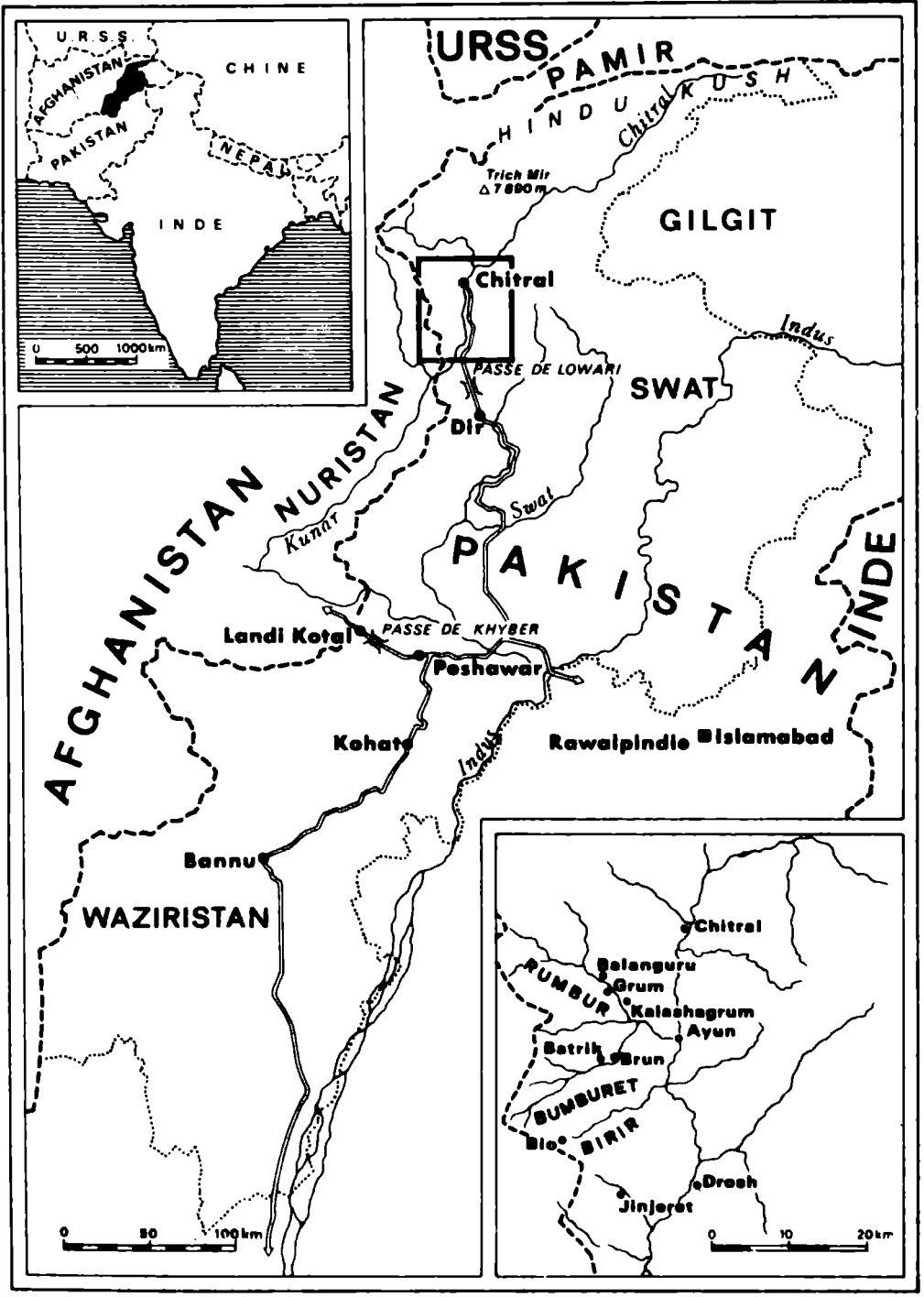
The importance of the Kalash resides not in their numbers – no more than about 2,000 today – but in their fidelity to a mode of thought which, if more thoroughly understood, should throw light upon the zones of obscurity that still becloud much of our knowledge of ancient India. Their history cannot be dissociated from that of their Kafir and Chitrali neighbours. The memory of these people, who possess no written records, bears the marks of the expansionist designs of the invaders of the plains against their mountain fastnesses. To reconstitute this "memory" it is necessary to retrace the paths which, leading from Central Asia, Chinese Turkistan and the Indian subcontinent, meet at the formidable rocky complex of the Hindu Kush, the convulsions of this natural barrier offering some explanation of the continued existence of religious maquisards in their inaccessible refuges.



The Kalash valley of Rumbur, a landscape of ramparts and deep V-shaped gulleys.

The Kalash recount: "In the beginning, God created the fields upon the land, but the fields would not stop trembling, so he created the mountains to guard the fields, which then stopped moving". The land, however, is still subject to frequent tremors in the Hindu Kush; contrary to the fable, the late formation of the range does not really ensure the stability of the fields. These mountains have taken over the landscape with what might be called the aggressiveness of youth; the takeover is imperious, often grandiose, but leaves no place for a gentle slope or a restful plateau. The Fokker of Pakistan International Airlines linking Peshawar with Chitral skims the Lowari Pass at 4,500 metres, but only in clear and calm weather, before slipping down into the Chitral river valley, dug out by a major glacier. The route is among the most dangerous in the world, which is why the company never takes risks and cancels all flights at the slightest hint of wind. "Flights subject to weather conditions. Cancelled." At any rate, the Pakistani pilots have shown themselves to be expert navigators below the peaks. On either side of the wings one can see the results of the quaternary era, following the retreat of the glaciers; a labyrinth of folds, indentations, channels, washouts, a landscape of ramparts and deep V-shaped gulleys. The fields, hemmed in on all sides, clinging to the steep slopes, are constantly subject to land slips or flooding; the mountains, it seems, have not fulfilled their role of guardians of the fields! These gorges, wider in some places than in others, certainly offer advantages for defence, but at the same time make it difficult for man to conquer such an environment and make it his home.

In the microcosm of the aircraft, the 47 seats are filled by a heterogeneous group which reflects the ethnic mosaic of contemporary Chitral. Only the traditional woollen cap usually adopted by each new arrival gives a semblance of unity to the Chitrali population. The region has always served as a last refuge for the victims of border strife. And again today, the Afghan-Soviet war reminds us that this province of northern Pakistan lies below the Pamir and the occupied Wakhan



Position of the Kalash valleys within the NWF Province

corridor to the south-east of Badakshan and to the east of Nuristan, where resistance is fierce. In the Fokker, which all but grazes the tips of the evergreens, Tajik and Kirghiz refugees sit side by side with dark-haired Pathan merchants and Chitrali (Kho), some of whom have astonishingly blue eyes. The cartridge belts worn by the Nuristani bear witness to their fight for independence as Moujahidines. All are returning from "the plains", some to their shops after a business trip, others to their refugee camps. The native Chitrali make their separate ways to the passes above or below Chitral, which serves as a combination of administrative centre, bazaar and airport for the region. To reach home, these Chitrali have a day's journey before them by jeep and another on foot. The farther one lives from the valleys, the harder existence becomes, but although from an aircraft there seem to be no signs of life, the circumstances of history have in fact always peopled this region.

The Kafirs are believed to descend from the soldiers of Alexander the Great, and the Hunza of Gilgit too. The kinglets of Badakshan claim the same origin. The legend runs through the valleys of the Pamir, and over the passes of the Hindu Kush, to the very borders of Karakoram. It would be hardly surprising for the Kalash to lay claim to the same ancestry; legend has it that a few deserters from the Greek army, or exhausted Macedonians appointed to stand guard in this satrapy at the world's end, mingled with the women of the area after the passage of the Great Conqueror. . .

The exotic adds spice to history, but not necessarily verisimilitude, as is apparent from the conclusions of 19th century European observers who sought to explain the presence of populations with "European" features in those isolated mountain fastnesses. The mystery of origins excites the imagination, but in the attempt to force the pieces of an ethnic puzzle into place and to square cultural coincidences, fantasy takes precedence over precision. And thus the Hindu

Kush, transformed into an Indian Caucasus,⁵ became excellent ground for Western curiosity-seekers: the blue eyes and the red or blond hair of the proud shepherd warriors extended the effects of Alexander's epic conquests by twenty centuries. . .

Despite 70 years of linguistic research on the Hindu Kush and recent conclusive evidence dispelling the myth of the Greek origins of the Kafirs and other peoples of these high mountain ranges, that myth is still spread across the pages of the tourist brochures on Pakistan and feeds the eyecatching titles of hastily prepared reports recently devoted to the Kalash. In the event, the reality turns out to be far more exciting than all the fiction. One must go still farther back in time to unravel the mystery of the peopling of those far-flung territories, and only the conclusions of linguists permit such a tentative venture into a history lacking in archaeological foundations or a written literature.

The Indo-Europeans, Indo-Iranians and Indo-Aryans furnish the thread. The Kalash speak Kalasha, the Chitrali, Khovar, two languages classed in the family of "dardic" tongues, whose influence extends from eastern Afghanistan, Chitral and Swat to the high Indus valley, Gilgit.

The Nuristani speak one of the so-called "kafir" tongues according to their ethnic group, Waigali, Kati or Presun. The word "kafir", except for the Kalash of Chitral, has lost its religious connotation. It serves today only to define a linguistic entity corresponding to an area that was formerly Kafiristan. These two neighbouring groups are characterised by the preservation of ancient forms of Vedic Sanscrit,⁶ and their speech may therefore be classed in the wider complex of Indo-Aryan languages. This implies that the ancestors of those who now speak the Dardic or Kafir tongues must have been

5. See J. Noiville, *Les Indes de Bacchus et d'Herakles*, *Revue de Philologie*, Paris, 1928-1929.

6. See L. Renou, *La civilisation de l'Inde ancienne*, Paris, 1981, p. 13: "The Sanscrit language was constituted in North-West India during the second millenary before our era. It is a branch detached from the linguistic group covered by the term Indo-Iranian, which in turn derives from the Indo-European source tongue. Sanscrit, in a definitely archaic form, rich in as yet poorly co-ordinated nominal and verbal structures, served primarily as the literary expression of the Veda."

among the conquering wave of Aryans who migrated from a region situated between the Caucasus and the Zagros, slowly making their way towards India between 2,000 and 1,000 B.C. Thus some 4,000 years separate the contemporary Kalash from their sources.

Around 2,000 B.C., the semi-nomad hordes appeared in Western Asia. Leaving from the Trans-Caucasus, they urged their flocks eastward, stopping for long periods in places recalled in their literature: a sea, the Caspian; identifiable topographical features in Iran; a river, the Hilمند of today.⁷ They introduced the horse in Central Asia. Their idealisation of the horse is indicative of the values of a conquering aristocracy; indeed, they called themselves Aryanas, the Nobles.⁸ Their gods, too, were organised in a replica of their society: priests, warriors, producers. Indra, the warrior god, would lead them to victory. These Indo-Iranians, as yet undifferentiated, were linked through their language to the larger Indo-European complex. Later, they branched off. The Ir-Aryanas spread out to the west upon the plateau that bears their name, Iranian, to the north along the valley of the Oxus (Amou-Daria) and to the east as far as the oasis of the future Chinese Turkistan.

The Indo-Aryans – Hindus – pursued their southward thrust towards India, moving in successive waves. The oldest poems in their oral literature, the Rig Veda, extol the glory of their invasion as they passed through the valley of the Kabul river and the famous Khyber Pass and descended upon the Indus plain. There they encountered dark-skinned peoples whom they subjugated. The new masters of the Punjab and the Ganges were to experience the evolution of Hindu India, through the influence on their culture of the indigenous beliefs

7. P. Bosch-Grimpera, *Les Indo-Européens*, Paris, 1980, p. 228.

8. Historically, the word "aryan" refers only to those migrants of the Indo-European family moving through Asia in those far-off times. The misappropriation of the term to serve the ends of racism and hegemony is a betrayal of science. The only legitimate use of the word today is in terms of linguistics, where it serves to define the languages of those invaders: the Indo-Aryan languages.

and above all of the metaphysical elaborations of the Brahmins.

But not all the Indo-Aryans migrated so far. Some groups remained behind, without crossing the Indus or even the Hindu Kush. Their evolution was to be altogether different.

The ancestors of the Dards, of purely Indian tongue, must have abandoned the migration in its later stages, for "it does not seem necessary to go farther back than Vedic Sanskrit to explain the forms one finds" in their languages.⁹ They apparently took over the pasture land, and then the rugged territories, to the north of the present city of Peshawar.

According to Kalash tradition, their first settlement was established in a land called Tsyam, which their later movements would suggest lay somewhere to the south of present-day Nuristan. Consequently they could not have crossed the barrier of the mountains or penetrated into the subcontinent.

As for the Proto-Kafirs, they appear to correspond to the first wave of Indo-Aryans, which preceded the main body of the invaders and branched off north towards the mountains of eastern Afghanistan. Indeed, in their speech, "certain phonetic peculiarities attest that some forms must be traced farther back to a pre-Sanskrit state of language¹⁰" and are indicative of an earlier separation.

These peoples were to split up as they penetrated farther into the Hindu Kush or Karakoram ranges. The ebb and flow of the various expansionary waves moving over the plains led them to deviate from the two major axes of penetration of Central Asia to the east: the Oxus-Wakhan corridor to the north, which was to become the silk road across the Pamir range, and, to the south, the logical route over the Khyber Pass towards Peshawar. Between the two, the danger of the high passes discouraged military adventures.

9. G. Fussman, *Pour une problématique nouvelle des religions indiennes anciennes*, *Journal asiatique*, vol. CCLXV, 1977, p. 23.

10. G. Fussman, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

For a time, until the arrival of the Arab armies in the 8th century A.D., the Hindu Kush was to slumber in semi-retirement, a condition which favoured the development of micro-cultures in each of the deep valleys. Then, little by little, the tribes encountered one another, mainly in hostilities, and lost the feeling of a common origin. The Vedic gods, for their part, had to adapt their exploits to these new homelands, to the new economic necessities of their faithful and to the presence of indigenous mountain dwellers who held goats in greater respect than the cattle cherished by the Indo-Aryans.

Whereas in India the gods of the Aryans had to make way before triumphant Brahmanism, in the mountains of the north-west they apparently continued to preside over human destinies. Their myths faded and were transformed to correspond to reality, their names too, but their functions remained and the rituals, always more resistant to outside influence, endured.

But after over two more millenia of history, what remains of the original state of the Indo-Aryan religions in these regions on the borders of India?

Contemporary linguists confirm the existence of "linguistic fossils", of Sanscrit archaisms, in the modern languages of the peoples of the Hindu Kush, but is it also possible to distinguish among those peoples, under the sediment of divers influences, what might be termed "cultural fossils" from the Vedic era? That would be difficult in the case of the Dards of Swat, Chitral and Gilgit. Previous to their conversion to Islam, long before, Buddhism had taken root in their lands, which were open to the Indian world via Kashmir. The mingling of the same influences among the Kafirs (and the Kalash) is more difficult to establish despite some circumstantial evidence.¹¹

11. Lennart Edelberg thought that the harp and the monumental sculptures of the Kafirs stem from the influence of Gandharic Buddhism. (L. Edelberg, "Fragment d'un stupa dans la vallee du Kunar", *Arts asiatiques*, vol. IV, No. 3, 1957, p. 207.) Were the Kalash, who have no harp and are less ambitious sculptors, affected by the same influence?

The Kafirs, unfortunately, gave up their customs at the beginning of the 20th century, and the information available on their religions is the result of painstaking reconstitution, involving questioning the older generation whose memories were not always reliable, and who had been traumatised by the shock of the conversion to Islam.¹²

The Kalash alone, after being subjected to Moslem proselytism on the one hand and murderous Kafir raids on the other, remained faithful to their polytheistic religion. The names of their gods, by their very etymology, are indicative of a clear link with the Vedic pantheon (see appendices, table "from men to the gods"). Nevertheless, it would be idle to imagine a descent from the Indo-Aryans in a straight line through the ages, hermetically sealed to outside ideas or innovations, reproducing ideally primitive rites. But without going to such extremes, it is reasonable to attempt a comparison between the ritual gestures of the Kalash, their relationship with the divine, their social organisation, and those initially current among the Indo-Aryans. Such a comparison, we hope, may elucidate some of the hazy features of the "popular" religion of the Aryan invaders, which the Brahmans did their best to eliminate and which Vedic literature, under Brahmanic control, does not really permit us to understand.¹³

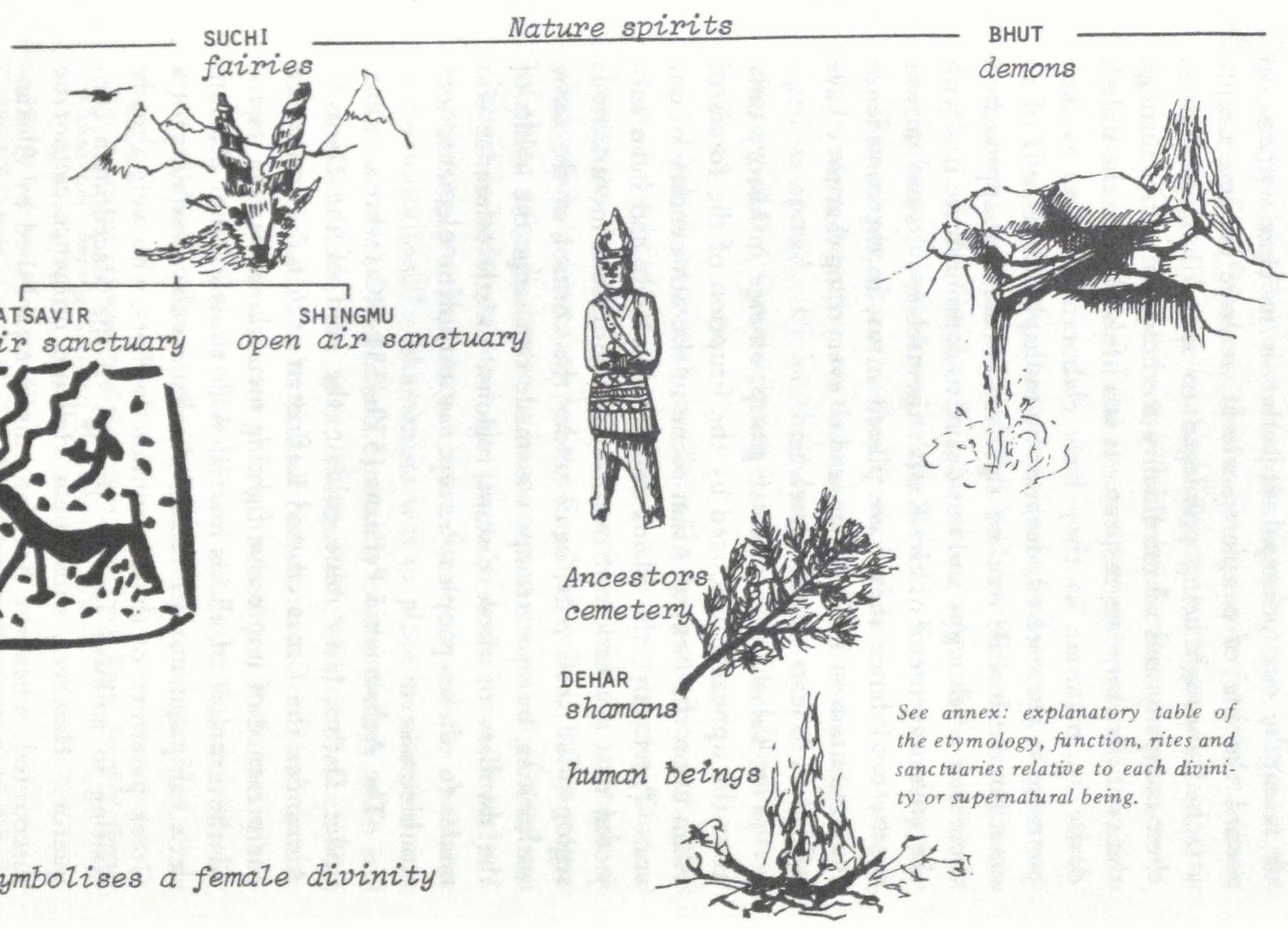
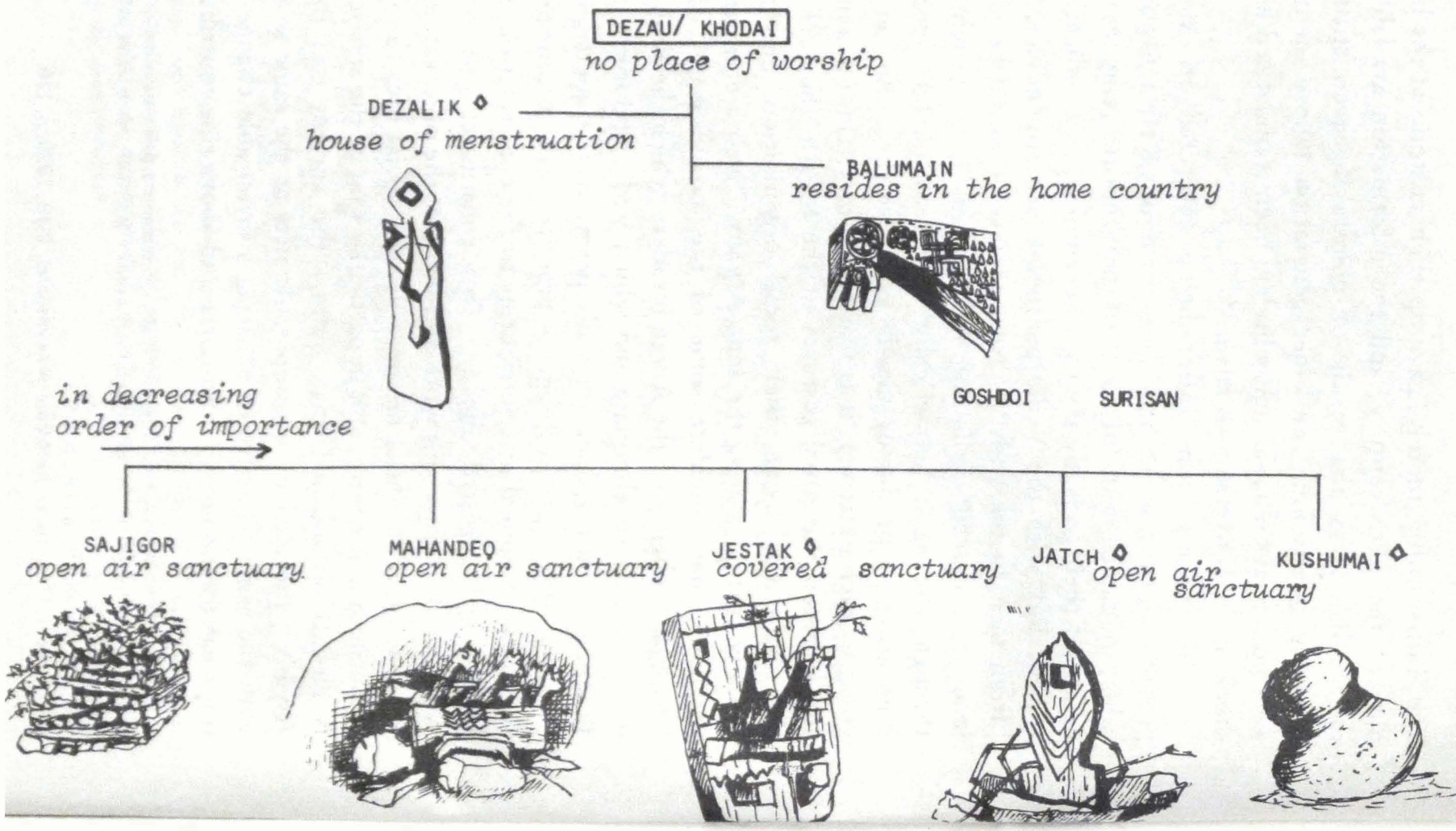
Our study of the religious practices still current among the Kalash is aimed at contributing to the confirmation of the hypothesis suggested above. This constitutes one of the purposes of the present work and involves the observation and analysis of an essential moment in their social life: the feasts of autumn and winter, and in particular that of the solstice. It is already established that Indra, "the ancient god of the Aryans", presided over comparable rites at the same seasons, with the same objective of ensuring a favourable change from one year to the next.¹⁴ But over and above this contribution

12. Robertson's book (see footnote 3 above) remains a precious mine of information, but limits itself to his own observations. We shall often refer to it for purposes of comparison.

13. G. Fussmann, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

14. See G. Dumézil, *Le problème des Centaures*, Paris, 1929, p. 110.

PANTHEON OF THE KALASH OF RUMBUR AND A SCHEMA OF THEIR PLACES OF WORSHIP
 A TABLE OF THEIR SACRED UNIVERSE "FROM MEN TO THE GODS"



◊ symbolises a female divinity

to research, our principal objective is to bear witness: to record the life of people to whom we have become deeply attached through being privileged to spend long periods in their company and whose fidelity to their own values through the centuries imposes respect. It is a life style that the Kalash desire to maintain as they have elaborated it and as they conceive it themselves, despite the multiple constraints of an environment hostile to their right to choose. Our approach to their way of thought and our desire to communicate it – with the encouragement of the Kalash themselves – is our answer to the confidence they have placed in us, to the confidence they maintain in the present, and to everything that they have helped us to learn about ourselves.

The Kalash, as a distinct group, emerge in history only after the upheaval produced by the irruption of the forces of Islam upon the Central Asian scene in the 8th century of our era. Previously, the plains and the lowlands had been subjected to a succession of overlords. The distant mountainous regions, for their part, came under the control of the same authorities, but no attempt was made to change the habits of the dwellers of those distant regions. Little reference was made to those peoples, except as turbulent elements and trouble-makers.

The Achaemenid Persians (539–331 B.C.) were content, under Darius I, to mine gold in the land of the Dards.¹⁵ Alexander the Great crossed Kafiristan (326 B.C.) and noted the presence of impressive fighting men whose courage required the exercise of all his martial skills to overcome. Alexander's campaign notes conclusively dismiss the possibility of a Greek paternity of these mountain dwellers, who were already waiting in ambush for the passage of the Macedonian conqueror. However, subsequent Hellenic influence cannot be discounted; when the Bactrian empire established by Alexander collapsed in 130 B.C. under the thrust of the Scythian nomads from the north, themselves harried across the Gobi

15. K. Jettmar, *Bolor and Dardistan*, Islamabad, 1980, p. 11.

desert by the Huns, some of the Greeks took refuge on the borders of Kafiristan. This might account for the presence among the Kafirs of unusual objects such as a silver wine goblet, or the style of certain sculptured columns and capitals, or the custom, rarely to be found in the Orient, of sitting on low stools.¹⁶

The Scythians, those Iranians of the steppes, gave up their nomadic ways, settled and became Hellenised in Bactria in place of the Greeks, then launched upon the conquest of the subcontinent through the Hindu Kush, founding the Kushan empire that stretched from Afghanistan to the Ganges. They were receptive to the values of Buddhism and encouraged its spread. Under their sway (1st century B.C. to 4th century A.D.), Gandharic art was born, and Buddhism spread to Swat.

Little is known about Chitral in this period; one imagines it to have been in close relation with Tokharistan (Chinese Turkistan), an oasis famed for its vines and the strength of shamanism, a sanctuary for the Scythian tribes. Some groups of these nomads appear to have crossed the passes of northern Chitral in order to reach the plains of India more directly,¹⁷ implanting on their way a taste for wine and for shamanic communication.¹⁸ Shamanism was to place its stamp on the tradition of the Kafirs and especially of the Kalash, who still remember Raik, the great shaman of Yarkhand, a city of Chinese Turkistan, who introduced them to wine and drums. Given the importance of these innovations, Raik was incorporated in the Kalash myths,¹⁹ and today the Kalash still refer to Yarkhand as one of the sources of their customs.²⁰ One of

16. A practice common to all the peoples of the Hindu Kush. See W.W. Hunter, "Afghanistan", *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. I, 1985.

17. K. Jettmar, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

18. G. Fussman, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

19. J.Y. Loude, *Kalash*, p. 121: the account of the revelation of Raik (see footnote 28).

20. Traces of the close relationship between Turkistan and Chitral subsist in place-names: the Chitral region is also called Kashkar, which is the name of a town in Turkistan, and one of the gorges linking the two regions is called Yarkhun, a name very similar to Yarkhand.

the consequences of the spread of the vineyards in the area was that the Dards were generally presented in Indian texts of the time as inveterate drinkers.²¹

China tore the veil of silence by extending its dominion over these isolated regions and giving them names corresponding to political divisions: Great Bolor and Little Bolor (618–906 A.D.). Fidelity to the suzerain was shown in practical form by gifts, among others, of silk-worms, mulberry trees abounding in those valleys. Buddhism thus came to coexist with pagan practices from Gilgit to upper Chitral, but there is no evidence of its spread towards southern Chitral.²²

Ancient tradition in Chitral has it that Bahman, the local pagan king, fought a terrible battle against the Arabs in which he was vanquished and slain. The incident must have taken place at the end of the 8th century. It was at that time that the Arabs launched their vast campaign of encirclement against the mountain regions, overthrowing the Chinese power as far as Turkistan. The "plain" was converted.

The Kafirs now emerged from their obscurity and for the first time received the contemptuous epithets of idolators, pagans, infidels. The dynasties of Central Asian unleashed their fury against them. First came Mahmud, founder of the Turkish line of the Gaznevids, one of whose seventeen victorious campaigns against India included the objective of subjugating those Kafirs; his success, however, was only superficial.

Three centuries later, Timur the Lame, the proud Tamerlane,²³ in his turn invoked a holy war against the infidel to justify his assaults upon the Hindu Kush, which now became a beleaguered fortress.

Again, at the beginning of the 16th century, Babur the Mogul, also on his way to India, sought to lance the Kafir

21. K. Jettmar, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

22. T.H. Holdich, *The Gates of India*, cited by L. Edelberg, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

23. Timur, the descendant of Gengis Khan, who according to legend also launched attacks against the mountain peoples of Chitral.

abscess, but was unable to establish lasting dominion over them.

But such aggressions resulted in the retreat of the most exposed groups. Like ripples in a pond, the Kafir tribes began to jostle one another, the most determined, or the most threatened, tribes driving out the less combative. The fate of the Kalash was that of the vanquished. They left their Tsyam homeland and pushed deeper into the network of secondary valleys. A first wave of Kalash is said to have conquered Chitral; the Kalash spring chants glorify this conquest, achieved at the expense of the Kho (Chitrali), and describe the northern boundaries of their new territory. It was in the region where the *Joshi* – feast of the future harvests and of the rebirth of nature – was celebrated that the Kalash took up their positions. The Chitrali confirm this fleeting supremacy (15th or 16th century). But the Kalash triumph was of short duration, and in any case involved only the advance guard, majestically installed in Chitral for a few generations. Other Kalash, established in short-lived security along the Waigal river, on the Afghan slope of the Hindu Kush, were dislodged by more warlike arrivals. They took refuge, some passes farther, in the valleys of what has become their present territory. There they found the indigenous Balalik, whom they subjugated in their turn.²⁴

In Kafiristan, the law of the strongest made a slave of the weaker. Thus was maintained the division of society inherited from Indo-Aryan times: the priest, master of ceremonies; the warrior-hunter, with an additional role as stock-raiser; and the producer, the slave-artisan who performed impure tasks. Agriculture fell to the women. By fleeing, the Kalash tried to save their status of free men. But the series of reverses continued. Regrouped under the banner of Islam and led by

24. Balalik: little "evil spirit" or "inhabitant of Little Bolor". The most powerful of the Kalash shamans, Naga Dehar, was apparently of Balalik origin; he travelled between Tsyam and Yarkhand, thus linking up the influences which nurtured the tradition.

Iranian chiefs from Chinese Turkistan, the Kho routed the Kalash and drove them out of Chitral, relegating any who remained, but who refused conversion, to the three valleys of Birir, Bumburet and Rumbur. There the fugitives joined other Kalash, themselves only recently arrived. In their weakened state they lost their independence, pledged allegiance to the king of Chitral, paid taxes in kind and in coin and submitted to forced labour.²⁵ The masters of Chitral, the *mehtar*, who claimed to be descendants of Tamerlane, made no serious effort to convert the Kalash to Islam; in that way they could more easily enslave them. The Kalash speak of those times in terms of cruelty and suffering. This condition of semi-slavery partially destructured Kalash society, and their warrior instincts were exercised chiefly in self-defence. All trace of the Balalik disappeared; had they been assimilated or killed? Consequently, the Kalash had to assume certain artisanal tasks regarded as menial, such as the construction of canals or houses, or carving. Progressively they acquired a reputation of inferiority, but despite adversity they did not give in. On the contrary, they erected their customs into a protective rampart, reinforcing the rules of purity to preserve themselves from the pollution of the surrounding world, and developing a distinctive identity in relation to other Kafirs.²⁶ Nevertheless, the vice was tightening: on the one hand the Kafirs, Kati-Bashgali, stock-raiders and collectors of murderous exploits for the sake of glory; on the other hand the Chitrali, who held them to ransom and drained them economically through servitude.

25. According to J. Biddulph, "The emperor Babur, writing in the early part of the 16th century, speaks of Chitral as forming part of Kafiristan. . . It is probable, therefore, that though the Islamic faith was introduced into the country mentioned about the beginning of the 14th century, it was long confined to a limited number of the inhabitants and did not become general till the middle or end of the 16th century." (*Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p. 117.)

26. See K. Jettmar, *op. cit.*, p. 36: "The Kalash, also called Kalash-Kafirs, were not so fierce or so warlike by far as the true Kafirs beyond the Afghan border, but they had many traits in common with the latter, and some peculiar to themselves which are even more interesting."

At the end of the 19th century, the English laid siege to Chitral. Their objective through this advance post, was to seal the north-western sector of India. Their difficult, indeed disastrous, occupation of Afghanistan led them to look with favour upon the creation of a buffer State between the ambitions of Tsarist Russia and British India. They therefore encouraged the unifying aims of Abdur Rahman, the charismatic leader of the Pathans, and remained deaf to the pressing proposals for an alliance with the 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 the satisfaction of the expansionist designs of the emir of Kabul. The Durand Line, drawn through the peaks of the Hindu Kush, 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 a last pass, escaped the threat of Afghan domination. Chitral remained in the orbit of India before passing into that of Pakistan.

Paradoxically, although Pakistan defines itself as an Islamic Republic, expressly recognising the role of religion in politics, the Kalash appear to have benefitted from the change. Freed from the yoke of the *mehtar*, from forced labour and taxes, they now enjoy, at least in theory, the status accorded to minorities under the Constitution. In practice, however, although the Government is concerned to guarantee this right to a separate identity, illustrated by the white stripe on the national flag, it does not have a real hold on the parallel power of the mullahs and has difficulty in controlling the intolerance of certain among them.

The State, for its part, speaks the language of modernity. Under the banner of progress and the threefold lure of roads, schools and hospitals, the central administration seeks to consolidate its authority over this "backward" province. The Kalash, however, are conscious that progress is not without certain drawbacks. They contend that good health depends

upon good communication with the divine and that their own healers have the power to reconcile a sick man with the spirits whom he has angered through his own fault. They are dubious of the dispensaries established in each valley, with their meagre stock of medicines, and suspicious of the nursing staff, who so easily denigrate customary practices. How can one have confidence in men who are so disrespectful of others' beliefs?

The school adjoins the mosque. Urdu, the language of Pakistan, is the vehicle for the values that conflict with tradition. Not all Kalash parents are convinced of its usefulness for a future as a herdsman. Only families with many sons allow one to receive an education. Girls are excluded and boys, if they wish to continue, have to leave the protected territory of the valleys and submit to years of apprenticeship, in loneliness and in an inquisitorial environment. What advantage can there be in this expense, these humiliations.

As for roads, they simply facilitate Chitrali penetration, access to the much coveted Kalash forests and the inrush of tourists. These roads intrude upon the intimacy of the community at sacred seasons and religious feasts, inevitably introduce contamination from outside, corrupt the purity of the territory.

For the Kalash, danger infiltrates from all sides. It has taken on new forms, in particular the – very attractive – form of consumerism, with its uncontrollable effects on individual conduct. The Chitral bazaar presents an altogether different picture since the victory of money over barter.

Today, the Kalash question poses a problem for the Department of Minorities in Islamabad. Their safeguard is a matter of budgetary concern to the tourist authorities: the Kalash represent a potential source of attraction for foreigners avid for glimpses of the archaic – glimpses transferred to photo-souvenirs to be enjoyed at a later stage. Caught up by the Western fever of speed, the tourist rushes through, displays his money. . . . How then to “organise the preservation” of the

Kalash without arousing the hostility of neighbouring "believers"? The choice is limited: either a "reserve", with emphasis on the picturesque, or *laissez-faire*. Under the combined action of corrosion from the modern world and Islamic reaction, the distinctive social organisation of the Kalash will slowly be destroyed. The alternatives take little account of those primarily concerned.

Since they are exempt from taxes, the Kalash are better able than before to meet their needs for food. Moreover, paid labour (road construction, wood floating, frontier surveillance) provides them with the cash required for the purchase of items that they have never made themselves, such as jewellery, tools, weapons, utensils and cotton clothing.

If the Government were to keep its promise to finance certain irrigation projects, the Kalash could bring new hillside lands into production and thus cope with the increase in population. If the Government were to appoint teachers and nursing staff drawn from the Kalash themselves and properly trained, they would be less subject to external influences.

If the Kalash were to win their longstanding suits against the Chitrali for the fraudulent acquisition of lands, they would recover a heritage extorted from them in exchange for rupees whose value meant nothing to them at the time Pakistan introduced money and suspended barter. They would then, perhaps, feel strong enough to continue to demand the maintenance of their customs and to assume the considerable expense involved in ensuring the protection of the gods and concord among families. But the customs, of course, must prove adequate to maintaining the difficult balance between heaven, society and the outside world, show their effectiveness in the face of the profound changes in conditions of life, and convince the rising generations of the relevance of the words of their ancestors.

The vitality of the community is best perceived in winter, during the festive season, when all its members assemble to enjoin fair future weather, to express their hopes, and to commit themselves to the gods, the spirits and the dead for the preservation of a mode of life which has proved its harmony.

A CLOSER APPROACH

In November 1980, we returned for the third time; for the solstice. We had been away for two years since our previous long visit, which had covered almost the entire harvest period. We had spent those two years in bibliographic research and writing. We returned with a book, the very first to be devoted to Kalash traditions, to the narratives of the “guardian of the memory”.²⁷ What would they think of it? We were obsessed with the thought of the welcome they would give us, of the time and the space between us. We felt strongly that we were still on the threshold of this society: we had learned a lot, theoretically, but we knew very little intimately; we had collected a great deal of information at first hand, but we had not really taken part in their lives.

Kalash society allows one to enter into a type of contact which many others would refuse. Of course, one has to have made the effort to learn the language, but at least the ethnologist has the advantage of not being put off by too obvious physical differences. Moreover, the *Englesi* – all Westerners without distinction have been *Englesi* since the British occupation of Chitral – are “pagans”, which is a point in their favour; indeed, they may be considered “allies”. If, in addi-

27. J.Y. Loude in collaboration with Viviane Lievre, photographs by Hervé Nègre, *Kalash, les derniers “infidèles” de l’Hindu-Kush*, Berger-Levrault, Paris, 1980.

tion, one proves to have a good knowledge of customs and taboos, the Kalash are not sparing in marks of affection, in patience and in tolerance.

Our first meeting on our return took place in the only street of the Chitral bazaar; it was with Bumbur Khan, an influential man from the Bumburet valley. He looked tired, and the way he was dressed did not adequately reflect his rank, particularly when visiting "in town". We had stayed with him several times during our previous visits. What joy there was in this reunion! His greetings were warm and demonstrative, in Kalash fashion, in the very midst of the crowd.

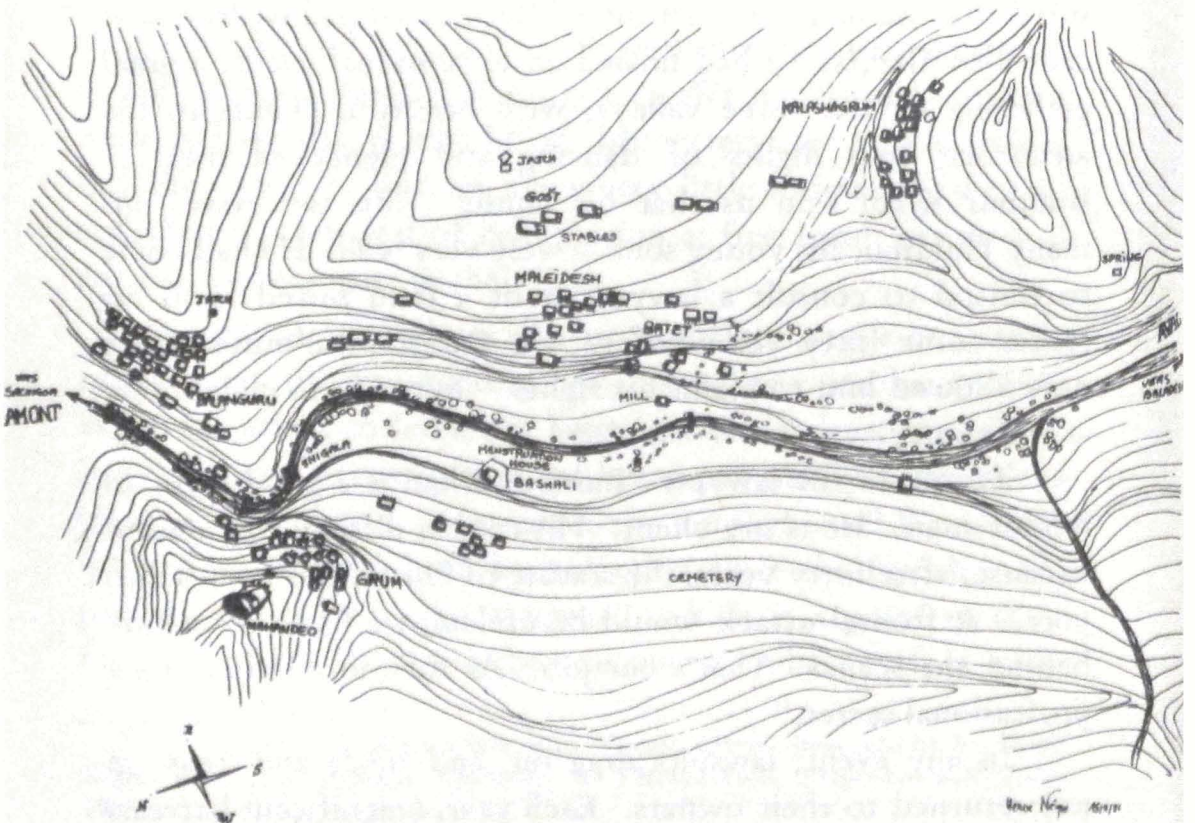
The Chitrali, always dumbfounded to hear foreigners speak Kalasha, pressed round us, listening but without really understanding. Bumbur Khan told us that he had come direct from Rumbur after three days of uninterrupted celebrations following the erection of funeral statues in the cemetery. It was a festival that now occurred very rarely, and he was so sorry that we had not been there. Because of bad weather and cancelled flights, we had missed an exceptional event, a great gathering of the three valleys, with beautiful chants to the ancestors, two nights of dancing and plenty of meat. . . Bumbur Khan told us that his family – his two wives, his many children, his young sons – were very well. He had come to Chitral to consult a lawyer about a field seized from his father some forty years before; the Pakistani administration now allowed him to claim his rights – but only to claim them – and to pay.

To quote the lawyer: "Bumbur Khan is a good man, an honest man. He is my client. His case is difficult to present because, after forty years, the statute of limitations comes into play. A frontal attack would be useless; we have to operate behind the scenes. That's our job. As for the method, it's a professional secret."

In any event, lawsuits drag on, and fields and trees are not returned to their owners. Each year, magnificent harvests of walnuts leave the valleys. . .



The valley of Rumber in winter. On the outcrop: Grum, the village of the founding ancestor.



Plan of the valley of Rumber

We had always chosen to stay in Rumbur, the northernmost valley of the territory. At first, no track led to it. Greater isolation and the close grouping of dwellings foster a more marked community spirit, a more serene expression of traditional customs. In Bumburet or Birir, on the other hand, Islam is omnipresent and the separation between communities less clear; because of the distances between villages, the Chitrali have taken over the intervening areas. There were two other determining factors in favour of Rumbur: the presence there of Kasi Khoshnawas, recognised as guardian of the tradition by the community as a whole, and of Saifullah Jan, the only "scholarly" Kalash, who spoke "a first-class English".

There was a magic in our return, at the end of a trek along a rough track at the bottom of a gorge, stumbling for hours in preparation for this rite of access. It was a sort of rite of passage, a passage to the other side of one's own reality. The tree trunks bridging the torrent turned the crossing into a feat of tightrope walking. In addition, our rucksacks were overloaded, because there was no question of living on the supplies of the Kalash; you had to bring your own food and go down to Chitral for new supplies at the end of each month. Small stretches of road under construction pointed to the coming, irreversible link with the modern world. Each twist and turn recalled a familiar landscape. The oak-covered slopes finally parted. A peak named Kotdesh, the fortress, guards the entrance to the land of the Kalash. The river and the footpath draw closer to avoid it. A little girl stood watching us; she wore a black woollen dress and a headdress of shells; as she moved, there was a sound of bells. In the distance, we could see Grum, the village of the Founding Ancestor, clinging perilously to an escarpment. The houses, flat-roofed rectangular buildings, are perched one over the other to cover the slope, to hold it up. The Ancestor had foreseen the need for defence: the village looks down upon the surrounding landscape as from an aerie. The sight of it, each time, gives intense pleasure – the pleasure of arrival. Here is the thought and the

writing of man in stones and wood, engraved on a fractured soil bounded by the watercourse and the sheer mountain walls. In the background, the glacier dominates the rocky heights from which the torrent issues and through which it takes its wild course. The winter wheat was already showing through.

We arrived in the middle of the meat meal, among the rocks of Batet, a village by the water. The male population of the valley were sharing the best parts of the goats which had been slaughtered in honour of the autumn and of a happy close of the year. The men stood up, saying that we were the people who had stayed a spring, a summer, an autumn in a certain house in the village, that of Yasin. There were smiles and exclamations, with resounding "Welcome, brothers!", "Welcome, sister!". The Kalash greeting after a long absence is a heart-warming experience. They lift you up bodily, hug you to the point where you lose your balance, then, with a rapid turn of the body, press you heart to heart, breast to breast. This virile demonstration of friendship, which is like a joyous battle, is both exhausting and very moving, as is the gentleness of the women among themselves, with their shy gestures and the exchange of kisses on hands, on plaits, on cheeks.

These welcoming rites obliterate the effects of separation. The man or woman who arrives from afar feels at home. We were at once served with fine pieces of sacrificed goat, a "pure" meat reserved for men. Straightaway, the plunge into the Kalash present linked up with our previous stays. The important question was: "Will you take part in the *Chaumos*, will you stay for the big feast?" We said that we planned to stay until the sacrifice of the full moon in January, the *Dewaka marat*. We had to get into the language again, to let the words flow. We asked them for news about themselves, and they told us that nothing alarming had happened. So we set our fears aside. They appreciated the fact that we had returned.

Saifullah Jan offered to put us up with his father-in-law, Katarsing, at Kalashagrum, a village perched high up on a small

levelling in the slope, where the houses stand on the edge of the cliff. He said that Katarsing could place a guest room adjoining his dwelling at our disposal and supply us with bread. Few Kalash have such a spare room or sufficient reserves of cereals. The practice of having guest rooms or reception rooms comes from the converted Kafirs living at the bottom of the valley. It is gradually spreading among the Kalash, especially among the wealthy, who owe it to themselves, by virtue of their rank, to offer fitting hospitality to important visitors, to relatives from another valley or to Chitrali notables passing through.

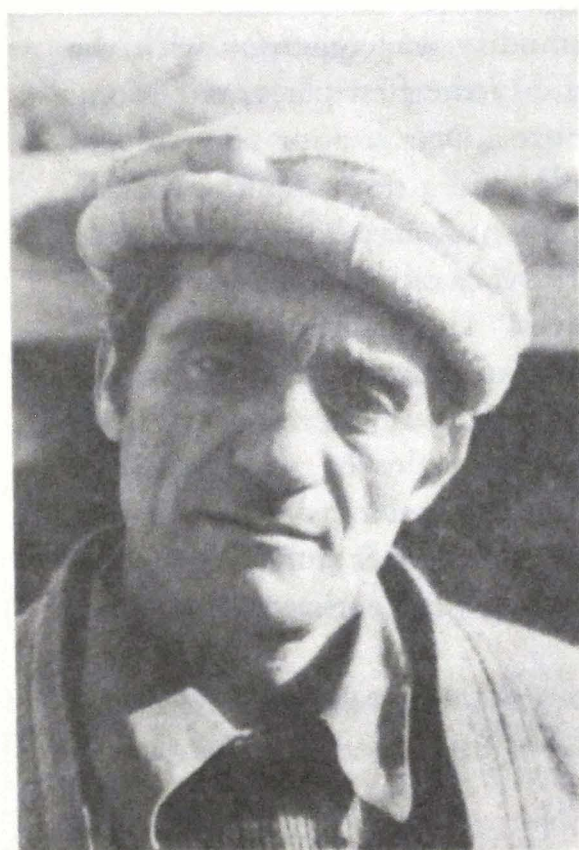
Katarsing, our host, is not only wealthy but he is also the son of the most important man in Rumbur. This reserved 40-year-old man was recently elected *mimbar*, or representative, of all the inhabitants of the valley, Moslems and Kalash alike, in the assembly of the provinces of Chitral.²⁸ This new political role, created by the Pakistani administration, has given added lustre to his already high reputation.

The quality of a visit depends largely on the judicious or injudicious choice of lodging. For a variety of reasons, our stay in Kalashagrum was to modify our relations with the community quite substantially. In the first place, our room, *anguti*, adjoined our host's house. Only a door separated us from the daily life of the family, and a door, for the Kalash, has no sense except when it is open: it may keep out the cold but never conviviality. From the very outset, we were thrown headlong into their everyday lives. This fruitful "familiarity" urges the observer out of his retreat; it is up to him to accept immersion, to give up his notions of privacy in respect of both space and time, to show himself worthy of such generous communication, to be available. The principal effect of this sharing of a roof was that we were no longer simply visitors in our host's house, as we had been two years earlier.

28. The ballot papers showed the picture of a cane for the candidate Katarsing and the picture of a goat for the Moslem candidate.



Buda, patriarch of the Mutimire lineage



*Katarsing, the Mimbar,
elected representative of
Rumbur to the Assembly of
Chitral*

The Kalash community, with its great concern to preserve its homogeneity, nevertheless, includes persons with strong opinions of their own. These persons do not upset the cohesion of the community by marginal behaviour, but they express their adherence to Kalash life in different ways. It so happened that our chosen home was full of such persons, as we discovered in the course of numerous late-night discussions.

The household consisted of the patriarch, his only son, Katarsing, and his two wives, seven sons and three daughters, and also daughters-in-law and infants. We shall attempt a portrait gallery.

The patriarch is looked upon with the greatest respect and great affection by his grandchildren. He has left his son authority to deal with everyday matters so that he can spend peaceful days in the stables, near to the herd of goats which has contributed so much to his prestige. In the present work, we shall call him by his name, Buda, despite the rule of family relationship which requires that he be referred to as "grandfather of Golemdam", his youngest grandson. He addresses us as his sons and daughters, *maī putr*, *maī tchu*, with that moving possessive denoting affection which authorises us to reply with the link-word *dada*, father. He is a man of learning and recognised as such, and from the very first encouraged our enquiry into tradition with the greatest kindness, always ready to check our knowledge of one story or another. Those quiet mornings with him at the deserted stables were privileged moments: squatting near the fire, we would spend hours listening to his weak, rather high-pitched voice, as he spoke slowly so that we could understand. We are left with the image of his face, the face of a grandfather, splendidly lined by the years, reminiscent of our own grandparents, a face radiant with a subtle combination of gaiety, goodness and wisdom produced by a life lived well, blossoming towards an end without decline. One could simply write: what a joy to have met him.

The "father of Golemdam", Katarsing, belongs to that small group of men whose high reputation is inherited from the heroic deeds of their ancestors. Conscious from an early age of the moral responsibility resting upon his shoulders as an only son, he has always demanded much both of himself and of others. In his youth an able shepherd, a tireless hunter, a formidable stone-thrower, he is now the careful manager of the goods bequeathed to him by his father. His renown stems also, in part, from the magnificent feasts he has organised, and has been further enhanced by his recent election as *mimbar*. As a host, he never altered his behaviour on our account. We were grateful to him for this very characteristic way of accepting our presence, recognising our independence, subtly diminishing the consideration shown to guests in order to put us at our ease, but without ever breaching the rules of hospitality.

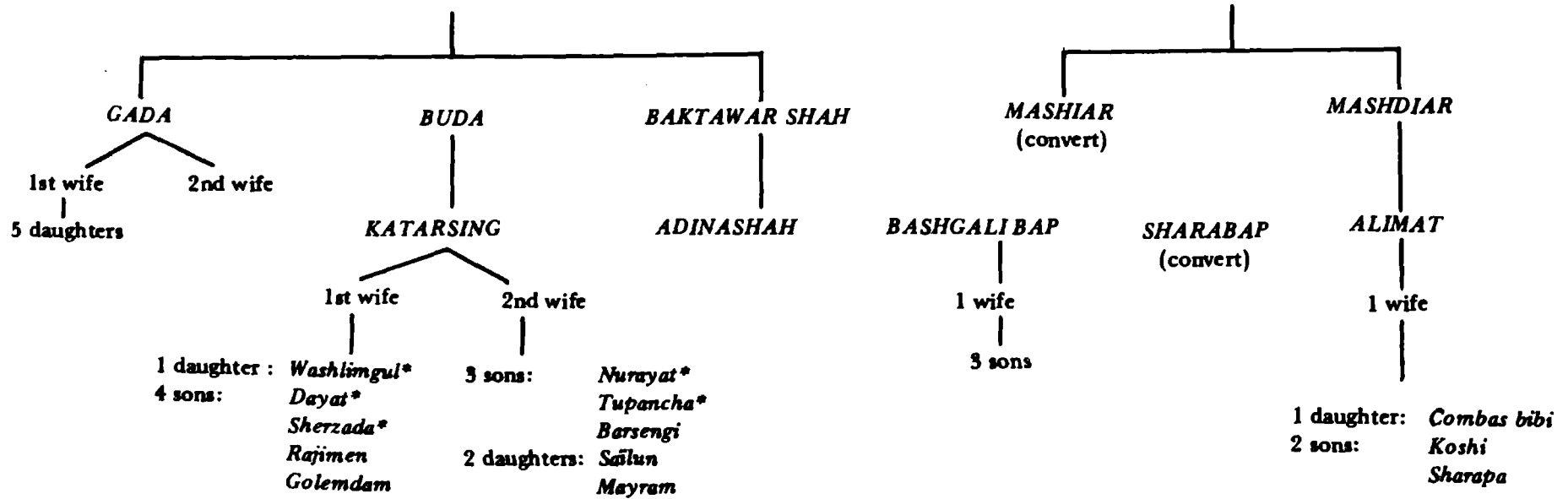
His two wives are very different from one another. The elder, who is the "mother of Golemdam" – she has three other sons and a daughter – is the very model of an "ancient". The term is complimentary. It expresses the respect that even the men, who are little concerned with the renown of women, shower upon an accomplished mother for her active propagation of tradition, both by example and by knowledge. Her exceptional character combines a sense of fun with inflexible firmness in adversity. She also has the gift of healing. For stomach aches, pains in the joints and bruises, she practises the art of *ket-tek*, with the help of artemesia.²⁹ Her "clients" come from afar, beyond religious boundaries, to request her care. Like her father-in-law, she was always attentive to our questions and ready with information, stories and explanations.

The second wife, "mother of Mayram" – she has another daughter and three sons – is beautiful and retiring, and satisfied with the role of a loving mother, soon to be renewed by

29. This therapy consists in stimulation through heat; the healer takes a few fibres of artemesia, a plant growing in the pasture land, places them upon a specific point on the skin and burns them.

Composition of the households of the *Mutimire* lineage
 from the village of *Kalashagrur*, our neighbours
 (Winter 1982-1983)

34 A



NB: We shall refer to the first wife of *Katarsing* as the elder mother, or the mother of *Golemdam* her youngest child; his second wife: the mother of *Mayram*.
 * married.

that of grandmother. She is somewhat overwhelmed by the strong personality of her senior, but having a natural gentleness, accepts the sharing of the household and its constraints.

Very quickly, our tiny guest room (9 square metres for three persons for three months) became the centre for nightly reunions. From the very first evening, the brothers came in one after the other to chat, then the little sisters, to play, and finally the daughters-in-law plucked up the necessary courage. The grandfather came for the pleasure of a cup of tea. The mothers came under the pretext of singing. The father rarely came. These evenings spent together quickly improved our mastery of the language. We smoked lots of cigarettes and broached all manner of topics. The family, thanks to the head of the household, had enlarged its horizons.

The eldest sons (of different mothers) manage the family economy except when their father sends them to the Chitrali construction sites to earn a bit of money. They work hard, whatever job is at hand: herding, wood floating, farming, maintenance of the different buildings.

Dayat, like his father, tends to be taciturn. He is a shepherd, and it would seem that the silence of the mountains, the harshness of the steep slopes, the succession of solitary days, had forged his nature. Normally sparing in words, he sometimes becomes very talkative during evenings of trivial conversation. The next day, he returns to his natural reserve. His second wife (his first marriage ended in divorce) is Lader Bibi, her face as delicate as that of a Florentine madonna.

Nurayat is the opposite of his half-brother. He is a story-teller, fun-loving, a singer. One senses in him the same depth of relationship with the natural world about him, but also the urge to speak of it, to make others love his universe, to mime hunts, to explain the world of the forests and the meaning of the dreams and beliefs born in the deep shade of the trees. He is a shepherd steeped in poetry and emotion, a companion whom everyone appreciates both for his skill at work and his concern for others; in short, he is the type of

man on whom the hope of the community is founded. He is passionately attached to his culture, yet conscious of the changes in the world about him. He is married to Sonogur, a lively, plump little woman, always laughing and singing in her high-pitched voice.

The next two half-brothers have made a break with the line of shepherds. They were chosen as candidates for school. This resulted in one of them, Sherzada, going as far as Lahore to a Christian boarding school – a change of planets, so to speak, which made the return home very uncomfortable.

As for Tupancha, the other half-brother, he has not gone so far. The little school he attended has equipped him to manage the store opened by Katarsing in order to break the Moslem trading monopoly. To open the store, Katarsing had to overcome the repugnance of the Kalash for commerce, which for generations they had looked down upon. Tupancha applies the lessons in arithmetic learned from his Moslem teacher to work the scales, to sell sugar, sweets, biscuits, tea, plastic sandals, hair-grips, cotton, salt, potatoes and so on; no more mountains for him.

The three other adolescents are to be shepherds and proclaim their pride in the task. Rajimen extols the pleasure of summering the flocks: "The king says, 'The poor are the kings of the pasture lands! They have the seven treasures provided by milk.' Of course, life in the grazing lands entails a great deal of work, what with supervising the flocks, cutting wood, cooking and milking, and one has to sleep on the hard ground; but it is a time of great abundance for the shepherds, who have at hand, at all times, the finest products that a Kalash can dream of."

Barsengi, for his part, compares himself to the king of the slopes, and challenges the crows to crow louder than he. As for Golemdam, still a small child, his lesson of the world comes from his grandfather, whom he never leaves. They call him "the little guardian of tradition" because of his love of legends, of which he can never hear enough.

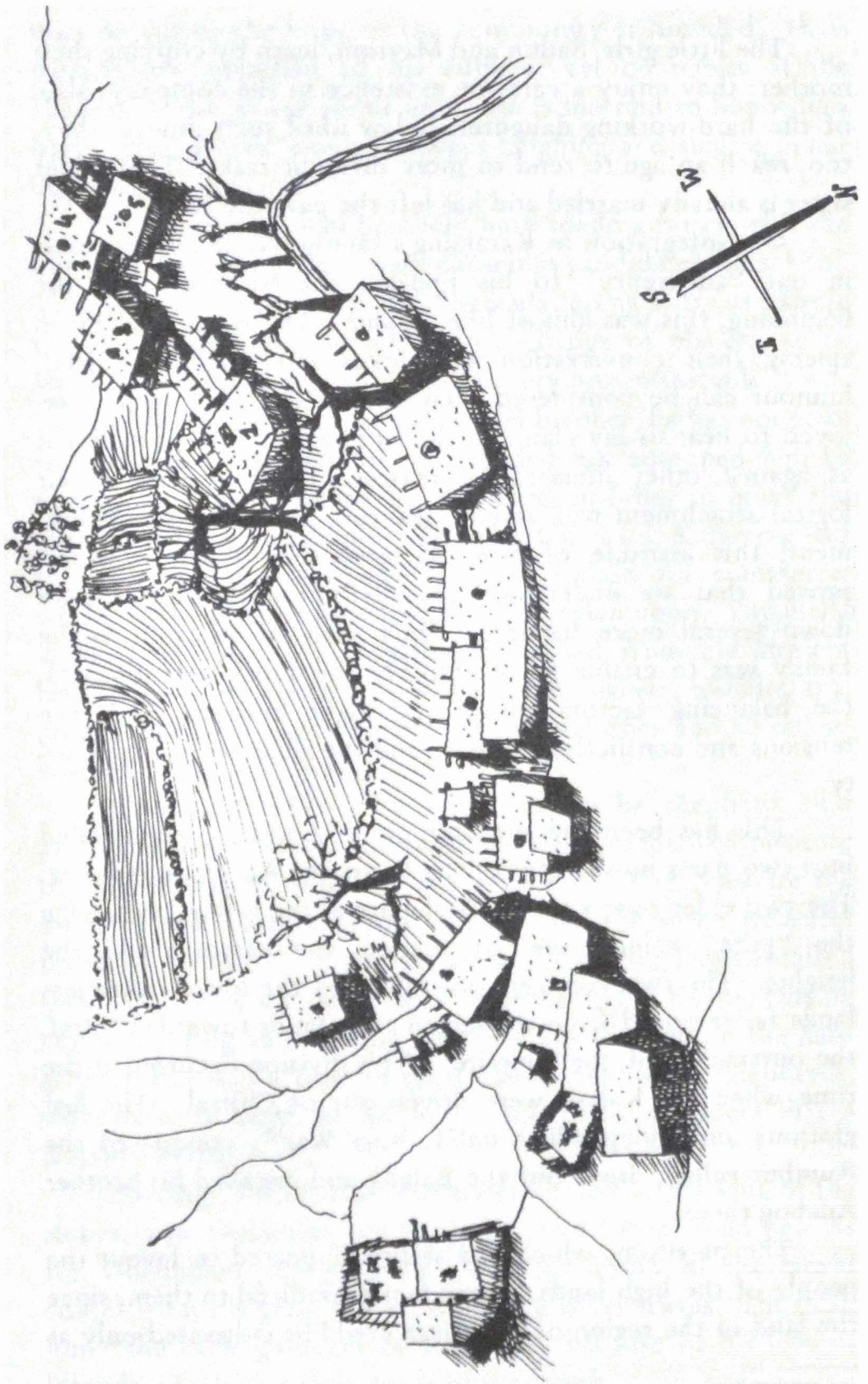
The little girls, Sailun and Mayram, learn by copying their mother; they enjoy a carefree existence in the company, also, of the hard-working daughters-in-law until such time as they, too, reach an age to tend to more difficult tasks. Their older sister is already married and has left the paternal roof.

Our integration in Katarsing's family was finally to result in our "adherence" to his lineage: the *Mutimire*. In the beginning, this was almost like a game. The Kalash delight in spicing their conversation with jokes and laughter; indeed, humour can be considered a cultural trait. They were overjoyed to hear us lay claim to this connection and to justify it as against other lineages by reason of our residence, our logical attachment to a stable. But over and above the amusement, this attitude of ours flattered their sense of order, proved that we understood the division of lineages, broke down several more barriers. Only such an insertion in the family was to enable us to discover the subtle relationships, the balancing factors among the eight lineages, both the tensions and conflicting interests and the alliances and solidarity.

This has been the situation since the valley was divided into two parts by the sons of the Founding Ancestor, Adabog. The two elder sons kept the high part of the valley, preserving the "pure" values; the sanctuaries, the pastures and the heights. The two younger sons inherited the lower, waterless lands far removed from the sacred sites, lands towards Chitral, the outside world, the "impure". This division occurred at the time when the Kalash were driven out of Chitral. The last glorious and independent chief, Raja Wai³⁰, conquered the Rumbur valley, drove out the Balalik and installed his brother Adabog there.

The partition, which had at first appeared to favour the people of the high lands, was in fact prejudicial to them, since the land in the region of Kafiristan could be cultivated only at

30. *Raja*: king, *Wai*: "full goats"; rich in influence and in fertile goats.



Plan of the village of Kalashagrum

Homes of the Mutimire Lineage: (1) Katarsing; (2) Gada; (3) Alimat; (4) Bashgali Bap; (5) Adinashah.

the risk of facing ambushes and pillage. Some of the land was abandoned for a few years while its owners went off to settle a blood feud with a Kafir.

In the lower valley, on the other hand, the ancestor Sumbara, by dint of sheer hard work, succeeded in conducting water right up to the highest fields. Legend has it that he called upon the strength of 60 Balalik workers to divert the water upstream and channel it down over several kilometres through vertical walls. It was an exploit that only the most extraordinary mortal could have achieved; Sumbara must certainly have been "in league with the fairies"! One night the fairies smashed an enormous rock which barred the way. . . A walnut tree still stands near Kalashagrum which the ancestor planted when, after seven years of effort, he saw the water flowing through his high-perched village. The centuries – at least four – have carved the tree into some ghostly witness. Crops grow well in this lower valley, which has the benefit not only of irrigation but also of earlier sunshine than in the higher lands.

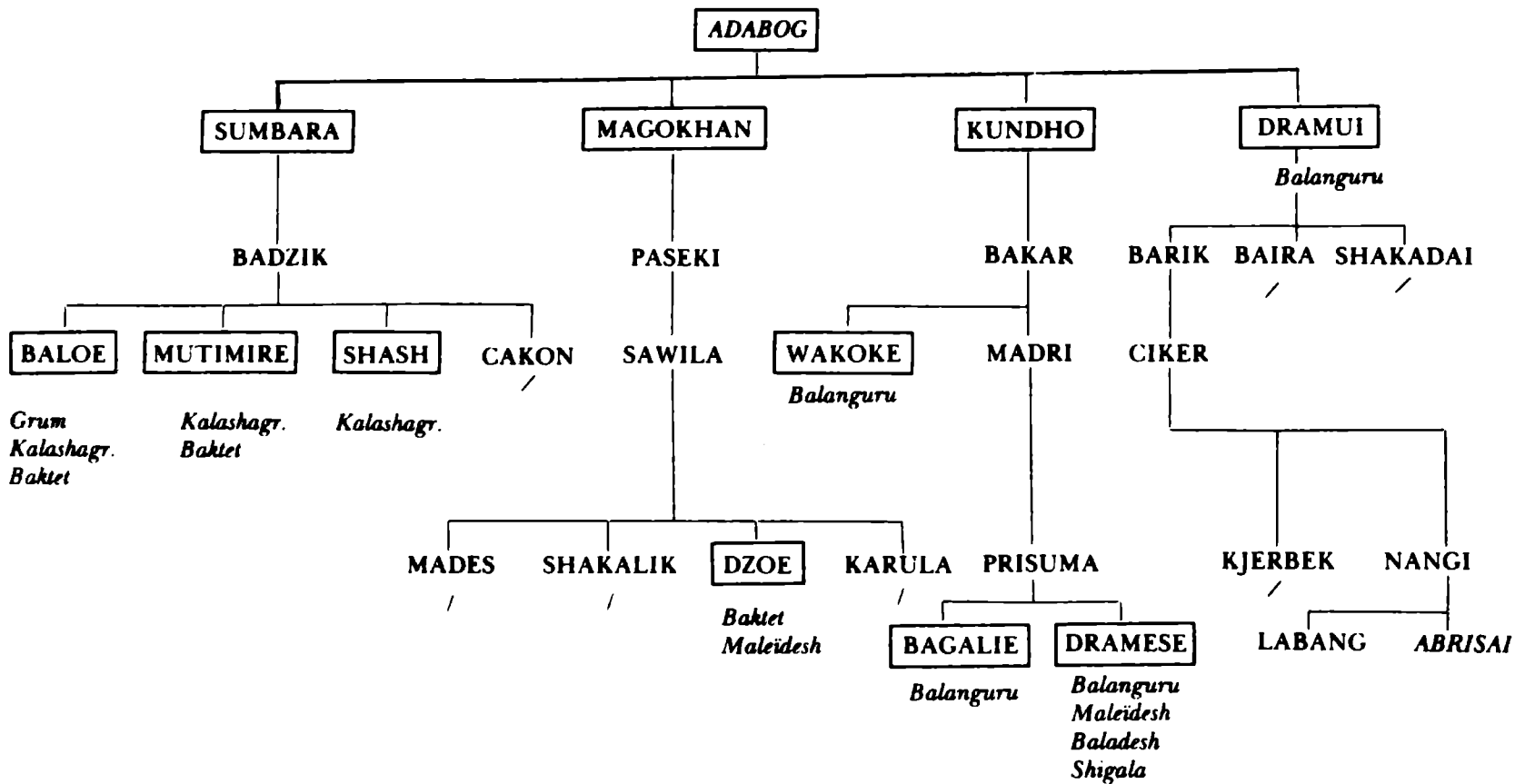
Thanks to our fictitious family bond, a privileged relationship was built up between ourselves and the members of the *Mutimire*, most of whom lived in or around Katarsing's house in Kalashagrum. It was a relationship dictated by the logic of Kalash society, but it was not to close the doors upon relations with other lineages. The feast of the solstice includes rites of renewal of membership whereby each man is linked to his stable of origin and each woman to her destined home. If we were to take part in it, we had ourselves to be explicitly anchored in a family. In addition, as soon as we arrived under the family roof, Viviane had had to accomplish an act of the first importance, namely, assume Kalash dress. This was required not only so that she could be admitted to the feast but also to reduce an embarrassing singularity in the context of promiscuity in which we were living and, beyond that, to assimilate the spirit of tradition.

“To try to integrate in the world of Kalash women demanded as a first step that I dress and do my hair as they did – a transformation whose consequences went far beyond mere physical appearance. What a plunge to take! In 1978, I was reticent; it was a reaction made up of fear of ridicule, refusal of a primary exotism and objection to physical restraints. In reality, I did not feel ready. I feared the travesty, realising that the adoption of Kalash dress represented a rite of entry into the community, a decisive step. But in winter 1980, it was quite different.

Welcomed straightaway into a family and wishing to join the other women in the rite of purification, the *shishao*, during the feast of Chaumos, I resolved to adopt the dress and hairstyle of the Kalash. As soon as I arrived, I went to a “tailor” in Rumbur – a converted former Kalash – and bought a full black cotton dress embroidered with coloured geometrical designs at the neck, the bottom of the sleeves and the hem. For the past ten years the “fashion” trend has favoured cotton, which is lighter than wool, a fashion not to the liking of the elders, who continue to wear wool. So I put on the black dress, the main feature of the traditional costume. My friend Sonogur, one of the daughters-in-law, provided me with the indispensable belt, woven of white wool, a long fringed band with brown, yellow and blue designs. She even took the trouble to dress me. And it is a fact that if one has not acquired the proper skills from childhood, the arrangement of the dress is a very complicated matter; the bust has to be full, the waist pinched by several layers of belt, the pleats correctly spread, the length adjusted (slightly above the ankles), the hemline kept perfectly even. After that I had to do this every morning!

A woman must not go bareheaded, whether indoors or outside. So I was given a *shushut*, a little coiffe decorated with cowries, beads, buttons and small bells; it is a brown woollen band which goes round the head and continues down the back. To complete the costume, a superb headdress, the

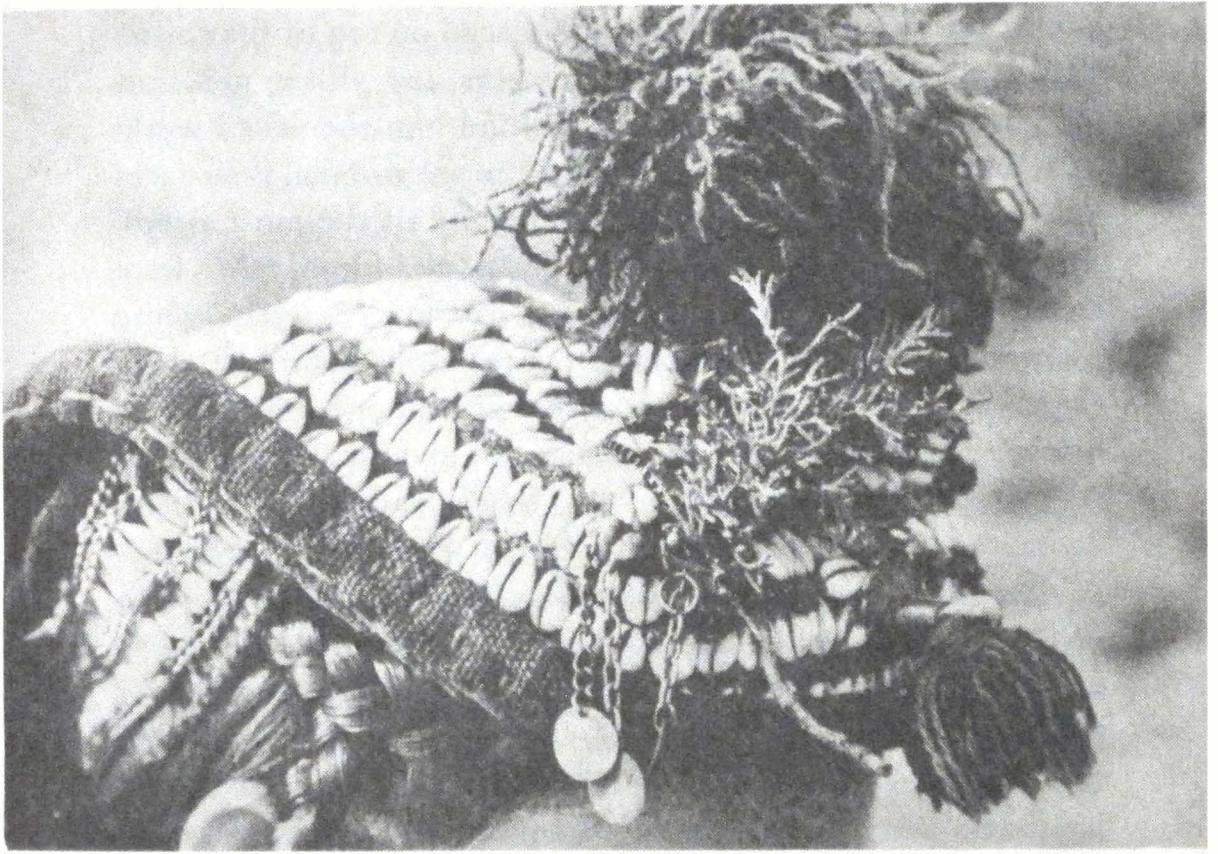
Genealogy of the eight actual lineages of Rumbur



40 A

DOWN-VALLEY	
Lineages: BALOE	168 members in 1981
MUTIMIRE	66 members in 1981
SHASH	5 members in 1981
DZOE	16 members in 1981

UP-VALLEY	
Lineages: BAGALOE	60 members in 1981
DRAMESE	150 members in 1981
WAKOKE	42 members in 1981
DRAMUI	
nawau	11 members in 1981



The **kupas**, the coiffe of the women, is a mark of Kalash identity. Covered with cowries, it is an appeal for protection and fecundity. No women may go bare-headed, without the **kupas** or at least without the coiffe support, the **shushut**, which is also decorated with cowries, beads, bells, buttons.....

kupas, the symbol of identity, was placed on top of the coiffe. This is the first object that fascinates any visitor penetrating into Kalash territory, leaving behind him the veiled world of Islam. It is indeed a contrast. Here are women, their faces uncovered, wearing headdresses composed of the most astonishing elements. The shells – by what trick of history? – were found washed up by a mountain stream. Cowries, white porcelain from the Indian Ocean, used to be found all along the caravan routes, and are now sold at high prices by Moslem hawkers; they symbolise the female sex and invoke fecundity. A rosette-shaped shield of red beads and white buttons decorates the bottom of the headdress. Here we find symmetrical designs formed by plastic beads – formerly the beads were of glass – and even by brass buttons salvaged from old English army uniforms in the Chitral bazaar. A purple pompom crowns the headdress. But there are variations on the traditional theme: every woman embellishes her headdress by the lavishness and quality of the ornamentation she adds; these are the external signs of wealth, added value beyond the demands of pure aesthetics.

The girls squabbled among themselves for the honour of dressing my hair and braiding it into the five plaits required by tradition – you need long hair. This session of metamorphosis created an atmosphere of excitement and lasted all morning. Bigim lent me a big necklace with nine rows of little red and white beads and said: “Ask your husband to buy you lots of beads in Chitral, you have to be ‘full’ of necklaces!” The prestige of a father or husband is judged, among other things, by the number of necklaces piled up on a woman’s breast.

After a last check, I was invited to visit the houses of Kalashagrum, but also of other villages, to be admired. Buoyed up by the evident pleasure of the women around me, I set off to “conquer” the valley. I was greeted with great curiosity and lots of questions as to the source of the different items of my costume. The women told me, bursting with laughter,

how ugly they found Western women's clothing and how shocking their appearance: 'In trousers, and with short hair, they are not women!'

My new clothing seemed to give a real legitimacy to my status as a member of the family in everyone's eyes. I even succeeded in changing the way I held myself, the way I walked, the way I sat. The men too began to have a different approach: 'You'll be taken for a woman of Rumbur; what is your native lineage?' they teased.

Together with the costume, I also assumed the weight of tradition. Physically associated with the women of the community, I now clearly belonged to the world of the "impure" and had to accept its often burdensome implications. But in exchange I became a party to their secrets, to the warmth of feminine intimacy and to the confidence of the children. My life was to be modelled on the activities of my "sisters", my time regulated by the slow progression of their days and my movements limited to a well-defined area."

Custom does not regulate the dress of Kalash men to the same degree. Except for the shepherds, the men have simply adopted the Pakistani form of dress, the *shalwar-kemiz*, a long cotton tunic worn over baggy trousers, and a Chitrali cap. For those who venture out of the valleys it is simply a matter of adapting themselves to the outside world, of not drawing attention to themselves, of attenuating a complex that is developing among them: "We are *jangali mutch*, jungle people (a deformation of the English word "jungle") in other words, people of the forest, backward people."

For us two men, the adoption of such clothing was not really a transformation. But on the other hand we had to take part in community tasks, share our time with the shepherds, bring in wood on sleds made of branches, sliding down the steep slopes, haul in tree trunks – in other words, measure ourselves against the physical world. Of course we had to talk – and boast – of our little exploits, both to astonish and to amuse the company.

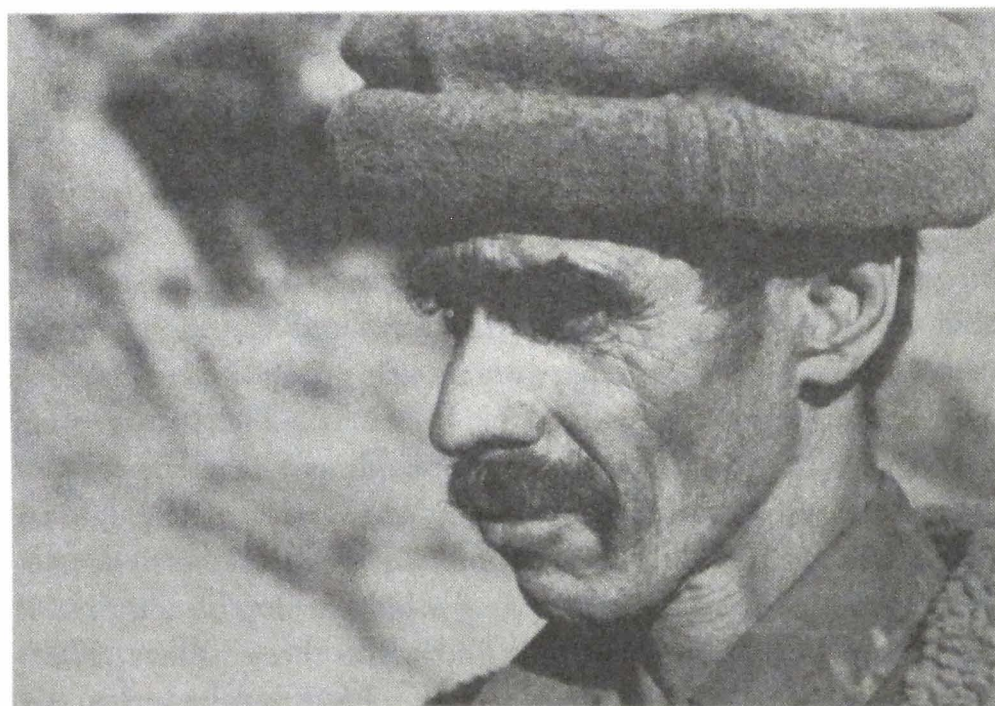
In the evening, the men would meet in the stables to exchange news and to chat. They would talk about current events and about tradition. We, of course, took part in the talk. It was shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan, and we were asked innumerable questions about the outside world. How many were they, those terrible "Urus" that one heard about so much? What was the war about? Would they come as far as here? And what about the Chinese?

Their curiosity stopped short at the boundaries of the imaginable, at the point where values ceased to be comparable. It was unthinkable, surely, that our parents had no herds, that fields were so far from the cities, that one bought bread from shops instead of baking it each day, that houses should be over ten stories high! All this was so unbelievable that the questions were periodically repeated, followed by the same expressions of astonishment at the answers. Even those who have worked in Peshawar or Rawalpindi have had to give up trying to explain things to older folk or young shepherds who have never travelled. A little girl asked us one day whether at home we fetched our water from the spring as she did. How were we to explain about pipes, taps, running water? We tried an approximation: "No, the water comes directly to the house." And the little girl, in some alarm, protested: "But then your house must be all wet!"

But although we had become so much closer in a number of ways, and despite our faithful adherence to the rites of membership and our scrupulous observance of the rules for protection from the impure, all of which absorbs everyone's attention for the entire month of the celebration of the feast of winter, we were still outside, on the threshold. This feast is of such complexity, with such an abundance of ritual, that it is impossible both to take notes on each detail of each phase and actually to participate in it. The two activities are simply incompatible. We needed a whole year, on our return home, to understand – a little – the richness of the ceremonial scenario, to grasp its coherence through an analysis of the

succession of ritual acts in the light of their interpretation by the Kalash as well as by reference to comparable rites in neighbouring cultural areas.

One of our priorities on returning to Kalash territory was to continue the work we had started with Kasi Khoshnawas, the guardian of the tradition; we wanted to complete the record of legendary tales which we had begun in 1978 and then to move on to the myths which underpin the extraordinary succession of rites which we discovered in December 1980.



Kasi Khoshnawas, guardian of the tradition of Rumbur

The whole of January we were snow bound. We devoted that time to endless hours of conversation with Kasi, armed with our tape-recorder, huddled round the little fireplace, delving into his memories, translating festive songs and speeches. This involved checking the Kalasha word for word, translating it into English with the help of Saifulla Jan, interpreting metaphors, trying to render the spirit of a phrase into French. It also involved lots of tea and lots of cigarettes

to bolster patience. Fortunately, Kasi enjoyed this exacting task, and not only for the money it brought him. Even within his own community, Kasi seeks recognition of his learning and would like, on that account, to be dispensed from everyday tasks. What he likes most is to go from house to house, to converse and display his knowledge. Courtesy demands that he be treated as a guest. But Kasi remains poor and does little to improve his situation. His neighbours show the respect due to his learning, even if they make fun of his eccentricities. But respect has the better of derision, because this is a man, surely, whose talents stem from his converse with the fairies.

The first signs of his difference from others appeared in his youth, at the time of his marriage, when he decided to sleep in the "pure" space reserved for men, between the central hearth and the far wall of the house. For seven years he placed his bed in this sacred spot in order to increase his chances of receiving inspiration. He refused to touch his wife or to eat bread baked by a woman. He spent his days leaning over a bridge watching the water. When asked why, he replied that the water spoke to him. So people got into the way of saying that his prodigious memory was a gift of the fairies: "If there are any today still in contact with the spirit world, Kasi is surely one of them!" As for his learning he acquired it later from keepers of the tradition in the three valleys, in exchange for working for them.³¹ But his brain would surely not have been able to store this harvest of information, these bewildering litanies of genealogies, without the support of the supernatural. One year, during the winter festivities, he had remained for three days in "a state of hibernation" after the descent of the great god, without eating, completely dazed, refusing to let anyone touch him, in obstinate silence; he had been "communicating".

31. It was therefore not out of place for us to pay our "informers" for our own collection of material, since knowledge, for the Kalash themselves, is not to be acquired without compensation.

Kasi is certainly an exceptional person. He is small, very thin, and is known as "the man with the narrow head" because of his emaciated face, his beak-like nose. His black eyes scrutinise a past which he alone can render present. That is his very *raison d'être*. His physical aspect concords with the timelessness of the mythical world. His laughter sometimes sounds almost crazy. At times he is wildly exuberant, then suddenly absent. He fosters a sense of mystery about a thousand tales still untold. His friendliness towards us, which at first was not disinterested, was progressively transformed into the anxious attention of a teacher to his pupils. We owe him a great debt.

Kasi earned money by telling us all these stories, and his role as our mentor enhanced his standing in the community. At the same time, the interest we took in Kalash customs enhanced their value too. For the elders, the first book that we had published took on particular significance, since the Moslem zealots were constantly contrasting the rules of their religion, dictated by God in the Book, the Koran, to the Kalash tradition without a revelation, without a Book. Suddenly, as they listened to our translation of the French into Kalasha, the elders realised that these pages covered with tiny symbols reproduced their myths and epic tales, tangible evidence of our work with Kasi two years before. "Our tradition has its book!" As a result, the prayers of the winter festival took account of our approach; some even referred to our role as communicators of the glory of the gods.

At Kasi's side, during those long sessions of communication of tradition, sat Saifullah Jan, a fundamental figure in our progress.

Saifullah Jan, the eldest of a number of brothers, had gone to school. He had very soon displayed astonishing aptitudes, and one of his teachers had persuaded his father to let him pursue his studies. So after Chitral he had gone on to Peshawar to study law. Despite the enormous sacrifice made by his family, he had been unable to complete his studies; he

was nevertheless determined to use what he had learned to defend the rights of his community, in particular in connection with questions of ownership of trees and fields.

In addition to his legal knowledge, Saifullah speaks and writes an English of a very high standard, as well as Urdu. For a number of years he has been travelling back and forth between his valley and the plains of Pakistan, sometimes taking part in congresses on minorities. Such travels are expensive, but because he is determined to defend his culture, he refuses to accept the offers of remunerative jobs made him by influential Chitralis, offers motivated by respect for his ability but also by the wish to prevent him from pursuing his embarrassing activities.

Saifullah's assistance throughout our long apprenticeship was of inestimable value, his word-by-word translations allowing us to capture the poetic spirit of the songs, praises and prayers, to understand the construction of phrases and to enrich our vocabulary of verbs and abstract concepts.

Together with Saifullah, and at the request of the Deputy Commissioner of Chitral, we prepared a list of Kalash demands. It so happened that our arrival at the end of November had coincided with the appointment of a young and brilliant civil administrator of the province, a man genuinely interested in looking into and seeking solutions to Kalash problems. The list we submitted to him set out the views of the Kalash themselves and their concern with economic improvements, which alone could safeguard their cultural independence and their freedom to develop their territory in their own way. Mr. Shakil Durrani was the first deputy commissioner ever to visit the valleys for the purpose of meeting the elders on their own ground, and listening to their complaints. During his brief tenure of office in Chitral (two years), relations between the Kalash and the administration were more relaxed, and the Kalash received some effective assistance. Unfortunately, at our fourth return (October

1982), Mr. Durrani had just been appointed to an important post in Peshawar, so that a number of projects were necessarily left in suspense.

October 1982

That autumn, our adjustment to the daily routine of Kalashagram took place even more quickly. It was difficult for us even to imagine staying anywhere else. Here we found ourselves at home again, our guest room awaiting us, empty. The peaceful evening conversations began again at neighbours' houses, with our "brothers in lineage". Making the rounds of the houses, we met old friends, for example that beautiful blue-eyed elderly woman standing on her veranda, overlooking the cliff, who treated us like her own children and talked about past harvests in her fields.

Viviane, in the company of her "sisters" was soon robed in her black dress and coiffe, bedecked with necklaces: the magical transformation was immediate. The children had grown. Mayram and Sailun were nearly ten years old, very feminine and affectionate. We went to greet grandfather Buda in the stables: it was a moving experience. We were offered whole bunches of sweet grapes, and settled down for a long chat. We had brought presents for everyone, mainly clothes, shells and haberdashery, as well as binoculars for our host. Binoculars are the most prized gift of all: they are used in the pastures to survey the movements of the herds, the flight of eagles or the approach of prowlers.

On the whole, the news was good. The young Deputy Commissioner Mr. Shakil Durrani, had given some of the Kalash jobs as frontier guards, obtained decent pensions for former policemen, settled certain land disputes in favour of the Kalash. He had also put a stop to voyeurism at the spring festivals by forbidding access by Moslems to the assembly sites. However, some Kalash had been converted to Islam. The month of November promised to be full of exciting events: the whole valley was talking about a *Biramor*, a very rare "prestige festival".

It was during that festival that everything really changed.

On the occasion of a prestige ceremony, the men of learning proclaim the glory of the donor. That is their role and their responsibility, their privilege too. It is an oratorical jousting match in which each participant measures his eloquence and knowledge of tradition against the other's:

“From the very first speeches, I was invited to take part in the verbal assault. With the Kalash, there is always this tendency to joke, and to challenge a person to say something or do something is part of the game. But this time the insistence, particularly on the part of the elders, was in the nature of a discreet putting to the test, as if they wished to check my intentions. ‘You say that you have learned the tradition, that Kasi has taught you many things. So if you know, you must speak up. That’s the point of knowledge.’

There was laughter and smiles. But I got a day’s grace: ‘Alright, I’ll speak tomorrow!’ A test would require preparation, a speech in Kalasha also. I drafted a laudation using phonetical signs and learnt it by heart; I did not feel ready to improvise. The next day, I took advantage of the fact that there were not many people present to deliver my short oration, my arm extended towards the master of ceremonies, my voice vibrant with the poetic lyricism demanded by convention. As a reward, I received my first bandoliers of honour, as well as strings of walnuts and almonds.

The news spread: ‘The French brother gave a speech of praise!’ Too few people had been present at the scene, so I must speak again, and make it longer! So I decided to write it all down and read it out. No one was shocked by this, indeed quite the contrary. The written word has a prestige of its own, but only the spoken word has real weight, and the passion with which it is delivered. That morning it was snowing, but over three hundred people from the three valleys gathered to hear me, many of them packed on the roof of the donor’s house. I was pushed forward in total silence. I had to shout phrase after phrase. I remember my hand trembling with the

tension. The elders exclaimed: "*Shabash!*" (You speak truly). I got back my breath and continued my declamation in the required fashion. I felt a current flowing through me, both physical and mental. When the shouts of "*Zindabad!*" (long life) exploded, I felt that I had made a breakthrough, had revealed by my action the basic motivations of our attraction to the Kalash tradition. The master of ceremonies responded to my tribute by clothing me in an elder's robe, the robe offered to all those who have the knowledge and the words. But they gave me no time to savour the joy of an initiate; the test must continue: I must dance. Flutes and drums struck up a fast rhythm which forced one to execute birdlike movements. There was clapping of hands and the rhythm grew even faster. I had to spin faster and above all let my body discover the movements closest to traditional expression. As the flutes and drums reached the paroxysmal moment, the excitement released a flood of unknown emotions. That evening, I was told that my speech had been recorded and that the cassette was being passed round.³² Those who had been unable to come that morning were listening to it!

The next day, at the finale of the feast, I knew that I must take part in the concert of cries of glory and thanksgiving. Quite naturally, I had been assimilated to the guardians of tradition. The robe had conferred upon me both the insignia and the role. I had also inherited the duties. Thenceforth, on each solemn occasion, I was expected to speak, to panegyrisé the lineage concerned or to lead a prayer chant. The elders took it upon themselves to remind me of this, to guide me gently. It was a joke no longer. There remained the challenge: to carry out these duties worthily. I was beginning to understand from within the mechanism of a society of praise. Kasi's teachings were to prove precious, complete and precise, allowing me to join this minority group at the heart of the

³². What an experience for an ethnologist to be taped himself! There are a number of cassette tape-recorders in the valleys; we shall refer later on to their importance in connection with tradition.

community as a possessor of learning and capable of praise. Our work was taking on reality in the eyes of the Kalash."

Each one of us, in fact, had found his or her place. Hervé Negre, the third member of the team in all four expeditions, is far more than just a photographer. Leaving his camera aside, he settled in and tried to find out what was happening about him. That was how he began, by treating people's maladies, by giving before taking. With his experience of divination and thorough knowledge of homeopathy and of plants, he approached the enormous demand for health care in his own way, gently. And he was immensely successful, because he was always ready to help and, above all, because his methods had much in common with those of the traditional healers. His diagnostic method, with the aid of a pendulum, immediately established confidence, because it appeared similar to that of the *tum'kutchawao*, a man who detects the causes of an illness through the oscillations of a bow, or of the *isting garao*, a woman who detects them through the oscillations of a bracelet suspended on a thread. His daily visits to the sick, his treatments and his results soon made him a public figure, called upon throughout the valley to treat both fevers and injuries. He was given the name of *tum'kutchawao!* Soon he was unable to leave a house without some payment in kind, such as a cheese meal, and without receiving a bandolier, the customary recompense of a Kalash healer. His reputation preceded him in the other two valleys: as soon as he arrived in Bumburet or Birir, the sick would turn out to consult him. And thus, having become a familiar figure, with a "title" and a role in society, he was able to take his photographs or to sketch at his ease, without disturbing the natural run of things.

"Kalash society is dedicated "to the glory of men". Women have always been excluded from religious matters, law and politics. As a woman, a foreigner and an ethnologist, I sought to find my proper place in it all.

I was attracted by the idea of sharing, for a time, a totally different social status. I was the only member of our small team to be able to penetrate the feminine world in all its detail. But such a privilege meant putting my own personality into hibernation. I had, for example, to assimilate the notion of "impurity". The Kalash, like many other archaic social groups, consider the blood of women at menstruation and childbirth dangerous. Those events create a temporary impurity which requires segregation in the *bashali*, the women's community house: five days for the menstrual period and twenty-one days for childbirth. The *bashali* is square, similar to other dwellings, and is always built some distance away from the village, on the banks of the river. Rumbur has only one, surrounded by a little grove of holm-oaks. No man may enter the perimeter of this defiled place, and no woman may leave it without completely washing her body and her clothing. The women in the *bashali*, some accompanied by a nursing child, constitute a sealed-off world, but one that is constantly renewed. This isolation reinforces feminine solidarity: confidences are exchanged, about health problems connected with pregnancy, about fears of sterility, about marital relations, about love and desire. And it is also there that life begins.

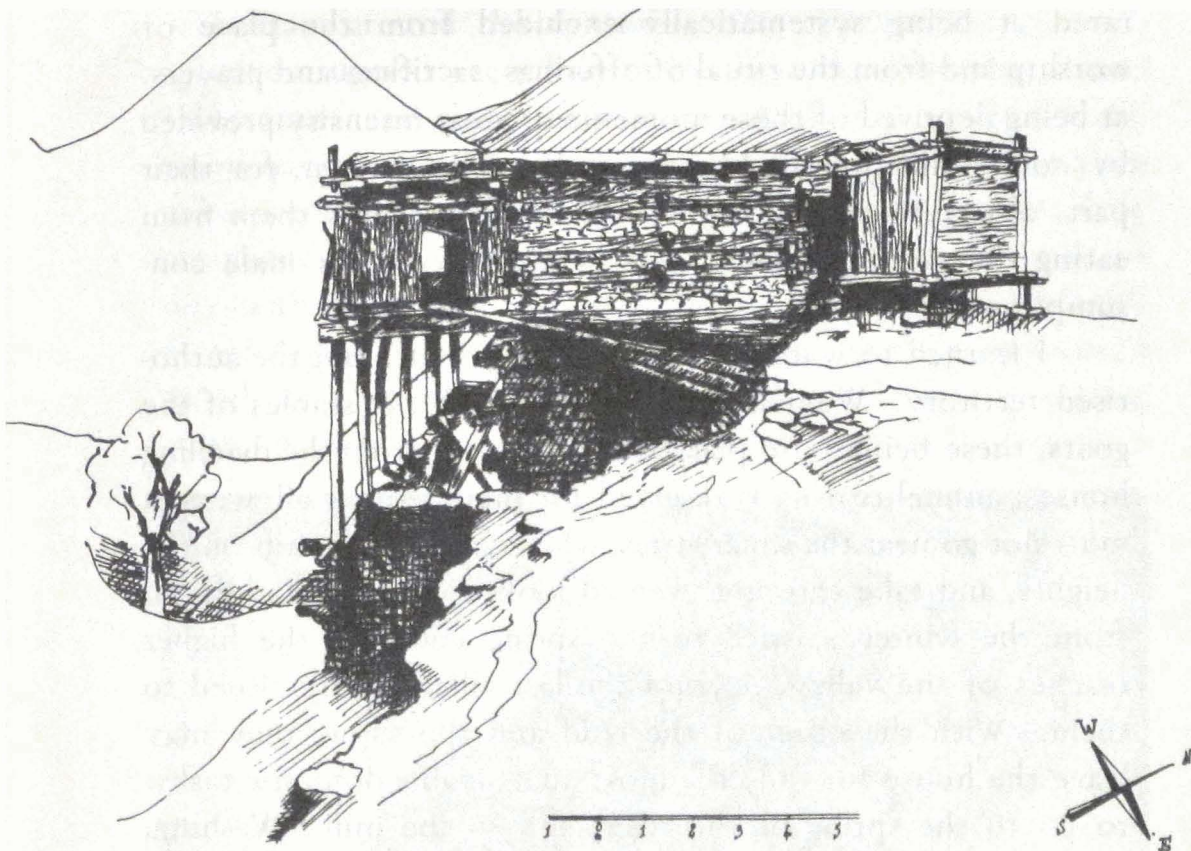
"At the first contractions, Nabigul made her way to the *bashali*, in the icy dawn of a January day. She was accompanied by her mother, in the absence of an old woman who usually acts as midwife. Women in childbirth occupy the reserved area on the left of the entrance, whereas those who are having their periods gather at the back, facing the door, around the fire that is continually kept burning. The altar to the goddess Deزالik, who presides over births, is a simple wooden plank on the right lateral wall. It is the duty of one of the women present to honour the wooden statue with first one walnut, then two, then three, then five, and so on, until the child is born. Nabigul squatted naked, holding on to a pillar with both hands as a support in pushing down. As soon as the

baby appears, the midwife picks it up from behind the mother. She performs the *suda ushtel*, the lifting up of the child, then cuts the umbilical cord with a razor blade – formerly with a sharp stone – and ties the end with a woollen thread. Nabigul had given birth to a girl – slightly disappointing! A son, after all, stays at home with his parents, even after he is married. . . With one hand, the midwife washes the child with warm water, then hands it to the mother, who lies resting near the fire. She then strews ashes on the soiled area, cleans the floor and goes outside to bury the placenta – considered most impure – at the foot of a holm-oak near the *bashali*. That day, at home, the father received the customary congratulations, *shaedar*, for a daughter, and offered bread and cheese to his visitors. All Kalash women want to have large families and deeply regret the high incidence of infant mortality. I therefore shared Nabigul's joy intensely: this was her second child, her first being a son.

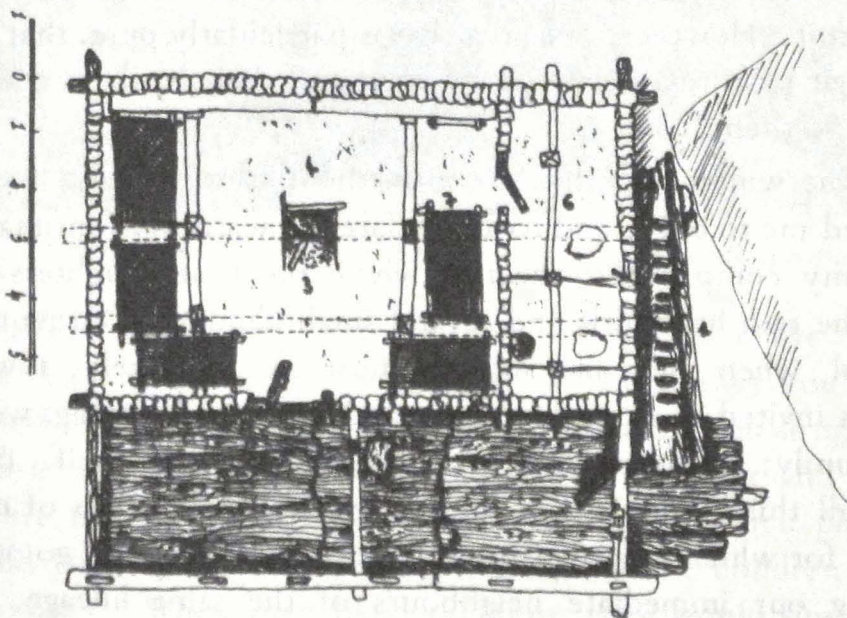
As for the permanent impurity attributed to all women, it impregnated my daily life just as it affected my participation in the feasts and ceremonies. In effect, a code of the pure and the impure, dictated by the shamans in the course of history, governs the whole of Kalash life.³³ It establishes a basic “incompatibility” between women and the sacred in general. Because they are impure, women can never accede to the status of “purity”, which is reserved for men. This basic duality, erected like some rampart against the pressures of Islam, is clearly a masculine “cultural” position in which, given the necessary complementarity of male and female, women are assigned their place and the constraints upon them are established.

So it was that I experienced each festive event “from the women's side”, their role being to sing and dance, and also to bake bread. I was always genuinely pleased to be in their midst during these celebrations, but at the same time frust-

33. See J.Y. Loude and V. Lièvre, *op. cit.*, p. 17.



House with a verandah belonging to the Mutimire lineage at Kalashagrum, with its storehouse



Interior plan of the same house: 1. trunk-stairway; 2. verandah, 3. hearth; 4. purification area reserved for the men 5. shelf and domestic altar to the goddess, jestak; 6. larder; 7. bed

rated at being systematically excluded from the place of worship and from the ritual of offerings, sacrifices and prayers, at being deprived of those moments of great intensity provided by communication with the sacred. The women, for their part, object to the dietary taboo which prevents them from eating the sacrificial meat, this being reserved for male consumption only.

I learned to watch where I went, to mark out the authorised territory. Women must not approach the stables of the goats, these being pure places situated away from the dwelling houses: animal rearing is reserved for men. Above all, women must not go near the sanctuaries, which are always built on the heights, and take care not even to look at them! In addition, from the winter solstice to the spring equinox, the higher reaches of the valley, beyond the last village – are closed to them. With the onset of the cold and the snow, they may leave the house for only the most unavoidable domestic tasks: to go to the spring or the river, and to the mill. Washing, dressing of hair or distant visits must await the sunny days. Summer, on the other hand, with its agricultural activities, gives women freer rein, they may go out to the fields, garden, pick fruit. However, one area that is particularly pure, that of the high pastures, occupied by men and their herds, remains closed to them.

The winter months of confinement in our host's house enabled me to enjoy and to appreciate the warmth of intimacy with my companions: the two wives, the four daughters-in-law, the two little girls and several small children. During the festival, when men and women must eat separately, I was always invited to share my meals and spend the evenings with the family: a woman must never be left all by herself. But with all this kindness, I could not ignore the demands of my work, for which I needed some freedom. So I would go out, visiting our immediate neighbours of the same lineage, or through the whole valley, often alone, from one village to the next. The time of non-productive activities was perfect for

long chats around the central hearth. We would sip tea – salted or sugared according to the household supplies – and nibble nuts and dried mulberries. And they would ask me many questions, often the same ones: the world of the Kalash women ends at the frontiers of their valleys. My almost daily escapades would sometimes earn me reprimands: ‘You don’t stay with us enough. . . Why do you go so far with all this snow?’ I had to take care not to hurt their feelings, so I would spend the next few days with them at home, chatting, sorting grain, making necklaces. I had also to learn to respect their



Kalash children (unschooled) discovering a white page, a pen and drawings

silences, to slip into their rhythm. I would offer the children exercise books and coloured pencils so that they could draw pictures: it was an interesting way of gaining an insight into their imaginations. Rivalries, tensions, laughter and teasing were part of the game. Or I would give in to their pleadings and sing them folk songs, the songs of the children of my country. When they liked the tune, they would sing it over and over again, repeating the words in slightly distorted form.

That is why “Frère Jacques, dormez-vous?” had greeted our return!

“I sometimes had to remind them why I was there, refer to my work, often neglected, and explain why I could stay for only a limited time. I was the “franci baba”, their sister from a distant valley, but because we all wished to efface the differences between us we were simply enjoying the fact of being together. I often took notes, and all those lines of writing never ceased to astonish the women. This magic of writing, a symbol of the distance between our worlds, also served as a counter-weight to my lack of skills in other areas: my clumsiness in spinning wool, in weaving a belt or in spreading the galette dough on a scorching griddle with a mere twist of the hand. My companions would reassure me laughingly, restoring the balance: “You know how to write, and we know what the Kalash women need to know!”

It was this experience of everyday life and of festivals, the pleasant feeling of grasping the significance of gestures, the possibility of talking with everyone, of asking questions, of learning so much from chance words, that led to a beginning of integration.

At our second winter festival, we were to benefit from this progression. The fact of experiencing the ceremonies once again lessened the tension involved in observing them for the first time, freed us from the anxious activity which had necessarily kept us on the edges of the stage. From spectators we became actors, subject to the duties of participants. For the women, that meant dancing. For the men of the word, it meant leading the songs in accordance with established custom, and directing the incantations at the great sacrifice, when our offering to the gods, a goat, was slaughtered.

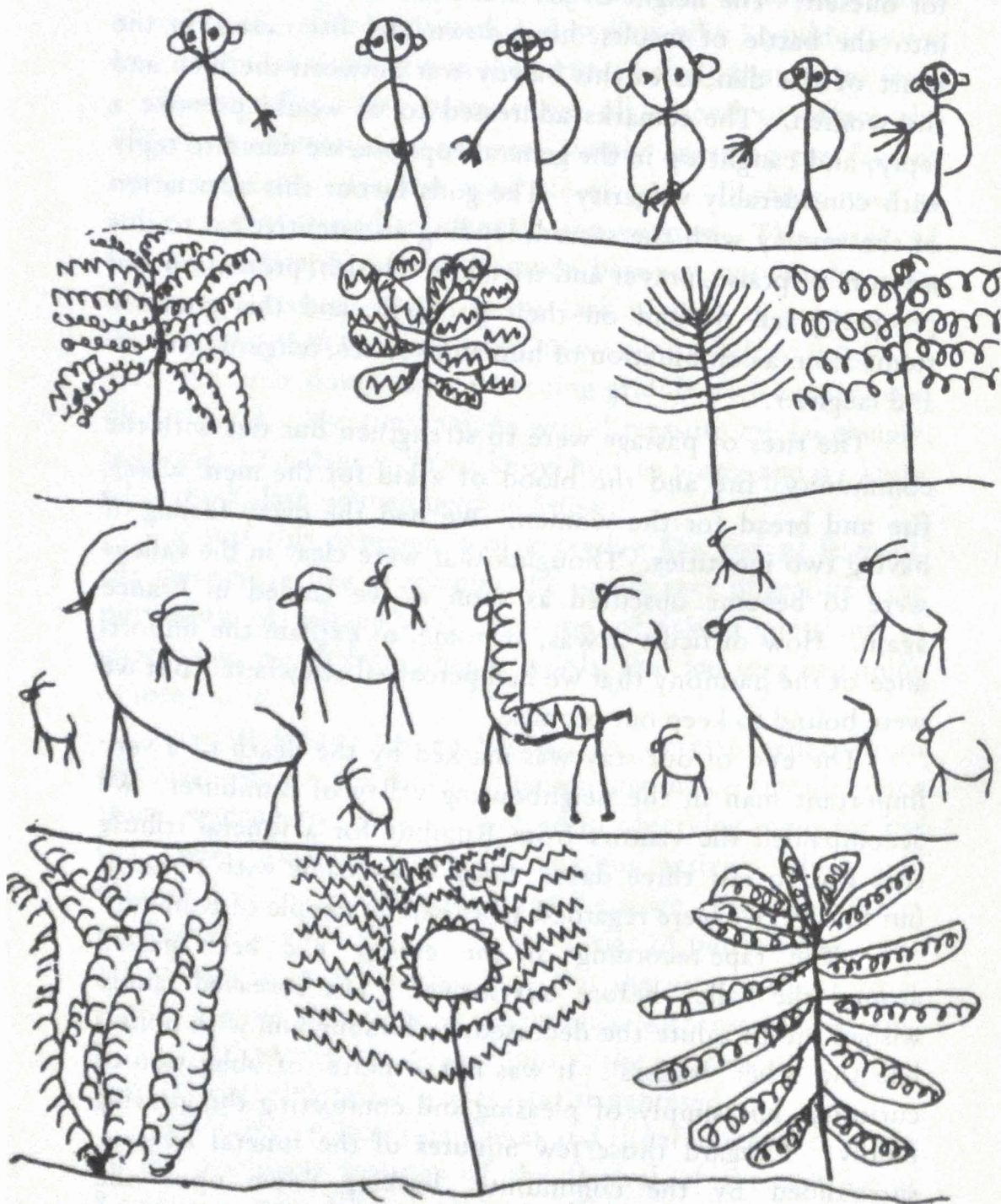
The burst of licentious jokes and ritual obscenities – one of the dominant features of the festival of the solstice at Rumbur – tears down the barriers of natural reserve. Nothing is too shocking. Within the limits set by tradition, proof of talent for libidinous excess, in both gesture and word, is

rewarded by additional esteem for the man who invents the most imaginative insults. A strange way of making a reputation for oneself! The height of joy was reached when we charged into the battle of insults, head down and fist raised, in the heart of the dances of this bawdy war between the men and the women. The remarks addressed to us would provoke a reply, and caught up in the general euphoria we dared to reply with considerably vulgarity. The gods favour this association of the smutty with the sacred, lending an attentive ear to this mixture of praise, prayer and triviality. Health, protection and prosperity all depend on their goodwill, and this goodwill stems from a combination of human excesses, religious fervour and laughter.

The rites of passage were to strengthen our ties with the community: fire and the blood of a kid for the men; water, fire and bread for the women. We had the dizzy feeling of having two identities. Thoughts that were clear in the valleys were to become obscured as soon as we landed in France again. How difficult it was, at home, to explain the importance of the harmony that we had perceived elsewhere! But we were bound to keep our promise.

The end of our stay was marked by the death of a very important man in the neighbouring valley of Bumburet. We accompanied the visitors from Rumbur for a funeral tribute that was to last three days. Because we came with those of our lineage, we were regarded as *Rukmula*, people of Rumbur.

“The tape-recording of the eulogy had been passed around the valley before our arrival. The bereaved family wished me to salute the deceased, to honour him with praises like the other ‘leaders’. It was not a matter of obligation or curiosity, but simply of pleasing and comforting the grieving family. I regard those few minutes of the funeral address, surrounded by the community, looking down upon the uncovered face of the dead man, as among the most intense of my entire life.”



Drawings by an adolescent kalash girl: shepherds, a herd of goats and forest trees.

The Kalash had allowed us to approach their mode of thought by showing us that a knowledge of their customs was not sufficient, in their eyes, if it did not nurture the life of the community, if it did not lead to genuine participation. Theirs is a society of acts, in which each action must be completed and repeated: it is not a society characterised by initiation as such. Those who come are made welcome, and nothing is hidden from them: the Kalash don't mind being questioned but expect an effort to be made to understand the real meaning of the answer. What this society gives in return, through certain rites of integration, requires the observer to make ever greater efforts at understanding. One constantly finds oneself before new thresholds, ever more ignorant as a result of having enlarged one's horizons.

The parting ceremonies, in contrast with the exuberant greetings on our arrival, were serene and dignified. Tradition requires a calm embrace, followed by an exchange of good wishes: the recitations sometimes alternate, sometimes in unison. Each says to the other: "May your wishes be fulfilled! Our destinies are in the hands of heaven!" One hand touches the temple, the other the heart.

"In your country, will our traditions be known?"

"In our country, our community will know. . ."

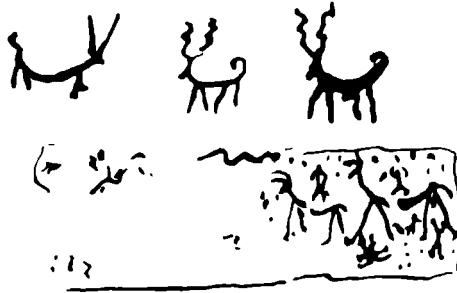
"Welcome!"

"Health and a golden path!"

And so we left. The thread of the present would be taken up again at our next return.

II

NOVEMBER, LAVISHNESS FOR IMMORTALITY



“THE PERFUME OF RICHES” ACCUMULATING A SURPLUS

Leaving the pasture lands

October, known as the “autumn month”, follows the “lunar month of wine and walnuts” and precedes that of marriages. As in Sanscrit, the same word is used for “month” and “moon”.¹

For several days now in the pastures, near the passes that mark the frontier with Afghanistan, the herdsmen have sensed that snow is on the way. They know that their solitude is coming to an end. After four months of summering in these lush pastures, the goats have become strong and healthy and the grass is almost gone. The stud goats are herded into the enclosures with the she-goats for the “mixing” following the propitiatory rites to ensure fecundity: a flaming sprig of juniper waved three times over the animals’ horns, which have been splashed with fresh milk. The cheese and clarified butter has been taken down to the village regularly, every three weeks or so, at each visit by relatives, in exchange for news of the valley and rations of wheat, tea and sugar.

But over and beyond the timing of these practical activities, the perceptible change in the weather is a reminder to the

1. In Kalasha: *mastrak*; in Sanscrit: *mas*.

herdsmen that they must not linger in these heights if they are to honour their contract with the spirits of nature, the fairies. All summer long, the fairies have graciously conceded the area near the summits to men and to their beasts; now they have withdrawn still higher, with their own flocks of ibex, concealed by the peak overlooking the pure waters of the lake of Bahuk or by the heights above the pastures of Gangawat, Ustui and Chimikson, at the end of the Rumbur valley.

The fairies' favours are confined to the summer. As soon as the "autumn moon" has passed, no herdsman must remain in the stone shelters for fear of some violent reaction. The spirits do not hesitate to unleash the elements in order to get their territory back, driving away any polluting presence with storms and blizzards. During the cold months, the pasture lands, like fallow fields, recover the purity they have lost through their contamination by the passage, however fleeting, of nubile girls accompanying the kids and by the long presence of men who have had sexual relations with women. It requires the months of winter and spring to restore the balance. The herds are brought down from the pastureland of grass and tender shrubs, through the forests of cedars and pines, and led into the intermediate pens above the main valley, where they remain for another few weeks. There they reacquire their taste for holm-oak leaves. In the village, the harvest is not quite completed.

The fairies are expected to follow this movement, for it precedes the festivals and the requests addressed by the community to the fairies: requests for their favour in exchange for promises of offerings and rejoicings.

Return of the goat man/fecundity rites

In Birir, the southernmost Kalash valley, it is said that in former times the return of the herdsmen gave rise to curious and disturbing events. During the last night of the harvest

festival, the *Prun*,² a herdsman who had concealed his identity took part in the dances, disguised as a goat. His face was covered with flowers, and only his eyes were visible. He wore a pair of horns and, as he passed among the women, he did his best to frighten them by charging them and touching them with his horns – those symbolic attributes – in an effort to impregnate them. The dance circle resounded to deep-throated “ho, ho, ho”, mixed with the frightened cries of the girls.

The Moslems, it seems, have done everything they can to put a stop to this custom, considered to be far too pagan. And in order to discredit it still further, they are said to have exaggerated the debauchery connected with the *budaluc*, the procreating herdsman, who returns from the mountains after a long period of abstinence and for one night of the festivities has the right to make love with all the girls he desires. But setting aside the question of Islamic zeal and the mystery surrounding the story, it is a fact that the legend of the *budalac* which continues to be associated with the autumn festival is connected with a prayer for fecundity. At its origin was a demographical crisis, which occurred at the time when the Kalash first settled in Birir. At that time, the women could no longer succeed in bearing children. Punjapao, a man inspired by the fairies, revealed the means of putting an end to this serious threat. He ordered that the men sleep in the stables for a year, from one autumn to the next. A year later, he ordered that the little boys be dressed as herdsman and that the few remaining little girls put on a high coiffe, a sort of plaited tiara, decorated with wild flowers and fruit from the gardens, symbolising children yet to be born. Punjapao then laid down the activities of this new feast, on the last night of which, the period of abstinence having been accomplished and purity restored, the men were to rejoin their wives. One or two of

2. R.L. Turner, *A comparative dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages*, translates *Prun*, *pru*, by “wine harvest and festival”, to be compared with the Sanscrit *purna*: abundance, full.

the men, reputed for their virility, were said to have had the right, and even the duty, to take any of the women of the valley, no woman being allowed to refuse. All this, of course, was aimed at increasing the chances of procreation. The practice was maintained. A chosen *budalac* went off to sleep in the stables until the following autumn. At the height of the new festival, he reappeared, clothed in a coat and cap of goat's hair, and thus fired with the procreative power of the he-goat, he "mixed" with the women he took in the dance area.³

This unusual sexual confusion has long since disappeared, but was perpetuated for a time in the form of a symbolic dance seeking the same effects, until that too fell into disuse. All that now remains of the *budalac* is the mocking title given to would-be seducers, and a song glorifying the return of the herdsmen: "Oh, oh, oh, *budalac* drinks cups of milk from the white goats of the heights, oh, oh, oh, *budalac* my child returned from the he-goats, oh, oh, oh, *budalac* my child in the gardens of flowers. . ."

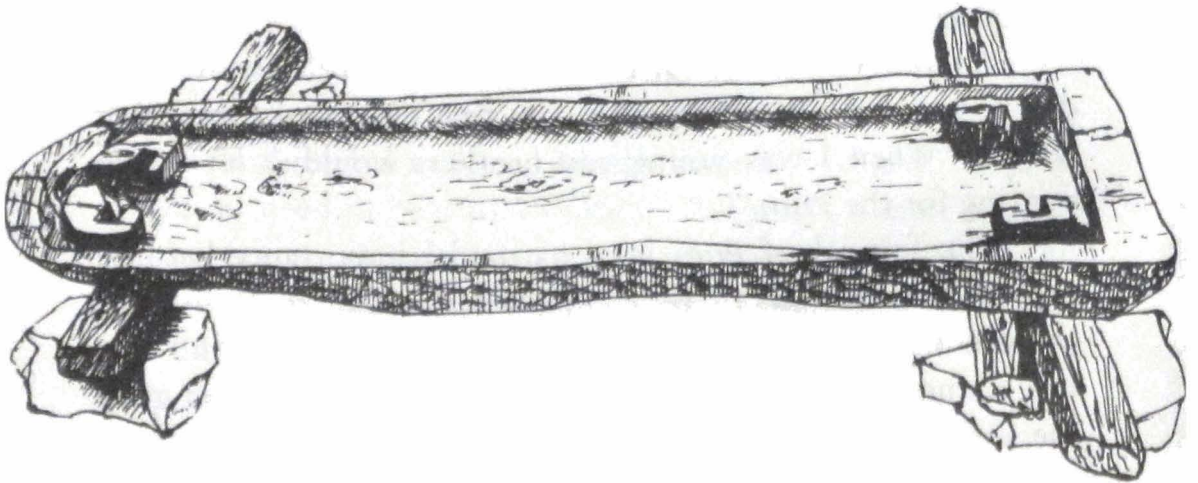
An old woman of Birir, bent with age, told us in confidence, her eyes sparkling in a way that cast doubt upon her words: "When I was young, my brothers wouldn't let me go dancing for the *Prun*."

The festival of *Prun* is of particular importance because the fields and herds of Birir, which are smaller than those of the other valleys, do not yield enough to ensure wealth. It is the abundance of fruit which provides the balance and gives the valley its reputation. The grape harvests are strictly and effectively controlled. The *roy*, guardians of the fields and harvests,⁴ patrol the countryside day and night checking the

3. K. Jettmar, *Bolor and Dardistan*, Islamabad, 1980, p. 60, refers to a similar custom in a Dard village of the district of Gilgit in pre-Islamic times. A priest of the cult of Murkhum, the caprine divinity equivalent to the Kalash goddess Koshumai, danced naked before the women of the group once a year, and enjoyed sexual rights to them on that occasion. He was called the "male of the herd of women".

4. The *roy* are adolescent boys chosen by the men of influence, the elders, at each spring festival, one per village and for one year, on the strength of their potential for responsibility. This is a first mark of social recognition, and it is up to the boys to justify it.

vines as the grapes mature and discouraging marauders. Penalties are severe: anyone caught in the act of eating grapes off the vines before the appointed time may now be fined 100 rupees per bunch stolen. But from the moment of the opening sacrifice of the festival – two kids offered to the god Praba, as well as bunches of grapes sprinkled with blood – the grapes are available for consumption and especially for wine-making. Wine-making is reserved for men because of the inherent purity of a beverage revealed by the gods for prayer and rejoicing. The wine pressing is performed exclusively by boys who have not yet reached the age of puberty. The wooden vats in which the grapes are pressed must never be touched or even approached by women. Fermentation takes a month and nobody must drink before the god Praba, who receives the first gift of a few drops of wine passed through the flames of a new ritual fire.



Wooden receptacle in which the grapes are trodden in the valley of Birir

But the Birir community does not wait that long to celebrate the beating of the walnut trees and the grape pressing. For two nights at Aspar, in the lower part of the valley,

there is dancing and singing in the public square, and the first nuts are crushed to make green walnut bread. The drums set the beat of rejoicing and the voices the tone. The following two nights the festivities move up the valley to Bishala, and a big wheaten galette, called the galette "of the guest", is baked. Finally, comes the afternoon of flowers. The little girls parade wearing coiffes decorated with fruit and flowers, which the boys then take off to present to the god Praba. The women, in the background, murmur a secret song. Fecundity haunts everyone's mind, even if the domestication of manners has drained the spirit of the bacchanalia, sobered and shortened the final night. . .

The harvests are about to begin and we know to what extent the Kalash link the grains of cereals with the number of children to be born. When the fields are bare, the herds return to the villages. Were they to return before the propitious time, the *roy* would deal with them severely.

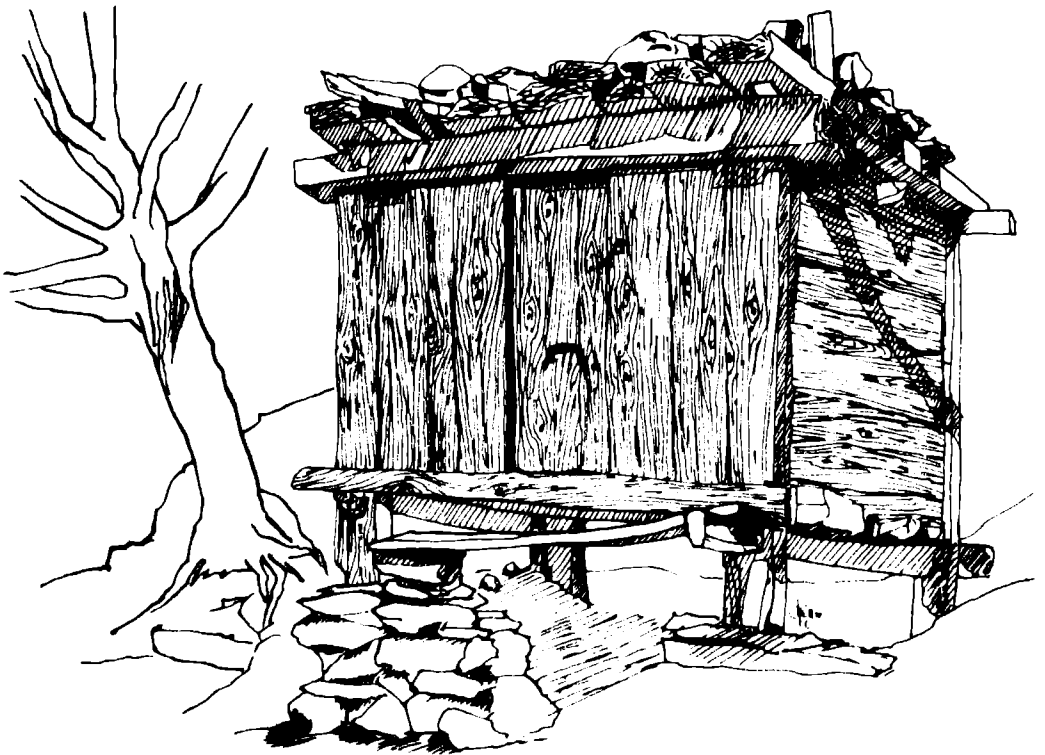
The time of the full storehouses

Harvest time in Rumbur does not follow such a precise timetable, nor is it punctuated by an end-of-summer festival. Here, as in Bumburet, wine does not have such a central economic and ritual role as in Birir, nor is it of interest to the whole community, since the vines grow mainly in the lower part of the valley, on the land of only a few households. As a result, the vines are not strictly controlled, and many of the grapes are filched before they are completely ripe. The owners therefore have to harvest the grapes too early, and the wine is sour and has poor keeping properties.

One of the elders explains: "Here in Kalashagrum it is impossible to keep fruit until it is ripe. The children go out at night in groups to steal the fruit and eat it. The parents don't say a word! And the *roy* too, they are either asleep or turn a blind eye, it's the same thing. Of course, if they patrolled properly, the children's parents would be fined: a goat, a dish of food, a blanket, flour. . . To say nothing of the vines on the

edge of the path. There the Moslems and the Gujurs⁵ help themselves without scruple, and couldn't care less for the shouts of the *roy*. . ."

The second maize harvest takes place in October. A field produces two harvests every other year. When the maize is reaped in late autumn, the land is left to rest until spring. When the first flowers appear, after the propitiatory rites, the manuring and the ploughing, the field is sown with wheat or maize, which is harvested in early autumn, after which it is ploughed again and sown with winter wheat. The winter wheat is reaped in June, and the field can then be planted with maize, which ripens fast, before the return of the herds, thanks



Pasti: a store for fruit: walnuts, mulberries, grapes, apricots . . . adjoining the owner's dwelling, or erected on top of his roof if there is a lack of space

5. In Rumbur, there are thirteen households of Gujurs, settled herdsmen-farmers. I. Edelberg writes in *Nuristan*: "Nomad shepherds, they speak an Indian dialect, they are Moslems and their physical appearance is very Indian." I. Dupree writes in *Afghanistan*: "They belong to the sub-groups of gypsies known as Jat in southern Afghanistan and *Gujurs* in the north."

to the water from the irrigation channels and the summer sunshine. Then comes the winter rest, followed by a new cycle.

After the grain has been threshed and winnowed, it is poured into *pan*, slate-walled containers, dug out beneath each house. The wine rests in big-bellied pots or in old bottles, where it ferments. Cheeses ripen in larger earthenware jars buried in the cellars, their taste getting stronger. Fruit is left to dry on the flat roofs, pears and loquats wrinkling, apricots and mulberries hardening, tomatoes shrinking. All these riches are carefully stored, either in the cellars or in the *pasti*, wooden sheds which adjoin the dwellings, like large cubes on feet. The economic year thus draws to a close with every household assured of an abundance of food, properly measured and stored.

The heads of household then proceed to assign different portions of the produce to different uses: items for daily consumption until the first of the spring harvests, surpluses for barter, reserves for purposes prescribed by custom. Some reserves are compulsory, for example, for funerals or hospitality, and are built up by everyone; others are voluntary, built up by a wealthy minority with a view to redistribution and added prestige. Cereals, walnuts, strong cheeses and clarified butter can also be kept for a long time, and this has long permitted the Kalash economy to be based on the principle of accumulated surpluses. However, this accumulation does not mean selfish hoarding, for the ultimate objective is the complete destruction of the surplus in exchange for prestige within society. Such sacrifice reaches eloquent proportions in regard to the herds, which are raised with the aim of seeing the best of the animals leave their stables for those of others or for the altars of the gods. For goats, in the scale of values, surpass all other goods. The way they adapt to the environment and their reproductive capacities have always impressed the mountain dwellers of Central Asia. The number of goats serves as a basis for the estimation of a man's fortune, and this has been

so since ancient times, as attested by the numerous goat cults from the plateaux of Iran to the fastnesses of Karakoram.⁶

The herds return to their stables and the herdsmen to their community, safe and sound. All still remember, not so long ago, the terrible raids on the pasture lands. The festive season and the time of social pleasures is at hand.

The month of marriages. A time of wealth-display

“I am going to marry my daughter to the son of the moon. If the moon disappears, it will come back next day. My son-in-law has purified his hands, and all around him kids and lambs are dancing. . .”

If a father decides to celebrate a marriage, *sariek*, the great consecration of a durable union between his daughter and his son-in-law, he will carry out his decision in November, the period recognised by the Kalash as the “month of unions”.

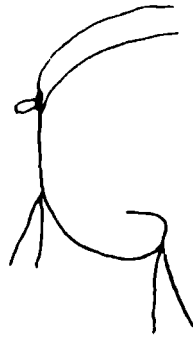
Indeed, the second lunar month of autumn is well suited to the assembling of the community, sufficient reserves having been established. Freed from economic problems, the men can discuss prospective unions, set prices and terms, or finalise earlier agreements by making good their promises. The *sariek* nevertheless remains a rarity and the prerogative of wealthy owners of herds. November could also be called “month of the new houses”, or “month of the autumn sacrifices”, or again “month of the dead who return to life”, or “month of the *biramor*, the slaughtered goats”. For it is during this period that feasts are given to celebrate a family’s installation in a new house, that the ceremonies marking the end of the harvests take place and, if a generous donor steps forward, that a feast is given to celebrate the erection of a funerary statue to the glory of an ancestor, or again a prestige festival, *biramor*, in honour of a living person.

All these celebrations, whether regular or occasional, can appropriately take place at this time of year not only because

6. K. Jettmar, *op. cit.*, p. 66, and L. Dupree, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

of the slowing down of activities and the return of the men, but especially because of the sense of assurance provided by full cellars and storehouses. Nevertheless, when a member of the community decides to undertake large-scale expenditure in November, he knows that at the next moon, the *Chaumos*, the festival of the solstice, of the regeneration of the forces of life, he will be able to ask the gods to grant his wish to see his wealth restored and his efforts compensated. Very appropriately, these lavish distributions of foodstuffs take place on the eve of the rites instituted by the gods and celebrated by men to compel the rebirth of nature and, with it, fecundity and fertility.

To the close of the year, marked by the completion of the solar cycle above the peaks, there corresponds a desire, on the part of some, to exhaust their wealth. . .



**THE VALUE OF MALE CHILDREN TO CONTINUE
THE NAME
DESCENT CAPACITY**

The ability to accumulate wealth and the desire to turn this wealth into a glorious heritage are valueless if there are no heirs. The Kalash have drawn upon the image of the bee swarm to define this capacity to produce male children for the purpose of continuing the name.

“Increasing the hive”

November 1982

The change of moon ushered in the bad weather. Early snowfalls, combined with violent downpours of icy rain caught the whole of Kashkar⁷ unawares. It was even said that at Chitral the population was completely distraught because of the lack of firewood. No one had thought of building up stocks capable of meeting such autumn cold. The price of holm-oak rose inexorably. The older people claimed that they had not seen such a state of affairs for 40 years or so.

In mid November, the Kalash sacrificed a goat at the sanctuary of the god Sajigor for the cessation of these abnormally heavy rains, which were seeping through the flat roofs, rotting the forage on the hillsides, and threatening to destroy

7. The name given to the area covering the province of Chitral, from the Shandur Pass to the Lowari Pass.

the last harvests and to spoil the forthcoming festivities. The exceptional sacrifices decided upon by the men of influence for the well-being of the community required of each owner of a herd in turn the gift of a goat. The *roy* were responsible for seeing that this duty was carried out, and for collecting the animals.

On the same day, there was particular excitement in Yasin's house, at Batet. For two days later the members of the *Dramese* lineage of his future son-in-law were to bring him the gifts agreed upon at the "engagement" ceremony at which he had agreed to part with his only daughter. The engagement had taken place several years earlier, but recently the beautiful Noshier Gul had started to go to the *bashali*, the menstruation house, and the sooner the alliance was concluded the better. She had already spent a short time in her future husband's house so as to get used to her new role and to the tasks that awaited her, and also to gain acceptance there through her efficiency and cheerfulness. After the ceremony of presentation of gifts, the *kaltabari*, she would be considered as his wife.⁸ She would continue to live in her father's house for an indefinite time, this depending upon how long it took her to make up her mind to go to live with her husband.

Two feverish days were spent preparing the bread for the reception. The sisters of the *Baloe* lineage — Yasin's lineage — gathered from early morning to help the mistress of the house to sieve and sort the 80 kilos of wheat. Each had before her a large tin dish of grain, from which she removed any small stones and which she shook so that any impurities would rise to the surface: she then threw the refuse out of the door, which had been left open to let in the light, in spite of the falling snow. The women looked anxiously at the doorway,

8. The change in a woman's status is marked by a new appellation when she resides in her husband's house. She is then known as "wife of her husband". The Kalash practise teknonymy, parents being designated by the name of their child from birth. To use their former name is a discourtesy. They are henceforth known as "father and mother of. . .".

speaking of being cut off by the snow, of the difficulties of getting about, of delays to the festivals, of so much general disruption. . . Their hands began to freeze, their feet too. They would stop to warm themselves by the fire, just long enough to take a quid of tobacco. It was a long job, not counting the grinding which was to take place at night in the nearest mill so as not to upset the regular milling schedule.

At her husband's house, at Maleidesh, Noshier Gul was helping to make gallettes of walnut bread, each carefully decorated, for the exclusive consumption of her lineage of origin. The girls of the household, clustered around the fire, were making designs of pine trees or goat horns, or using acorn cups to decorate the surface of the pastry with stars. As a finishing touch, they gave a lace-like edge to each of the gallettes. Such a huge quantity of bread was being prepared that the barely browned gallettes were removed from the fire and carried by the children to neighbouring houses, where the baking was to be completed on the customary convex hot-plates. Time was short. The *Dramese* were already gathering, each making a contribution to the preparations by bringing a tin kitchen utensil, either a dish or a jug. One has to help to marry a "brother" if in return one is to receive help in marrying a son. Economic cooperation is usually confined to close members of a lineage, but it may extend to the entire lineage if its honour is involved in the events of a household.

In a room adjoining the house, the father had assembled the *mal*, the items making up the "bride price", whose value had been established during the visit when the first contacts had been made and presents exchanged. Throughout a long night during which tea, bread and cheese were served, the two parties had fixed the amount of a payment representing a fair exchange for the future fecundity of the woman. The terms of a contract depend on a very careful consideration of the possessions of the parties, their respective social position and reputation, and of what the man's household can materially provide to balance the woman's promise to increase the size of

the ‘hive’. The price of the bride, also known as *kuak-kuak* – literally “child-child” – is basically the price of generation.

Colonel Robertson, writing in 1895, somewhat cursorily described an apparently similar practice among the Kafirs: marriages, he said, could be summed up as very simple matters, consisting in fact in the purchase of women by men.⁹ To this, he added the idea of bargaining. But for the Kafirs, as for the Kalash, marriage is anything but a simple matter, to be reduced to a mere commercial transaction.

First of all, it is a paternal uncle of the prospective husband, acting as the matrimonial agent, who must establish the preliminary contacts, present the proposed alliance to the girl’s father and report upon the warmth or coolness of the response before matters are taken any farther. For differences in prestige or wealth between the future allies may constitute insurmountable obstacles, even if the Kalash do not like to admit the existence of classes. But this tradition of exchange, characteristic of patrilineal populations, which attributes to herds the highest value and to a woman’s fecundity the highest of virtues, must not be allowed to veil the most delicate matter of all.

The forbidden sister

In this society, with its daily greetings of “brother” and “sister”, the matrimonial rules call for a reconsideration of these appellations, which in everyday speech apply to all the members of a group. Using classificatory kinship terminology it may be said that a man’s “sisters”, his *baba*, are only the women of his own lineage, that is the lineage of his father but also that of his mother. This name of *baba* distinguishes those women whom he is not authorised to marry. Kalash law on this subject follows very precisely the law described by Louis Renou in his treatise on the civilisation of ancient India, which defines the marriage codes of the Vedic era: “The

9. G.S. Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush*, London, 1896, p. 533.

essential rule is that of exogamy, which probably goes back to the very ancient division of society into exogamic clans. . . One does not marry a woman who is directly related as far as the seventh generation on the father's side and the fifth on the mother's."¹⁰ Three thousand years later, the same stringent rule still applies to marriages in the three valleys.

Oral tradition has reinterpreted the myth of Adam and Eve to explain the origin for the exclusion of the sister in respect of marriage, and to express the aversion of the Kalash for the Moslem preference for marriages between first cousins. Adam and Bibi Awa, driven from paradise in circumstances reinterpreted in the context of Kalash life, are nevertheless faced with the same problems of subsistence and procreation.

On a single day, Bibi Awa conceives seven boys and seven girls, who are born in pairs at intervals of a few moments. Not knowing how to assemble them all, Adam prays to Khodai-God to teach him what to do. Khodai says: "You must unite the first-born son to his youngest sister, the last-born. . ." And so on, splitting up the twins. But the last-born of the sons, strongly desiring his twin sister, refuses to obey the law. And each time they tell this story, the Kalash conclude by saying: "Because of his behaviour he was forced to leave, and he became the first Moslem!"¹¹

Thus, because of the unpardonable sin of incest, Kalash society, organised in patrilineal, exogamous lineages, bars access to the sister and to all women bearing the same name through descent from a common ancestor, whether paternal or maternal.

"Children and adults hit me with walnut shells. . .

(A teasing way of declaring amorous intents.)

"What do you want of me, I'm your sister!"

(I cannot make love with you.)

10. L. Renou, *La civilisation ancienne de l'Inde*, p. 78.

11. See the story of the creation of the world, J.-Y. Loude, *Kalash*, p. 45.

The spring songs relating to marriage often contain jokes about incest but without ever naming it; indeed, it appears to be too serious a sin for the word even to exist.

Consequently, a man seeking a spouse, or rather his parents, who want to find a companion for him, look beyond the limited community in which he has grown up for a girl of another valley or of a lineage sufficiently far removed from theirs. In Rumbur, where the founding ancestor originally divided the territory into two parts among his four sons, ideally, the girls of the upper part were promised to the boys of the lower part, and vice versa. From an early age, Kalash children of both sexes have this "genealogical fatality" which limits their relations instilled in them. They are aware that they must overcome any dangerous inclination so as to avoid incestuous consequences.

It is for this reason that parents, who are well versed in the complexity of lineal descents, forestall the risk of amorous deviation by arranging marriages, often during earliest childhood¹² with a view also to establishing the closest and most favourable economic ties and strengthening the household by the most judicious alliance. Thus the marriage strategy totally disregards those principally concerned and looks towards advantages that are more essential, socially speaking, than individual preferences.

One has to understand the need for exogamy in a restricted society constantly threatened by aggression from without, forced to increase its numbers and therefore its cohesion by the internal exchange of goods and women. According to Lévi-Strauss: "In small societies, the small size of the group and the lack of social mobility is compensated for

12. Early childhood: 5 to 10 years for girls and 9 to 14 for boys. S. Jones reports that among the Waigali, former Kalirs, arranged marriages date from the era of the wars of conversion. The resultant poverty was apparently the reason for the payment of the price of the future bride well before she reached puberty, to enable the father either to reconstitute his herd or to pay his debts. The present-day Nuristani deplore this practice, maintaining that it led to bad marriages, an increase in divorce, disputes and acts of revenge. (S. Jones, *Men of Influence in Nuristan*, p. 145.)

by extending the restrictions on marriage. Thus all women with whom one can trace a family relationship are prohibited".¹³

In the face of this law of survival, it was inevitable that the partners in an incestuous union should at first have been ostracised and that today they should be definitively excluded. In the past, a man who remained deaf to appeals to reason and persisted in his love for a "sister" could in fact live with her. But his decision effectively meant that he was banished from society, referred to as a *bahira* and excluded from most public acts of worship.¹⁴ And his sons inherited his shame, a shame given concrete form by the ignominious prohibition to touch the drums. At his funeral, his descendants were permitted only the beating of tambourines or of "sieves", *paretch*. Two famous lineages suffered this condemnation, the Shagenshai of Birir and the descendants of the Aspai at Bumburet. But in those days a son or a grandson could redeem the hereditary fault by sacrificing to the gods, thereby recovering his dignity and the right to the use of the drums. Today the community, fully aware of its precarious situation, has taken an even firmer stand, and an illicit love affair can have only one solution, conversion to Islam.

Thus, this stern law, established as a defensive measure, can lead, contrary to its intention, to discouragement and to abandonment of tradition. Some Kalash, albeit very few, have not scrupled to deny their membership of the community and to give free rein to their sentiments. Moreover, all the love songs play on the ambiguity of the word "sister", thus expressing a reaction to the restraints: "In springtime, I shall lead my goats to the pasture of Sumanshai, oh my dear sister. Oh flower of the garden, I have chosen you, with you I shall flee. And so, in flight, we shall cross the Lowari Pass and we shall grow flowers on the barren land and all will be jealous of our

13. C. Levi-Strauss, *Le regard éloigné*, p. 85.

14. Even if a man marries a girl of his lineage while observing the interval of seven generations, he must erect an altar to the goddess of the family, Jestak, in his own house and carry out the rites separately from the rest of the community.

love. In the cool shade, between you and me, the talk will never end. . .”

B. is about 40 years of age and has five children. She is endowed with unusual curiosity about the outside world, quick reasoning and a cheerfulness that contrasts with the life about which she complains: “Our custom can give rise to problems. Parents make promises, engaging their daughters or their sons when they are still young. They don’t know each other and cannot choose for themselves. Often the girl does not like her husband and refuses to leave her father’s house. As for me, my parents gave me to a neighbour. I was little, he was older. We didn’t know each other. I was shy and sad. I told my father that I didn’t like him. My father replied: ‘I have chosen you a husband from the same village, near our house. You are our eldest daughter, I have had no sons, you will surely have one and thus my grandchildren will be near me. If you leave this husband, you will live far from us and I shall be unhappy’. So I stayed with him. I have never loved him. He is always keeping watch over the herds and coming home tired from the stables in the evening. He has never travelled, never leaves the valley, hasn’t seen anything, cannot discuss anything, has a petty mind. He has nothing to say to me. I love my children, my two daughters with whom I talk a lot and my three sons. I can’t leave him, my children belong to him even though I brought them into the world and raised them. . . Some men know how to speak to their wives, those who go to Chitral, to Peshawar. Their minds are large, they can speak. Sometimes a husband and a wife are happy, they love each other. When a man has been away a long time and comes home, he kisses his wife’s hand, sits down next to her, speaks to her. A husband and wife do not kiss on the cheeks, never on the mouth, that is not the custom here. Among relatives, one kisses the hands, the plaits, but a couple do not kiss one another, it would be shameful, one would not dare!”

Kaltabari, the presents of an alliance

That autumn evening at Batet, on the occasion of the *kaltabari*, there was indeed no question of love. Noshier Gul

would sneer at the mention of her husband, who incidentally was not present; he was tending his goats on the upper part of the valley and had not considered it really necessary to have someone take his place for the occasion.

At the hour of twilight, the *Dramese* arrived seeking to control the young bull they were offering so that it could head the procession. Two men carried heavy sacks of decorated gallettes on their backs, and all the others, gathered around their leader, shared out the presents.

The base price, for a first marriage, is about 60 *mal*, "goods": a disparate collection of objects comprising tin dishes, *tchu tchu mal*, literally "the breast price", and black cast-iron pots, very heavy and expensive, the equivalent of five goats; iron tripods for the fire; baskets woven of juniper roots; one or several rifles, perhaps some goats, and one or several bulls. Nowadays some people replace payment in kind by rupees, but only in part, for the ceremony of the *kaltabari* takes its name from *kal*, taste, and comprises "all the utensils needed to set up a house in good taste", brought by the *kaltabar*, the "relatives by alliance".

The two villages concerned, Maleidesh on the slope and Batet on the river bank, almost touch one another. So the bride would be happy: one could not dream of a new home closer to her father's. A big sloping field separates the villages, as though suspended over the cliffs which the river eats away each summer when the flood waters rush by. The *Dramese* had come down through this field of maize stubble, drumming on the dishes with wooden sticks, so that the people of the valley knew that the procession of the *mal* was on its way. Sometimes, when the procession passes through the village, the people gather in their doorways to watch the event and to try to count and identify the objects making up the "price", and to determine the quality of the bull.

At the entrance to Batet, the men of the *Baloe* lineage were waiting. The two groups met, exchanging warm but calm greetings. The guests were relieved of their burdens, the gifts

being taken to a storage area, and invited to take their places in the guest house adjoining the principal dwelling of Yasin, the father. The women stayed together to chat with the bride's mother. The important men took over the stools, arranged around the fire. The young and the less important crowded together on the beds behind the four pillars of the room.

The *Baloe* served thin wheaten galettes and the best cheese. They waited outside, in the dark and growing cold, while the guests ate. Afterwards they would finish the leftovers, squatting outside. The meal seals the union. At the end, the father of the bridegroom – or the important man of the lineage, rises and addresses his counterpart: "Now my son is your son, your daughter is my daughter. . ." These are the words of the definitive alliance. The assembled gathering stands and the new parents congratulate one another joyously in the traditional manner, hands placed on each other's hearts and lips.

With the tea, conversations start to build up. At a meeting, the men of influence monopolise the floor with long monologues, rarely interrupted. Discussions never give rise to commotion. One can recognise a fine speaker by the way he imposes silence on the gathering. The others nod their heads or say: "It is true!" Then a new speaker develops his views, embarking on a narrative embellished by a thousand details. The most serious problems are broached at these meetings, as well as the most amusing anecdotes. The topics include relations with the Chitral officials, the need to keep watch over the felled wood, the insufficiency of medicines at the dispensary. Some tell of their stay in another valley, reporting astonishing news or more scandalous details.

The tea passes round.

Some of the children had lit bonfires, and were playing with the embers and tossing up sparks against the dark sky. Then each family, the women first, picked up resinous torches and made their way to their respective villages, forming a

procession of lights in the darkness of the night. The men, the elders, went on talking. The *Dramese* announced that they would be going to Birir in a few days' time for another *kaltabari*; a young man of Rumbur was marrying a woman of Birir.

A woman in the valley of grapes

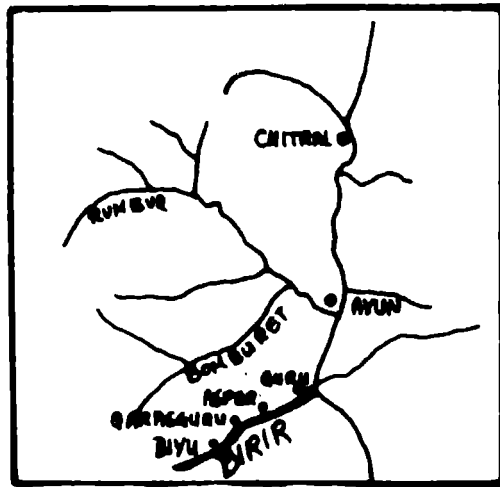
An alliance between valleys

The event was of some importance: 43 persons were preparing to leave for Birir. It was a remarkable trip, that would take two days. The group consisted mainly of *Dramese*, who were directly concerned with the union, but also of relatives by marriage. All were contributing to the *mal*: basins, cooking utensils, two rifles, a splendid copper jug. And they were bringing three heavy baskets of decorated galettes.

Gathered at the designated point of assembly, the travellers displayed unusual elegance: Chitralli pullovers and clean clothes still stiff from drying in the cold wind. The important men, in particular, had an eye to their dress. Baraman, the leader of the expedition, had enhanced his naturally imposing bearing with sophisticated accoutrements: a straight-trousered dark blue suit, long socks, a cap topped off with pheasant feathers, a cartridge belt slung across his chest and a pistol stuck in his belt. He had also underlined his eyes with *khol*. His son, who was married, timidly awaited his father's verdict as to whether he might join the company or must stay at home to work, every visit to a neighbouring valley being regarded as a pleasurable event. Before starting out, the bridegroom's parents distributed bread and cheese among the travellers, to fortify them for the trip.

Three women took part in the expedition. One was returning to her husband, another was going to see her father for the first time in eight years. The third, the wife of Satjuan, an important *Dramese*, had never visited Birir. Now, at over 40 years of age, she had decided to remedy that omission.

To reach Birir, “the valley of wine without bread”, the travellers had necessarily to pass through Ayun, in Moslem territory; for the people of Rumbur, therefore, Birir was “the distant country”. The Rukmula are quick to denigrate their Birala neighbours, sneering at them as at semi-foreigners whose variations on customary practices both annoy and astonish.¹⁵ They enjoy imitating the sharp accent of the Birila, their fruity pronunciation, and regard them as somewhat crude and unmannerly. But for a Rukmula who is poor, it is easier to acquire a wife from the “valley of grapes”; the terms of payment are less onerous, the men of the “country without bread” being satisfied with more modest gifts.



Map of Birir

For three hours the procession wound its way through the Rumbur gorge as far as Ayun. In this orchard town, modestly hidden behind its high earthen walls, the people watched the passage of these strange travellers with their feathered headdresses, their arms laden with tin dishes. The women of the group must be hidden from Moslem eyes, their black dresses and shell-covered headdresses concealed by

15. Rumbur, Bumburet and Birir are Chitrali denominations. The Kalash names for the valleys are: Rukmuh, Mumuret and Biriu, and their inhabitants are called Rukmula, Momola and Birila.

shawls. At Ayun, rented jeeps – *motors* – provided a service to Birir along a rocky but practicable track. Four vehicles were requisitioned, one for the “bride price” – the numerous utensils plus a goat – the other three for the forty-three travellers.

At Birir, the jeeps stopped outside the traditional cemetery, where the coffins of the dead of former times are strewn about the ground, broken, overturned, uncovered. The village of Guru forms a raised stairway on the other side of the river. There the women were leaning over the edge of the terraces, murmuring a song of greeting – black lines over the abyss. The heads of the Birila lineages came forward to greet their guests in the customary manner: the hand placed on the head before being outstretched and placed on the other’s heart, then returned to the head; protocol required no words. The hosts had more angular faces than their guests, as if hewn by the deadly local axes; their skin was greyish and they were ill-shaven; they were gravel-voiced too. Their reserves and apparent roughness are reminiscent of the pictures of the fierce Kafirs of the 19th century. The first contact between the two groups, without warmth, showed the differences between them; although linked by similar cultures, they had little contact with one another. Each observed the other.

The gift ceremony was reduced to a furtive exchange. The presents were stored away and the guests quickly directed towards the village. The three Rukmula women were absorbed by the female community and gave all the latest news: recent births, marriages and break-ups, a prestige feast to be held in Rumbur in a few days’ time. . . The men crowded onto one of the impressive covered terraces overlooking the slope. As for the young married couple, there was no sign of them. Then followed a long wait on the terrace and in the houses, in which the women were keeping up the fires – but without baking bread! Fortunately, for the Rukmula, who are always shocked by this shortage of bread, the hosts finally provided them with great bunches of black grapes, very firm and sweet, the grapes upon which their reputation is built.

Night was falling. Tradition requires that the speeches continue until dawn. The Rukmula crowded into the two houses of the family who were giving up their daughter, descendants of Lataruk. Then began the game of comparing the customs of the two communities in regard to rites and the conduct of ceremonies, as if fascinated by the differences in tradition separating them. The most influential of the *Lataruk*, haughty, imbued with a sense of his own importance, a feather waving proudly from the back of his headdress, recited the litany of local genealogies from memory. Kasi Khoshnawas, from Rumbur, the man whose learning was respected in all three valleys, nodded his head, agreed, but took the liberty of adding some details.¹⁶

Late in the evening, a meal of bread and fat was served, together with white wine.

The young men sang in the moonlight. The boys of Rumbur addressed flowery words to the local girls, who were standing on the roof edges, discreetly draped in blankets. At about midnight, Kasi Khoshnawas launched into a torrent of praise in honour of the masters of the house. Two ten-rupee notes, stuck like horns in his cap, recompensed his efforts. Little by little, in the overcrowded room, bodies slumped, shoulder to shoulder, leaning against each other. The elders were of a different metal. One of them, in a dull voice, told an interminable tale about the sea. . . . Four or five dignitaries seated on low stools listened to him, outfacing sleep, hands gripping their walking sticks.

At four o'clock in the morning, the young woman who had married a Rukmula and had returned to her native village was woken up for the *gajum marat*, the sacrifice of reunion: one or several goats at the discretion of the father. Tradition

16. "In Waigal Valley it is not uncommon for a man to be able to name 20 generations of his ancestors, though none of my informants there could seriously rival those elders in the Bashgal Valley who provided me with genealogies that were as much as 45 generations in depth. These genealogies are not mere lists of agnates, they ramify widely and I have spent entire afternoons recording the various branches of clan and lineage from a single informant." (S. Jones, *Men of influence in Nuristan*, p. 134.)



In the valley of Birir, Badchara Khan, an influential man from Rumbur, shouts the praises of the bride's lineage

requires this rite to allow the husband to make love with his wife under his father-in-law's roof, an act otherwise forbidden there. The young woman squatted to the right of the fire, not far from the doorway. The goat must die in the sacred area, between the far wall of the house and the hearth. The celebrant sprinkled several drops of blood on the fire, then on the altar of the family goddess. A ram was slaughtered on the threshold; then two goats were killed in the stables to feed the guests.

The songs began again with the arrival of morning. The boys danced in the narrow space of a storehouse roof, singing to the girls of Birir.

There was intense activity on the part of the hosts in preparation for the great meal of departure. Badchara Khan, an influential *Baloe*, hoisted himself onto the roof of a storehouse to declaim a speech glorifying the descendants of Lataruk. The members of the lineage, standing at every level of the stairway-village, basked in the grandiloquent descriptions of past values and present generosity. For a full half-hour, Badchara Khan sang their praises, his voice hoarse with

shouting and breath coming in gasps. The beneficiaries of these praises covered his cap with rupees. The women placed white bandoliers with coloured fringes round his neck. An elder presented him with a robe of honour, gold and blue, splendidly shining. Women's voices were raised in a chant of thanks. But he still continued, now garbed in his robe, outshouting the women, extolling the greatness of his hosts. More and more rupees poured in, until his headdress was bristling with notes. His speech evoked the story of the ancestor, Lataruk, who had given his name to the lineage:

“Dondi and Babura were brothers. They served the king of Wirishik Gum, in Gilgit. They remained in his service for eight years. At the end of that time, Dondi asked his brother to go and build a sanctuary to Jestak, the family goddess, at Birir. Hearing of this decision, the king provided Babura with 60 soldiers, and at the time of his departure, he also gave him a handful of gold.”

Babura built the *Jestak Han* and placed the gold inside a pillar. His task completed, he returned to Wirishik Gum. His brother then told him of his intention to leave, and the king offered two horses to the two brothers. He said to Dondi: ‘You seem sad, go to Gerza (upper Chitral), I have commanded that a celebration be given in your honour’.

And indeed, the people of Gerza sacrificed 60 rams in their honour and afterwards provided them with 60 carriers to take their riches back to Birir. There, they were able to feed the whole population for three days. After those three days, Dondi wanted to go into the *Jestak Han*, but he was seized with such fright that he could not enter. He asked his brother-in-law, the courageous Majabek, to enter in his place. But Majabek was ill. So he resolved to go in himself with a shield and a sword. He looked about him, then came out and celebrated the ceremony of completion of a *Jestak Han*. His teeth had become the colour of gold. After the feast, Dondi returned to Wirishik Gum.

The queen said to her husband: 'Dondi's teeth are very beautiful!' And the king thought: 'But Dondi is sleeping with my wife!' The king sent Dondi home to Birir with gifts, with robes of honour. But on the way, at Shasha (upper Chitral), he had two men placed there in ambush, with orders to kill him. They cut off Dondi's head and threw it in the river. The current carried the head as far as Nagar, down-stream from Drosh, and there it shone in the darkness of the night. Dondi's sister was married to a man from Nagar. She realised that this light in the water came from her brother's head. She arranged for a funeral feast at Nagar which lasted three days, and another, also lasting three days, at Birir. The community then placed the head in the cemetery.

The king of Wirishik Gum, learning of this, was so enraged that he wanted to kill Dondi's wife and seize her goods. Dondi's brothers took his widow, who was pregnant, to Kamdesh, in Kafiristan. When the baby was born, she assembled the wise men of Kamdesh, who killed a ram and gave the child the name of Lataruk, 'boy of problems'. Lataruk lived for 12 years in that village. When the old king of Wirishik Gum died, his successor gave Lataruk lands in token of apology. And his lineage prospered."

The orator was silent.

The meat was ready. The guests squeezed together, squatting on the long verandah. There was one tray for every five persons with bread, meat and a bowl of bouillon made with clarified butter. The red wine flowed and goblets were refilled as soon as they were empty. Unused to such excess, the Rukmula gulped down their wine getting more and more excited. At the end of the meal, Baraman, as head of his delegation, rose to his feet and fired two pistol shots into the air. Then, holding his walking stick upside down, with the point up, he embarked on a laudation of his host's lineage, now allied to his own. Very soon, he seemed to fall into a trance-like state, his eyes even more sunken in his eagle-like face, hollowed by his efforts. His voice, strained to breaking

point from the vibrant pathos of his words, became barely audible. Then, getting back his wind, he became vehement again, spluttering, impressive. The rupees showered down again, while the descendants of Lataruk wound a red scarf round the neck of each guest. Then came the farewell embraces.

The Rukmala delegation proceeded at a rapid pace along the way home. A jeep arrived and took 15 persons on board, lurching as a result of the over-occupancy. Satjuan's wife, unused to this mode of transport was nervous, trembling at each bend in the road: "Don't be afraid, *nana*, aunt, Khodai is watching. . ."

The general good temper reflected the pleasure of returning home. One humorist, under the influence of *bong*, *has-hish*, gave an imitation of the Birila and their rasping speech. . .

Obsessive fear of the husband's house

"What are you thinking of, my dear brother? Although we don't realise it, our youth is fleeing, only fine words remain in us. . ."

Even if the social contracts tend to leave little place for emotion, love obsesses the young Kalash and haunts their spring songs:

"Go, oh bird, and greet my loved one for me. She cannot make up her mind which man to love. She excites me so much that I cannot stay in her presence, but from a distance I watch her. . ."

"There's nothing to it! To seal a friendship, a wink will do, and afterwards you make love in a field, by night."

Bar is a herdsman and content with his lot. He is 15 years old and has a blue-eyed girl friend in Grum, the village opposite his own. The only thing that worries him is that he has been told that "it" saps one's strength!

As the parents' choice rarely coincides with their children's desires, adolescents readily indulge in premarital, but not

incestuous, sexual relations. Since no contraceptives are available, a girl who finds herself pregnant will quickly join her husband's household so that he can take on the responsibility for the paternity of the child. Hence the importance of finalising arrangements for the payment of the bride price as soon as a youngster reaches puberty. Although, illegitimate children are accepted by the community, they are not really well considered.

After the presentation of gifts, several years may elapse before the young spouse embarks on her new life; often she is apprehensive, or unable to overcome an aversion towards her husband. Sometimes only a great deal of discussion, and the pressure exerted by men of influence, are needed to overcome her resistance and compel her to follow, in tears, a father-in-law who has come to fetch her and who walks in front, apparently impassive. The father-in-law also carries away a sack of bread as a gift to the women of his household. The girl's mother accompanies her daughter to the confines of the village, offering final words of encouragement.

B. told us: "The elders and my husband chose a husband for my eldest daughter: she was about 14 at the time. He was about 20 years old – living in Balanguru. My daughter didn't want anything to do with him, didn't like him. Her husband's family brought the presents – the *mal* – last autumn, but she still refuses to leave with him. It's a problem, and there is nothing I can do. Whenever I question her, she replies: It's your choice, not mine!" Meanwhile, the husband was rendering numerous services to his father-in-law, hauling wood, chopping it, collecting forage. He was always busy, always somewhere about the house, currying favour with his wife's family, trying to persuade her: "Tell my wife to come to my home. I am happy to have her as my wife. . ."

The girls marshal dozens of good reasons to put off the inevitable departure: the husband is too small, or ugly, or his village is dismal and sunless, or there are difficulties in fetching water, or the mother-in-law is overbearing. . . For they know

that on leaving the security of their own home they will find themselves at the service of a "foreign" and sometimes exacting household, in a state of servitude that is likely to continue either until the first child is born or until a younger daughter-in-law arrives and takes over the jobs of fetching water, bringing in wood, taking grain to the mill or baking bread. But it is above all her role as a mother that will save her from the hardest chores, since everyone agrees, including mothers-in-law, that babies need constant attention.

If the union appears to be solid, then, some six months after the wife is definitively settled in her husband's home, a little ceremony will take place at the *Jestak Han*, the ceremonial house of the husband's lineage, to "mix the blood of the couple". Smoking juniper is waved over the wife's head to purify her, and the blood of a kid splashed on the husband's face rids him of all stain. A few drops of blood are then poured into their ears; this is the *shisha-istongas*, the only occasion for a woman to experience purification by the blood of a kid, on the same footing as a man.

The love flight

"Little sister, we shall go together to Waigal and to Nuristan. There, I shall pay twice the amount of your bride price, I shall pay gold and silver and I shall return with you, and you will be as a flower on my cap. . ."

The girls reply:

"Oh my golden brother from the hills, you make me wistful with your song. . ."

Today,¹⁷ throughout Kalashagrum, the separation of G. from her husband, K., was the main topic of conversation. G. was of the *Baloe* lineage, her father living in the higher part of Kalashagrum, where the village meets the forest and where all the houses of his relatives are grouped together.

17. 11 January 1981. This account, even though it does not cover the autumn — divorces are discussed throughout the cold season — throws light on marriage alliances by an examination of the complex system by which they are dissolved.

Four months previously, G. had returned to live with her parents, still nursing her child. Her husband apparently repudiated her and, according to rumour, had already replaced her. But G. now wanted to go to live in Balanguru with her lover, who was prepared to pay twice the bride price in order to "buy back" his future wife. In fact, it was the young man's father who had agreed to pay, for the son, in principle, owned nothing and was completely submissive to the wishes of his father, the sole judge in matters of alliances and exchanges. The previous year, one of the sons of Baraman, the *Kasi* of Grum, who was passionately in love with a married woman, had expressed the wish to live with her at whatever cost. But the father would brook no discussion: "Either you give her up, or you leave the house!" This would have meant that the son would find himself without a roof, without land, without livestock, disinherited, with no option but to leave the valley to look for work. After two weeks of such an uncomfortable conjugal life, Baraman's son had returned to his home, and his lady love to her husband's house.

But very often, a young woman who is really determined to remarry takes tactical refuge under the paternal roof and stubbornly refuses to leave it. It is seldom that, after a few months, the father of the new suitor does not give in. But this uncertain situation may sometimes continue for a considerable time. Finally, bitter discussions on "repurchase" begin, which in all senses of the term are tantamount to a settling of accounts.

The calculation of the bride price takes place in the house of the girl's father, in the presence of the first son-in-law. Surrounded by the important men of the valley, who are invited as witnesses or to give their opinion, both parties try to recollect the value of the customary gifts that the young woman's father has received. To each object formerly presented by the son-in-law's household there corresponds a unit of measurement reckoned in pebbles. Thus, if the initial payment comprised 4 bulls, 20 iron dishes, 15 jugs, 3 kg of

tobacco, 6 rifles, 2 kg of honey, 20 goats and 10 kg of wheat, the equivalent in pebbles would be $4+20+15+3+6+2+20+10$, in other words, 80. Once this inventory has been made with the agreement of all present, the number of stones is doubled to establish the exact price of the remarriage.

A few days later, the operations continue at another venue, the village of the new husband. As a precaution, the two parties are lodged as guests in separate houses: indeed, before the definitive conclusion of this "love bargaining", the negotiations may well degenerate into violent abuse, or even a fist fight "until the blood flows!". By tradition, the betrayed husband refuses to enter the empty rooms of the lover, but the preliminary gift of a robe of honour helps him to change his mind.

The two contracting parties are linked by two messengers. The second husband has been warned, prior to the visit of his future mother-in-law, of the nature and amount of the payment. He has thus been able to prepare the objects and collect the livestock, usually with the help of his lineage. He then entrusts them, singly or several at a time, according to the importance of the present, to a messenger, who shows them to the first husband. If the rifle is new, the jug undented, the dish of a good size and the goat healthy, the husband assents and hands the messenger the pebble corresponding to the item in question. Each discarded pebble closes the bargaining on an item, and this proceeding continues until the stony accounts are finally balanced. But the first husband may declare himself dissatisfied with a particular item and reject it. In that case, it is immediately returned to the suitor, who is obliged to replace it. There again, the discussions may take an unpleasant turn: the husband may feel that the other party is trying to make a fool of him and hurl the object away in fury, or the would-be husband may take exception to the unreasonable demands of his rival. However, once all the pebbles have been exchanged, the two husbands are expected to shake hands as a sign that the dispute has been settled. All aggres-

siveness must be forgotten, and the two men will thus be able to resume normal relations. The next day, each – separately – sacrifices a goat to the god of contracts, Mahandeo, to inform him of the agreement.

As for the numerous bowls, basins and jugs provided in part by the parents of the suitor, they are distributed among the families closely allied with or supporters of the former husband, and placed in underground storage areas pending the next divorce or marriage. They serve as exchange values among the various lineages, and are kept in reserve rather than used, owing to the frequency of marriages and divorces in the Kalash community.

In the case of G., it was different. Arguments began even before the inventory of the *malbat*, the pebbles. The young woman's father and her lover had appealed to a number of influential men to ensure the discussion, first, of the circumstances of the break-up and of the manner in which K., to use a Kalash expression, had thrown out his wife. To avoid any bias, these advisers/mediators had necessarily to belong to lineages other than those of the parties concerned.

Three days of uproarious meetings were required before the assembly of important men could render its verdict. Katarsing confessed that he had come out of these meetings "with a tired mouth". During those evenings, our conversations were enlivened by the latest developments and the comments to which they gave rise. Finally, the assembly ruled against the first husband: K. had not waited until the "repurchase" of his wife before flaunting himself with another woman. Indeed, it would appear that he had virtually installed the woman in his home during the four months following G.'s return to her parents. Despite his strong protests, it was found that his conduct had led to the break-up of the union and that, under the rules of custom, G. should be considered freed from all conjugal ties.

It is a fact that, according to tradition, a man who remarries after driving out his wife, but without waiting for

her "repurchase", loses all his rights over her and can no longer require the new husband to pay the bride price, let alone twice the price. On the other hand, he keeps the children, who in any event remain the property of the father in accordance with the principle of patrilineal filiation.¹⁸ Kalash history recounts that, at the time when the Kalash still occupied the region of Ayun, Mamat Shikan of Bras fell in love with a married woman. When he wanted to take her to his home, his wife's parents immediately took their daughter back, an act which effectively restored his freedom. From that time on, the Kalash have made divorce more difficult, realising that everyone, sooner or later, would want to escape from a union entered into by the sole will of their parents. It was to combat this propensity for facility that the community erected an economic barrier by doubling the bride price.

For G.'s new husband, N. of the *Wakoke* lineage, the conclusion of the affair was highly successful. Not only did he obtain the woman he loved, but he was also able to marry her without incurring any expenditure other than that for the food served to the elders who had come to arbitrate the case. But few husbands make the mistake of being too impatient. Prudently, the husband will wait for his wife to take the initiative in the break-up by leaving to live with her lover. This is what the Kalash call *alashing parik*, departure for love, which then allows the husband to claim his material rights. However, divorces usually take place before the birth of the first child, for the woman knows only too well that the privilege of marrying another for love will cost her the loss of her children. This separation of mother and children, combined with the cost of remarriage, limits the number of break-ups. After reaching the age of 25 and having had a second child, a woman will hesitate to leave her husband.

18. It should be noted that, among the Kalash, the preponderant role in the conception of a child is attributed to the father, "the one who transmits the soul", a theory that reinforces the principle that a man's descendants belong to his lineage — "The soul is believed to live with Khodai-God in heaven. When Khodai decides that there shall be a new life, a soul comes down and attaches itself to the spinal column of the future father. Thence, it is transmitted to the belly of the woman at the moment of intercourse." (Kasi Khoshnawas.)

In all the talk about marital break-ups, or about a girl's reluctance to leave her home for her husband's, one finds overtones of chauvinism and of rivalry between valleys. If marriage entails a change of territory, the girls of Rumbur cannot get used to Bumburet and those of Bumburet look for any and every reason to live closer to their parents. One complains that her husband never talks, another that her



"Coquettish" make-up style known as the "ram's horns", made from goat horn which has been burned, scraped and mixed with water

husband has not given her a child. In any case, the spouse's valley is always denigrated: Rumbur is narrow and steep, Bumburet is full of Moslems, and as for Birir, the bread is no good and there isn't enough meat. . .

Adultery – *dust karik*, literally, to find oneself a friend – is simply part of life. “It gives meaning to love!” said B.K., an important man of Bumburet, dropping his customary reserve. “One should be wary of women with too much make-up, with those black or purple masks surrounding their eyes; such exhibitionist coquetry clearly shows an amorous condition. . .”

In this market-place of sentiment, women are by no means necessarily the victims. Take, for example, the case of the young herdsman of Brun, in Bumburet, who lost his wife after only one day and a single night. This meant total disaster, for if a union is too brief – under 20 days – the husband also loses all his rights in respect of the bride price. That is what happened to the young man from Brun, to whom S. of Rumbur, the runaway wife’s new husband, paid no compensation. In disgust, the young man joined the police, nursing a grudge against women in general. . .

Neither was K.S. of Maleidesh able to keep his wives. The first two had left him for “reasons of incompatibility”, as his neighbours delicately explained. Since then, he had taken a third wife, little K.T., the most flighty woman of the whole valley of Rumbur, whose reputation “wearied the tongue” through being so frequent a topic of conversation, enlivened with succulent details and risqué jokes. K.T., for her part, did not scruple to take advantage of her husband, who was terrified at the idea of failing in his third attempt at matrimony. Should he make the mistake of assailing her lovers or alluding too pointedly to her behaviour, she would threaten to convert to Islam to escape him. So the poor man had simply to close his eyes to the situation.¹⁹

19. In October 1982, we found K. T. dressed as a Moslem. She had fled from her husband one night to the village of the converted Bashgali at the end of the valley. After a series of fantastic adventures, she had remarried, this time to a Moujahidine refugee, who reimbursed the bride price. The couple are therefore able to live in the Kalash community, at Maleidesh, close to the former husband.

Risks of a vendetta

According to Robertson, "Kafirs rarely divorce their wives unless the women run away from them". There again Robertson was describing practices similar to those still prevailing among the Kalash. And he added: "Divorce is easy. A man sells his wife or sends her away".²⁰ But he pointed out further that repudiation had also proved to be a clumsy solution, entailing loss of right to reimbursement and above all the risk of giving serious offence if the disgraced wife belonged to an important family. In the Kalash community, the only recourse for a suspicious husband in such a case, even in the absence of proof, is violence. All it needs is that on his return from the pastures, from hunting or from Chitral, he should hear rumours. . .

It is thus problems of romance or of misalliance that most often arouse aggressivity among members of a community normally inclined, rather, towards tolerance and tranquillity. There is then a risk of a vendetta; the husband of the runaway woman may refuse to be thus humiliated and reject all attempts at conciliation, including payment of twice the bride price, and he may threaten reprisals.

In August 1982, A., a very beautiful girl of Bumburet, fled across the mountains. Since childhood, she had set her heart on S. For her, there was no question of going to the house of the husband chosen by her parents. Here is her account:

"I left at nightfall in the company of M., a frontier guard, who is the only person to know the forest tracks near the peaks. We had to avoid the stables of the people of Bumburet. We crossed two passes and then went down through the narrow valley of Bahuk; by daybreak we had reached the summer houses of the Rukmula. My heart was full and happy. I didn't feel tired or the pain in my legs. I wanted to find S., my new husband."

20. G.S. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 537.

But the former husband declared war. No one of the lineage of S. now dared to go to Bumburet; they were certain of being beaten up, or even worse. Death threats in response to adultery created a sense of uneasiness hitherto unknown among these people. Vengeance or not, the murder of a co-religionist was regarded as the final abomination, deserving of the immediate expulsion of the perpetrator. That such extremist utterances should have been proffered evoked the influence of Islam and the crime of honour. The principal men of Rumbur, with the exception of any member of his lineage formed a delegation to Bumburet, where they used all their arts of persuasion and every conceivable argument to gain acceptance of the rules of the game: payment of twice the price of the woman. But to no avail: the husband, wounded in his pride, stubbornly refused all compensation and demanded the return of A. Satjuan, the leader of the *Dramese*, admitted his apprehensions on the eve of a new attempt at conciliation: "It's a very hard problem. The two successive wives of this man left him for lovers from Rumbur. Before, I was friendly with everyone in Bumburet, but now relations are growing more and more bitter. This business is causing me a lot of worry. . ."

A marriage for glory

The exceptional restitution of the bride price

Such conflicts should not obscure the fact that some unions are of a durable nature from the very outset, as are others that have followed satisfactory divorces. The birth of the first child is an assurance of fecundity, a promise of descendants for the two lineages, and strengthens their relationship. The father of the bride can thus take advantage of this for his own glorification.

For up to this level of matrimonial exchange, few acts really concern personal glory. Of course, a man commits his honour when he presents gifts to the bride's father, and shows

the prestige of his position when he buys back, at a very high price, a woman who has run away from her husband. Again, to honour a contract, the goods must be of the right quality and delivered on time, and this entails more danger of losing face than gaining prestige. But Kalash society, in the absence of a class structure, nevertheless assiduously cultivates the sense of competition, of emulation through merit. Throughout his life, a wealthy man pursues the objective of gaining influence and importance, in other words of distinguishing himself from the rest and thereby, through his own qualities, increasing the renown of his lineage. This earthly ambition reflects a deeper preoccupation, that of survival through his name, the only concrete assurance that he will live on. Man dies, but society continues to carry in its collective memory the heroic and therefore still living deeds of its defunct members – provided that they were illustrious members. Now that a Kalash no longer has access to the sources of consideration formerly provided by the murder of enemies, raids, forays or hunting,²¹ he makes good his appetite for recognition by his generosity in festive occasions.

The *sariiek*, literally “assembling”, a veritable marriage ceremony, constitutes a preliminary stage on the hard road leading to renown. Several centuries ago, in the time of the last great Kalash “king”, Raja Wai, a wealthy herdsman of Bumburet, named Sambalak, instituted this ceremony for the celebration of a lasting union. One autumn, he assembled the community and, in the midst of the festivities, conspicuously returned the bride price to his daughter’s father-in-law, “for the joy of the father-in-law”. By instituting this practice, Sambalak acquired an imperishable reputation. And every father who today celebrates the union of his daughter and his son-in-law deserves to be compared with the man who was known as “the king of the bees”, the wealthy man whose house had hummed with children like a hive with bees.

21. Since the establishment of Pakistan, the Government has imposed severe regulations for the protection of endangered species. Thus the Kalash can no longer openly hunt wild sheep, ibex or even the harmful snow leopard.

The object of the *sariek* is not the material restitution of the gifts received during the marriage arrangements, the *kaltabari*. Rather convention demands that the expenses entailed by the two consecutive days of "assembly", including meals, dancing and singing, should be equivalent to the *mal*, the price known by all and convertible in goat-units. Thus in 1977, for example, a *sariek* offered by three members of the *Dramese* reduced their wealth by 72 kg of clarified butter, 1,236 kg of cheese, 2 bulls, 12 goats (2 of them slaughtered and ten given to the bride to augment her husband's herd), 300 rupees pinned to the headdresses of the praise-givers, 7 ceremonial robes for the important guests. . .²²

Such lavishness demands drastic economies over a period of two or three years and severely reduces the household consumption of the families concerned. But these sacrifices are already noted in the praises and chants improvised at the *sariek* and credited to the reputation of the donor and his lineage. There is thus an immediate reward. And the daughter, attired in the new clothes bestowed by her family, sings: "Oh my father, you have dressed me like a doll, and in return I shall give you a treasure. . ."

For a Kalash man, renown is the most precious treasure of all. He spends his time accumulating material goods which are only fleeting riches, since they will dissolve at the first occasion in the form of gifts, sacrifices and feasts. But after each of these feats of generosity, he will achieve an even higher place in the hierarchy of esteem. Society recognises his right to self-esteem by according him precedence over others, and various prerogatives. For the "claimant to pride" who combines prodigality with oratorical skills, timely wisdom and an imposing appearance, will accede to the status of *gadeirak*, "elder", "man of influence", "man of importance". The *gadeirak* neither represent nor hold political or judicial power; they nevertheless form the summit of the social and customary edifice by their learning and competence, as well as by the

22. Figures given by Gillian Darling, *Merit feasting among the Kalash-Kafirs* (thesis), Vancouver, 1979.

inherited and present prestige of which they are the depositaries. Each lineage, depending upon the extent of its ramifications and possessions, and in a spirit of "fraternal" solidarity, has assisted one or several of its most representative members to achieve a position of distinction.

These men take an almost daily part in the affairs of the valley. The "elders" in council arbitrate disputes, deal with problems of relations with the outside world, see that urgent work for the collectivity is undertaken, decide on the essential dates of the annual cycle, keep an eye on the passage of time, and rule on divorces and on any disturbing infringement of custom. They are the guardians of tradition, the link with the times of the ancestors. They do not impose their decisions, nor do they have the means of enforcing their judgements. Rather, they assist opposing parties to achieve agreement. However, their authority is strengthened by peer-group pressure consequent upon a refusal to follow their advice.

This watchful concern with deviant behaviour, with excessive individual claims or inclinations which might endanger the community, is balanced by recognition of the right to the pursuit of personal distinction. In this pursuit, there are no restrictions: the seeker after glory may choose between emulating past models of festivities, the basic expenses of which are codified but may easily be surpassed, and devising new ways of exhausting wealth. Thus Sudji, for example, devised an unusual destiny for his daughter, and arranged her marriage accordingly. His name remains associated with the privileges won by means of a phenomenal *sariék*:

"Zizi was the daughter of Sudji, a descendant of Mahin of Birir. Four years after her birth, when she was not yet dressed in the robe that confers the status of woman and the impurity inherent in that condition, her father took her to live in his stables. She stayed there until she was fifteen, never returning to the house, because she had acquired a state of purity comparable to that of men.

When she was fifteen, Sudji arranged for her marriage to Sanduka. The price was paid. However, before his daughter left the stables, her father performed *istongas* for her, the rite of purification by the blood of a kid, reserved for men. After this precaution against external impurity, Sudji invited the community to one of his fields for five days of dancing and festivities. He chose two hundred and forty white goats and a white horse, gold earrings and necklaces, and accompanied his daughter to the house of her husband. On the way, he lit seven fires and made Zizi jump over the flames seven times. Finally, before leaving her, he gave her a handful of gold as well as dishes and utensils for her exclusive use, to be kept apart from those commonly used in her new household.

To this day, all Zizi's descendants eat out of their own dishes, even outside their valley; they take them with them when they travel. Otherwise, the food given them must be presented in a new dish. Murat Bek, a shaman, explained the extent to which Zizi's father had made her pure as a man. But her return to normal life demanded precautions, as well as substantial outlays for an "assembly", in exchange for this privilege, which ever since has shed its light on the entire lineage.²³

Who are you to speak, you who have "only one wife"²⁴

Polygamy was the rule among the Kafirs. A man's influence increased with the number of his wives, four or five according to his means, but rarely more. The husband of only one wife was avowedly poor, and was rated insignificant. His words, no matter how wise, evoked no interest at meetings. The Kalash, similarly, "make of the multiplicity of wives a premium for social success and longevity".²⁵ But the Kalash limit themselves to two wives.

23. J.-Y. Loude, *op. cit.*, see p. 71, *sariék mastruk*.

24. See G.S. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 534.

25. C. Levi-Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

Custom authorises and even recommends the taking of a second companion in cases of sterility, or where the first wife has had only female children. It also strongly urges sole descendants of a lineage to take a second wife, so that the line will not become extinct.

The interval between the two marriage contracts is not fixed, but it must be at least several years. The two wives live under the same roof, each taking over a side of the house, bring up their own children and, using separate storehouses, manage the food reserves, which are shared in accordance with the importance of each. The "elder mother" retains the privileged position due to her age and maturity, but the husband's main concern is with the number of sons each wife gives him. Although bigamy is an expense at first, the additional hands it provides should prove the value of the "investment".

The man with two wives, whatever his objectives may be, already belongs to the category of those who are out of the ordinary. But he must go farther.

**“YOU SHALL BE THE SON OF A SARIEK
AND OF A BIRAMOR”**

**CAPACITY FOR GENEROSITY AND
ACQUISITION OF A POSITION**

A man who has given a *sariek* for his daughter has thereby signalled his entry into the race for distinction and his intention of giving another such signal by holding a *biramor*, the great feast of the “slaughtered goats”, once he has reconstituted sufficient wealth to do so. And the praise-givers during the marriage festivities take care to remind him of his responsibilities: “You shall be the son of the *sariek* and the *biramor!*”.²⁶

Background and evolution of a feast of merit

A rumour was spreading through the valley of Rumbur, where the people were peacefully gathering the autumn harvests. After the winnowing of the wheat and the dehusking of the maize, the household of Mishter, with the help of Nadir Khan of the same lineal branch, the *Baloe*, had decided to give a *biramor*. The news was widely commented on, supplemented at first by exaggerated figures on the donor’s generosity. Then came talk of 60 goats and 1 bull. If those figures were correct, the *biramor* would be fairly small. “A little *biramor!*” people were saying, reduced to the basics, without splendour. . . . But it must be admitted that the donor’s household was in a rather special position.

26. That is the rule, but of course there are plenty of exceptions. The word “*biramor*” stems from ‘*birar*’, he-goat, and ‘*marik*’, to kill, to slaughter.

Saidaman, the patriarch, had already given a *biramor* some 10 years earlier. He had been the first to renew this onerous custom, which had been neglected during the hard times experienced by the preceding generation, times of poverty, high mortality and insecurity. During that period, the community had confined itself to expenses connected with funeral rites, sometimes getting deeply into debt to meet them. But since the establishment of Pakistan, in 1947, which had led to the abolition of the tribute of forced labour and taxes due to the king of Chitral, as well as to State intervention to prevent clashes between Kalash and Moslems, the economic situation of the Kalash had substantially improved. Saidaman, then, had already depleted his wealth for the satisfaction of the gods and the pleasure of men. Of the gods, he had asked for the reconstitution of his herds so that his sons might be able to continue along the glorious path initiated by this celebration. His prayer had been granted, but in the meantime he had been struck down by serious illness and had hovered between life and death. The Islamic doctors surrounding him during his illness, had told him that hell really existed and that all pagans would go there to be burned and tortured however good they had been in their lifetime. The sick man had been greatly affected by this, and had panicked; no one had said such things before. The mullahs had added that conversion would cure him and save him. Terrified by the prospect of hell, which gave death a hitherto unsuspected visage of horror, he had promised to change his religion.

It so happened that he had recovered. The mullahs had seen to it that he carried out his promise; there must be no question of back-sliding, since he would at once lose the life that he had just regained. So Saidaman, this giver of feasts, this descendant of a glorious line, this wearer of the earrings that evoked the great deeds of the past which must now be no longer spoken of,²⁷ had embraced Islam. His conversion had

27. Earrings, among the Kafirs, were worn by men who had announced their intention to kill an enemy and who had carried out their promise. Among the Kalash, they also signify a great giver of feasts.



Nabras Khan, the youngest brother of the donor of the glory feast — Biramor — carrying the spear which reminds all of the prestige of his lineage

traumatised the community. And ever since, he, the father, with his wife, had been living withdrawn among his five sons, who were old enough to refuse to follow his example. Today, Saidaman, the fallen idol, had to allay suspicion, show himself, go occasionally to the mosque in the valley, play the role of a gracious host to his Moslem guests who showed him such inordinate friendship, since his house was not far from the track and everyone was aware of his wealth. But among the wild rumours circulating came the announcement that Saidaman was prepared to sell a part of his possessions in order to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and obtain the title of Hadji. His sons had categorically opposed this mark of zeal on the part of the new adept.

The herd, so patiently rebuilt, and the stocks of cheese and wheat, were most certainly destined for the feast. But before unveiling his intentions and letting rumours spread,

Mishter, the donor, had to obtain the approval of Nadir Khan, his brother in the branch of the lineage to which they both belonged, whose moral and material support would be indispensable throughout the ceremonies. In exchange, of course, Nadir Khan would share in the resulting renown.

Mishter's name involved the names of his brothers, who were equally concerned in the work of preparation and in its glorious consequences. But by virtue of his seniority, this *biramor* was definitely Mishter's. Nevertheless, Mishter was hardly typical of a "great man". Nor did he claim to represent his family, gladly leaving that role to Kamader, the third-born of the brothers. He far preferred the life of a herdsman and farmer, disliked speaking in public and kept in the background at meetings with smiling discretion. The exploit of the five brothers would live in the collective memory, an exploit all the more meritorious in that their branch of the lineage had been reduced to only two households and that they had therefore to make efforts beyond the ordinary.

The date of the feast remained uncertain: questions on the subject were eluded by enigmatic smiles, and Kamader, the brother in charge of trading, would say, with the satisfied air of one who knows the extent of his resources: "A *biramor*? Who is talking about a feast? We cannot give one; I have just bought a very expensive horse (1,500 rupees) and a cassette radio (2,000 rupees). That's a lot of money, a lot of money. . ."

But one evening an incident took place that might have had dramatic consequences, and that obliged the household to speed up matters. That evening, in November 1982, the fireside conversations in Kalashagrum were brutally interrupted by the news, relayed from house to house by the shrill cries of a terrified woman, that Mishter's house was on fire. The men jumped up at once; no one here could have suspected a fire, since Mishter's house was behind a cliff, and they were therefore the last to reach the spot. All the inhabitants of the other villages had at once formed a chain from the river to the

house to pass containers of water. The fire was thus put out and the house saved, but the forage which had been drying on the roof was completely destroyed.

The fire-fighters and onlookers were already leaving the scene of the fire, wishing each other goodnight and comforting themselves with assurances of the benevolence of Khodai: "Khodai *merebani*, thanks be to God, no one is hurt, thanks be to God who has protected the house. . ." The fire, they were saying, had been caused by sparks that had gone up the chimney and had set alight the maize leaves spread on the roof after the previous day's rain. Fortunately, the forage had still been damp! But one fact dominated the talk: this was the second time that the house had caught fire. The first time, Mishter's little daughter had set fire to it while playing. The grandmother had cried so much, loudly bemoaning the loss of all these riches, that it had been necessary to slap her to bring her to her senses, to make her see that Khodai had spared human lives. And tonight again, Khodai deserved thanks for every life he had protected. The feast of the *biramor* had thus become inevitable and urgent. If a last sign was needed, this was it. The herd must be sacrificed to gratify the gods, who awaited this gesture, and divided up among the people.

The exact date now depended upon the sorting of the grain and the long sessions of grinding at the watermill near the river. But when, at last the women of the household embarked on the exhausting process of baking bread, it could be concluded that the festivities were at hand. The house began to hum like a hive. The donors rushed this way and that, bringing in water, hauling in wood. The excited children scuffled. And already, an afternoon in advance, the members of the lineage from the upper valley were arriving, one after the other, to give praise. Each male upon his arrival would proudly plant himself in the doorway of the veranda and begin to vociferate: "*a shabash tai ra Sumbara nawalas atia. . .*" (I salute you, oh privileged descendant of Sumbara. . .").

This declamation would be shouted, and yet the words signified joy and good fortune. On entering the house, he would be immediately directed towards a stool facing the doorway, so that he could continue, seated, to utter phrases dear to the heart of his host. But his host was hardly listening, he was so busy; he would nevertheless slip a rupee or two in the praise-giver's cap and bring him a tray of cheese before rushing off again. The whole family was caught up in this frenzied activity for three days on end, without a break.

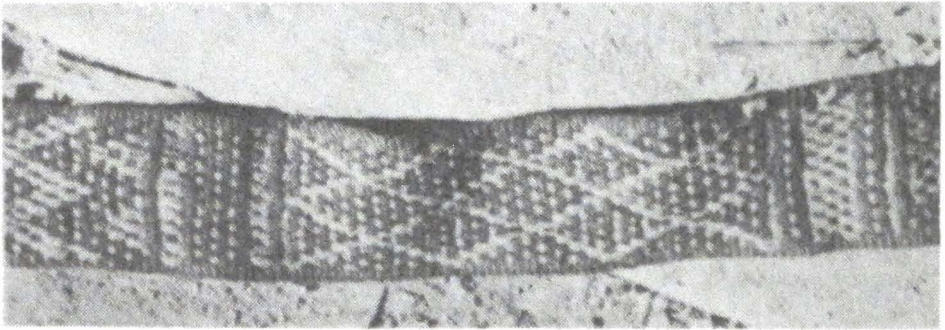
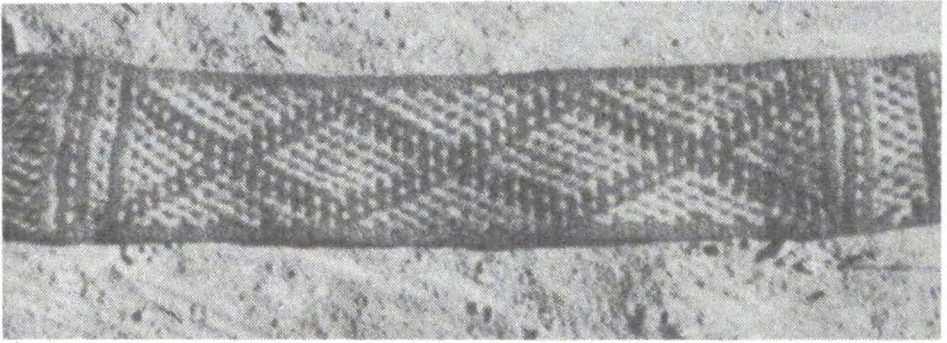
28 November. Morning

The married sisters of the lineage, the *jamili*, arrived to help with the baking of the thousands of galettes. A woman cannot achieve glory, but she contributes to its achievement by a man, her husband or her father, depending on circumstances. All her life she belongs to two lineages; even if her daily responsibilities require her to labour for the prosperity of her husband, each festive occasion in her lineage is a reminder that she has her place and her duties in the home of her father or brothers.

The wicker baskets were overflowing with the bread baked throughout the night on three fires continuously burning. Smoke and lack of sleep had reddened the eyes of Saidaman's daughters-in-law. Now the *jamili* took over, carrying out the tasks expected of them. During the past year, they had been weaving numerous *shuman*, the multicoloured cotton bandoliers intended to recompense the praise-givers. The praises were beginning anew, this time from the roof of the house, where the men of learning, seated, were vociferating far and wide. The festivities had begun. Saidaman's sons were wearing necklaces of flowers. A red flag – the colour of valiant warriors – was flying from the roof of a storehouse. Pinned to it was a list, in Urdu²⁸ of all the names in the genealogy of the host lineage.

28. The practice of writing the names seems to be of very recent origin, and indicates a reaction to the Kalash complex, previously non-existent, about their illiteracy.

Praise-giving is a poetic art in its own right, with its rules, its metaphors, its emphases. It is an expression of exhibi-



Decorative motifs on protective bandoliers Crossed he-goat and ibex horns

tionism based on oratorical conventions and attitudes, a jousting match in which each participant seeks to draw attention to his own talents at the expense of the fiery discourse of the previous speaker. But beyond the exhibition of oratorical skills, these speeches permit the constant reaffirmation of social values, establish landmarks in the history of the ancestors, although with scant attention to chronology, and open up for the younger generation an inestimable field of knowledge of traditional sources. But these speeches remain the prerogative of the *gadeirak*, the manipulators of words and emotions, the keepers of learning.

Malkan, a great man of Wakoke, was the first to improvise:



The shuman, bandoliers of honour, are woven with the body used as a loom to hold the warp under tension

“I salute you, oh happy descendants of Sumbara. For over 20 years the *sariék* and the *biramor* had vanished, and you have revived them. I greet you. Settled in your house, you have fed the whole valley yourselves, accomplished these memorable festivities without asking anything of anyone. You are attentive to the poorest in the community. If you hold a *biramor* this year, you will probably hold a *sariék* next year, and then perhaps another *biramor* the following year. This is your time of glory, oh generous people, associated with the fairies, protected by the goddess Jatch.²⁹ If God wishes to grant someone good fortune, he does what he has permitted for you. I greet you, oh people sprung from treasure grains. To give and prepare a feast is no easy undertaking. . .”

The speaker paused to catch his breath, and perhaps to seek renewed inspiration. The pause being a little too long, another orator, Lal, a *Dramese*, took advantage of it to jump into the breach:

“All honour to you, blessed grandsons of Sumbara, wealth is thus, generosity is thus, oh drinkers of the milk of a thousand goats. With the horns of goats, your sons walk in the mountains and gather riches, oh great descendants of Sumbara, your works turn in the skies, you are the summit of the world.

“You have built houses at Batet and Kuna, so many two-storied houses.³⁰ In autumn, your two-storied house was the prey to flames, but the fire was put out, for you are lucky. You have made a feast of the highest quality and your feast turns in the sky. . .”

“You observed the religion of the Kalash in the right way in former times, now you have converted, but your sons give this feast. . .”

The speech is sometimes addressed by an allusion, to an individual member of the lineage, but otherwise to the lineage

29. Jatch, the goddess who protects the earth and stray animals.

30. The veranda and the two stories of a house are among the external signs of unusual wealth.

as a whole or to the living donors alone. Now Malkan took the floor again, recalling the glory of the ancestors:

“All honour to you, descendants of Sumbara. Your grandfather Amir served the king of Chitral, who sent him to Bashgal with the mission to govern there. After crossing the Gangawat Pass, he reached Bragamatal and governed in the name of the king of Chitral, from Bragamatal to Tratchigal. He collected the product of the taxes, and brought back the goats via Gangawat and the valley of Rumbur. In the great Chitral, he handed over the taxes to the king. Honour to you, grandsons of Amir, you the descendants of Amir, the collector of taxes in the great Bashgal. This type of function belongs only to a lucky man.”

“Honour to you, great descendant of Sumbara. Your father, Malik, went to Kafiristan to demonstrate his power. At that time, he was the summit of the influence of your lineage. In Kafiristan, he jumped on the stretched goatskin bag and burst it, a game at which no one else had succeeded. Similarly, he outshone everyone in stone-throwing. Then, he fed all the Kafirs and, on returning here, he also fed all the valley. . . Oh grandson of Malik, your feast is too great, you also are feeding everyone. Honour to you for your heavy grains of wheat and for your goats protected by Jatch. . .”

The reference was to the goats of the ancestor Sumbara, which had been concealed and saved by the goddess Jatch during an enemy attack.³¹

Dingo, a *Dramese* of Balanguru, now took over:

“Honour to you, happy descendants of Sumbara. In the entire universe, no one is as happy as you. You are becoming the sons of a *sariiek* and of a *biramor*. Your ancestor Jugulek led his goats to the stone of Latchohin, and there he built a shelter for the cheeses. From the pasture lands of Chimikson he brought back so much butter and cheese that he fed the whole community. Greetings to you, descendants of that ancestor who came to Sajigor in the spring month to sacrifice a

³¹. See the account of the establishment of the sanctuary of Jatch at Rumbur, J.-Y. Loude, *Kalash*, p. 55.

bull and a goat and shared them among the people of the valley. . .”

Indeed, in ancient times, the most famous men celebrated a *biramor* in spring, for the fact of exhausting their riches at that time of the year made the feast an even more difficult undertaking and thereby gave it added brilliance.

“Your plans are fulfilled, oh descendants of Jugulek. In the spring, your ancestor Kasum Khan announced to the people of Bumburet that he would erect a statue to the memory of his father. When they saw it, Nastok and Juhan Shah were astonished. . .”

Feasts celebrating the erection of funerary statues took place in autumn, the season of abundance. For the reason just mentioned, the prestige of such feasts is increased tenfold if they are celebrated in spring.

“If people think about the future, the whole world will say: ‘The devils will listen to your plans and do their best to destroy them. . .’ But as for you, the devils do not see your plans and you succeed. Honour to you, you heap luck upon luck, you are very wealthy. Your father Malik, having put on the fringed trousers,³² fed the whole community. Your grandfather Malik became a son of the *biramor*. After that your father Saidaman also gave a *biramor*, gratifying everyone. Now he is a convert to Islam, but you, his sons, have taken over the family riches and you are giving this feast. Your family is fortunate.”

While Mishter and his brothers were rushing to and fro’ between the stables and the houses, dealing with a thousand details, such as finding change and distributing bandoliers or walnut necklaces, Saidaman, the father, was receiving the praises with unfeigned emotion, as though overcome by the compliments and distressed by the drama of his conversion.

32. *Dashak but*, wide trousers of raw wool formed by woven strips going above the belt up to the shoulders. The upper part is richly embroidered and folds over the belt in a fringe. These trousers are the symbol of exceptional herdsman-donors, and are worn for the first time by a 7-year old boy upon his entry into the adult world, so as to draw upon him the qualities of a good stock-raiser and a distributor of wealth, the qualities looked for in a man.

He was seated facing the orators, his hands covering his eyes, thanking them, wiping his face, stammering justifications that were at once swept aside by the waves of flattering words. With his hand, he pointed to the sky, and there were tears in his eyes. Society showed him respect, recalling his acts in the past, but he had besmirched his honour. Fortunately, his sons had picked up the flaming torch of tradition.

Dingo continued:

“You are all seated together, you stand up all together, you are all close to one another and in agreement. . .”

And then Lal spoke again:

“Now you observe the Moslem religion as well as you observed the religion of the Kalash, each time in the right direction. For the Moslems, the important thing to do is to make the pilgrimage to Mecca; for the Kalash it is to give a *biramor*, and that is what you are doing.”

The repeated references to Mecca were not indicative of any weakness or even a concession on the part of the community, quite the contrary. Saidaman's obsession with the pilgrimage was due not to a sudden excess of faith but to the fact that the inordinate expense of the voyage would restore his prestige in the community. And the community was quite willing to accept it provided that the *biramor* given by Saidaman's eldest son retained priority.³³ If Saidaman acquired the title of *hadji* that would open the way to regaining the respect of his own people. The men of influence considered it meritorious that a convert should practice his new religion in the same spirit as the old one, in the continuity of ancestral values.

Suddenly, came the sound of far-off drums, from beyond the river. A flute-player and a drummer appeared, and were at once surrounded by the young men of Balanguru, who began to dance. The dance was of a free style appropriate to a

33. S. Jones confirms this attitude among Waigali converts: “The respect that villagers have for the hajji is much involved with family reputation and the resources required to make the journey. His father and grandfather used their wealth to give feasts to achieve rank, he has used his wealth to make the pilgrimage to achieve prestige.” (*Men of influence in Nuristan*, p. 249.)



Musicians accompanying the dances during the Biramor at Rumbur

march: arms thrown up, knees lifted up high, head thrown back. The women followed, chanting discreetly, each carrying a new basket to fill with the meal. The procession entered the field in front of the two-storied house, the one that had been left untilled after the harvest in anticipation of the feast. There were rifle shots and pistol shots. Circles were formed. Women surrounded a frenzied dancer. Walnuts rained down. Outshouting the music, the great men uttered congratulations and compliments. The hosts welcomed each guest and presented him with a woven bandolier and a scarf: red for the descendants of generous and warlike ancestors, white for the heirs of a more modest prestige.

Baraman, the great man of the *Baloe*, vociferated wishes for long life. The applause thundered, the drums likewise. The boys threw themselves into the dancing with expressions of amorous ecstasy; this was the kind of dancing they had picked up from the Chitrali, and it had become all the rage among the young. The body seemed possessed by the surges

of the heart; the wild drumming stirred up emotions kindled by the flame of repressed desire. These was clapping, whistling, excitement. Suddenly a *gadeirak* brought everything to a halt by introducing a discussion on whether it was appropriate to use the drums to play Chitralli music. The problem was quickly resolved: this was only a "little *biramor*", entailing only normal expenditure, with no extras, no rebuilding of a sanctuary. Obligations towards the sacred were thus limited and did not prevent the intrusion of profane sounds. So let the rejoicing continue!

The meal was served. Two bearers staggered under the weight of an enormous crate of cheese. They placed a generous portion in each of the baskets, all of which were lined with wheaten galettes. This generosity extended to the children of Moslem neighbours and to Tuna, the gujur, a gypsy beggar who lived miserably on a small plot of land granted him by a Kalash. Tuna did not disdain this charity, the object of which was personal glory. Thanks be to Khodai for this rich gift! The women carried home the excess food for the meal of the absent herdsmen.

Afternoon

The festivities were in full swing: praises declaimed from the roof, dancing in the field. Guests were expected from the other valleys, sisters of the lineage, *jamily* from Bumburet and Birir. On their arrival in the evening, the women would sing on the verandah, especially for the old *nana*, Krakal's aunt, who was said to be able to offer praises just like a man. A real character! Speaking in high and mighty tones and very volubly, she held forth at the bashful who were hesitant to join the dancing and doing a disservice to custom by their lack of spirit. She recalled those unusual women whom the Kafirs so greatly revered for their learning at the end of a virtuous life that after their death they erected funerary statues in their honour, thus placing them on a footing of equality with men.

This evening, her face made up in the pattern known as “the ram”, her coiffe decorated with feathers, she imposed her presence on all. Her speech, dealing with women, started with the evocation of an illustrious female ancestor:

“All honour to you, glorious grandsons of Sumbara! Grandmother Kabuli came here. Your ancestor Malik gave many bulls for her. After spending so much to buy her back, he had only a few goats and sheep left. But the following spring each goat gave birth to three kids. Grandmother Kabuli worked hard in the fields here and gathered in great wealth. She had five daughters, for whom she wove splendid shawls in which to dance at the spring feast. Honour to you! The people of Rumbur get on well together, do things together, give feasts, agree among themselves, offer a *biramor* to [the god] Sajigor and together make life hard for the Bashgali.”

To speak in praise of the harmony of the community is regarded as very flattering. Throughout Kafiristan in former times, as among the Kalash today, cohesion was one of the basic concerns of society. Discord, or a long-lasting conflict, brings discredit on the community and is synonymous with weakness. “The others” judge. Whether the dissensions are between one household and others of the same lineage, or between lineages, or between valleys, everyone tries to put an end to them as quickly as possible so that the people may always appear like “arrows, united and closely packed in the quiver”, an image dear to orators.

By dawn, the enormous bonfire that had been lit the night before had been reduced to a carpet of hot cinders. All night long, the dancers, both men and women, had turned carelessly around the flames, while the women of the house had emptied the skins filled with flour so that five hundred persons and more should have bread on the second day.

The day of sacrifice

At daybreak, the donor drove the goat destined for the gods towards the sanctuary of Mahandeo, situated on the

Grum peak. Several brothers of the lineage accompanied him, as well as the *dehar*, the shaman, and a praise-giver, who shouted assiduously during the climb.

The two sacrificators purified their hands and arms in the hardened snow; night after night, the cold had become more intense. A bunch of juniper was laid on the ground, and a branch of evergreen oak was placed on the altar below the carved horse-heads. The conclusion of the laudation coincided with the prayers:

“Oh great Mahandeo, I come to you with my community to pray to you. Accept my prayer with gladness and increase my household and my wealth. Increase my fortune and my prosperity.”

Mishter’s hands were raised to the sky, palms up. The sacrificator set fire to the juniper, purified the area by circling it three times and cut the goat’s throat. Blood gushed onto the fire, the oak leaves and the altar. Loud voices were raised to request good health. In the midst of the verbal commotion, the shaman began to call out “hey! hey!”. Then he entered into a trance brought on by the odour of the juniper and the sight of blood. The god watched the scene; the column of smoke and the pleasant odour had established communication with the divine. The god now spoke through the mouth of the shaman, who was staggering among the company, his terrifying eyes seeing into another world: “Hey! Malik, Saidaman, your great accomplishment will be still further increased!”

The assembly approved: “Increase! Increase!”

“Hey! Saidaman, who will hold the reins of your house [now that you have been converted to Islam]?”

The assembly answered: “There are many sons who will look after the household in Saidaman’s place . . .”

The dialogue continued:

“Hey Saidaman, your accomplishment is becoming greater, your share is increasing . . .”

“Increase! Increase!”



Two purified men sacrifice a he-goat on the roof of the stable belonging to the donor of the feast

“Hey Malik, hey Saidaman, to whom will you entrust your house, your stables, now that you are a Moslem?”

“There are sons, they can take over! Give health!”

“Hey Malik, hey Saidaman, your pure house has become impure.”

“Each year, they will make a sacrifice to purify it anew. Increase the population, give health . . .”

Then the *dehar* revealed promised births in this household blessed by Khodai and destined to expand:

“Hey Mishter, hey Nabras Khan, one of you will have twins and will want to give a *sariek*. . . All your problems will be pushed aside.”

“Hey Saidaman, I shall dismiss all worries and troubles and remove the evil eye from your household. . .”

“Hey Mishter, hey Nabras Khan, your prayer has been accepted.”

With these words he collapsed in the arms of the others, who had followed him constantly as he moved about, for fear that he might fall and hurt himself. The assembly concluded: "Accept, accept." The men blew a resounding kiss to the heavens, pinching their lips together. That day, the shaman was to enter into as many trances as there were animals slaughtered: a goat at the sanctuary of Jestak, goddess of the family, a goat on the roof of each of the donor's stables, plus a bull, a goat inside each room of the house and another in the guest room. On the highest roof, a purified boy was to dip five white stones in the blood of the final sacrifice and cast them in the five directions of the boundaries of Kalash territory, thereby consecrating it.

Each person noted to himself the amount of the offerings, fifteen kids, a bull, and three more goats, slaughtered by a Moslem for his co-religionists who would not eat *aram mos*, the meat of an animal killed by a Kalash.

The meat was cut up on the stable roof. The men bustled about. The water in the great cauldrons was already steaming, and the pieces of meat were put in to boil.



The dehar, the shaman, enters into a trance, and relays the approval of the gods after the sacrifices

The dancing continued with renewed energy. Even the *dehar* shared in the enthusiasm; then, suddenly, he stopped the music by again entering into a trance. He seized the big drum and drew the crowd up on the rooves. Staring at them, his eyes fell on Katarsing, the last giver of a *biramor*, and insisted on his taking the drum. At once, one of Saidaman's sons clothed Katarsing in a robe of honour; thus distinguished he must beat the drum for the first dance on the roof of the present dispenser of riches: tradition required it. The *dehar* called Mishter: he must dance first, clothed in a golden robe. But Mishter was nowhere to be found. The shaman ran from roof to roof, staggering this way and that. Arms reached out to seize him at the edge. He cried out the names of all the sons. He warned that the pleasure of souls, of the spirits and of the gods depended upon the proper performance of the dances and songs. The trance went on. Still the master of the house did not appear: it was discovered later that he had been looking for still more bandoliers, rupees, walnut necklaces and robes. The *dehar*, raging, fulminated against the women whose singing was not spirited enough, and then collapsed. An old man and the old aunt from Bumburet finally came forward to lead the dancing. Surrounded by a double row of boys and girls, the dancers with an exhibitionist bent ventured into the circle. Hands held out rupees.³⁴

At first, the dancers executed their movements with care, taking little mincing steps, hips delicately swaying, eyes closed or, on the contrary, staring, arms outstretched like the wings of birds. Then the flute whipped up the action, to the accompaniment of the ever faster beat of the drums and the exclamations, clapping and shouting of the crowd. A man

34. The association of money with dancing is of Moslem origin. It is the custom of the Chitrali to whip up the enthusiasm of male dancers with banknotes. When the Kalash girls dance, the offering of rupees gives additional suggestiveness to the looks of the men who hold them out. The mothers do not appreciate this game: "L. Gul is shameless, she doesn't dance well, she stamps her feet, but she dares to dance in front of the Moslems and to receive money. My daughters don't dance before them. The men are too fond of watching the Kalash girls dance and give them a lot of rupees. I don't like that!" (Mayun Bibi.)



Dances of Chitrali inspiration evoking an amorous state of being

grabbed some rupees with his finger tips and began to twirl around. The money increased the tension. The Moslem guests gave a lot, and even more when the *jamily* joined the dance; they loved this spectacle of women unconfined, dancing freely. And the rupees rained down. From the overhanging roof tops, the elders watched, leaning on their canes. They were dressed in the floral-patterned robes that had been presented by the hosts to each representative of a lineage.

Baraman, the leader of the *Baloe*, wound up the morning festivities with a speech in *khowar*, the language of the Chitrali, out of regard for the presence of the Moslem guests. He gave his words a diplomatic ring that accorded well with the spirit of the gathering:

“Khodai wanted the conversion of Saidaman. We hope that you will go to Mecca. As for this *biramor*, it belongs to your children. The Moslems go to the mosque, and we go to our sanctuaries. There is no difference in the observance of our religions. Saidaman has divided his riches among his sons, retaining just a part so that he can practise his own religion. His sons are responsible for the present event. Let those who wish to dance according to their fancy do so. The *Baloe* will prepare the rifles and the ropes for the games, for the pleasure of all.”

The crowd shouted out wishes for a long life.

Saifullah Jan, the only literate member of the community, read out the names from the list attached to the red flag, going back as far as the common ancestor. Such was the prestige of the written word; how times were changing!

The meat was ready, and the moment had come to share out the butter. In the entire valley, there was only one cast iron pot large enough for the ritual cooking of that superior delicacy, *pretshiona*. Mahamurat, the illustrious ancestor of the *Dramese*, had obtained the pot in exchange for a horse from the *tajik* merchants who had come to the Chitral market at the turn of the century to sell their metal cooking utensils. The *Dramese* had lent it to the *Baloe* for the occasion. The great men sat down on stools to supervise the distribution of the food. One has to belong to a lineage of *biramor*-givers to enjoy the privilege of being seated on these low stools in the open air. That privilege is attended by the right to a double portion of meat and butter. The extreme complexity of the distribution, based on individual rank and the numerical composition of each household, demands the specialised skills of these men of learning, who also bear the title of “sharers”, *main mutch*. Baraman announced the number of ladles of food to be dispensed to each family. Satjuan and Katarsing gave their approval; no one must feel slighted in his dignity.

The traditional black walnut ladle was plunged through the foamy surface of the melted butter, bringing out the precious golden liquid. The men began to eat on the stable roofs, far from the women, who were relegated to the field. On no account must the meat be mixed, the meat of the he-goats, very pure as coming from a male, being for the men, and that of nanny goats, sacrificed in the houses and therefore contaminated by impurity, being for the women. The "sharers" saw to this with scrupulous vigilance. As the *dehar*, in a trance, was repeating, society would live and the herds would be protected as long as the Kalash observed the laws of purity and forbade the consumption by women of the sacred meat of the he-goat.

Here was bread, meat and soup made with melted butter — a luxurious meal for the enjoyment of all. If the gods permit inequalities, at least the customary redistribution of riches limits the power of the wealthy and gives occasional relief to the less privileged. The wish to reduce the gap between rich and poor, and above all to prevent the economically strong from taking power, has given rise to an ingenious system of compensation. Everyone benefits from it, the poorer having occasions to eat well, and the richer gaining public recognition and influence. The souls of the dead rejoice to hear their names spoken. Kalash society, in the words of Pierre Clastres, "does not allow the desire for power to take the place of a desire for prestige".³⁵ Thus, a private activity serves the public interest: the amount of energy expended by an individual for the survival of the name of his lineage benefits the group as a whole.

The gods, too, had received their share of taste, blood and odour, and they had accepted the people's prayers.

"All honour to you, people issued from strong seeds, no one is as happy as you. You are the kind of rich men who know how to consider the poor. Future generations will say that you were great men and will admire you. . ."

35. P. Clastres, *La Société contre l'Etat*, Paris, 1974, p. 179.

No *biramor* would be complete without games. They had been promised by the donors, and in the afternoon they were opened. The *tambuk* had been set up on the other side of the river, 400 metres away; this was a target formed from a pumpkin whitened with ash and fixed on a pole. The marksmen took turns to aim with their black powder rifles, loaded through the muzzle, old-fashioned relics of the British army. But the fat pumpkin did not split, and no winner emerged. Had there been a winner, he would have had to pay for a goat and feed the company to thank the gods for this favour. That had been the rule throughout Kafiristan in former times: the winner must treat the losers and his prowess at the game gave added prestige to his accumulated merits.

Today the competition exacerbated the latent rivalry between Kalash and Chitrali. The wrestling match, *salom chatik*, turned twice to the advantage of the Rumbur people. There was tension in the air, so much so that the tug-of-war was cancelled and replaced by the *shil*, a form of shot putting. There again there was no winner, there were only draws. But the roll of the drums summoned the participants to channel their passions in other directions, all through another night.

It was a harassing night for Saidaman's sons. They were making pure galettes on the stable roof, a bread that must be untouched by any pollution, for it was promised to Sajigor. Then the day came – the third – to take the feast to the sanctuary of the great god, the powerful intercessor who could facilitate or prevent the rebuilding of the riches that had been expended. The donor was operating on two levels, the human and the divine. He was promoting his own renown, but at the same time his prestige forced him to assume the obligations due to his rank, entailing inevitable excesses in lavishness. Only if the gods constantly granted him their favour would he be able to meet these duties, which his sons, moreover, would have to inherit. Having become wealthy thanks to divine favour, he must show himself worthy of that wealth and render it fruitful by sharing. The gods loved the principle of

an exchange of gifts, and man must observe it unfailingly. Tradition was full of striking reverses brought about by deceit.³⁶ For to go through life amassing riches without sharing them led to a death without fulfilment. The festivals, in fact, give an aim to existence, allowing one to cross the uncertain bridge of death with the assurance of survival, through one's name. The gods must be correctly nourished.

It was snowing. Very early, Buda, the patriarch of the *Mutimire*, left the stables to which he had withdrawn after a full public life. In 1977, together with his only son, he had given a splendid *biramor*, with five days of festivities. For that action, coupled with his other exploits, he had become the most respected person in the valley. As soon as he arrived, he was given a stool of honour outside, near the edge of the highest roof. His voice, high-pitched with age and the effort of shouting, produced immediate silence:

“All honour to you, grandsons of Amir, I greet you. . . Your grandfather Amir went to Bashgal and became the head of the king of Chitral's army. Some members of your lineage achieved glory through their actions, others by collecting taxes for the king. To give, to dispense one's wealth is a hard thing to do, but you have done so. You know how to economise, to save your goats so that you can give a *biramor* or a *sariiek*. Khodai created you for that, oh my brothers. . .

“Honour to you, your grandfather built summer houses at Sanduriga, and he made leather slippers for all the members of the valley.³⁷ And he did this without expecting anything in exchange, without asking for money, whereas now they are worth a good 100 rupees a pair! And if Parika, your ancestor who made all these shoes, had taken money for them, he

36. Malik Shah had harvested a magic wheat that danced. But he wanted to give a *biramor* using millet instead of using his amazing harvest. His bull bit him on the penis. . . (See J.-Y. Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 26.)

37. To offer dancing slippers was considered a very estimable way of honouring one's guests at a prestige festival. (See G.S. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 465.) The Kalash, having no slave artisans, are sometimes obliged to manufacture for themselves objects which in Kafiristan were made only by members of the lower classes.

would have been a rich man. But on the contrary, he made them without expecting any return, and it is for that reason that Khodai loves you, for your goodness. I greet you, oh descendants of *Baloe*, consider that in these days it is not an easy thing to share one's fortune, but your household is growing, your stables are getting larger. . ."

His speech, which was listened to with the greatest deference, was followed by a confused burst of praise-giving from all sides, as though the approaching end of the festivities made it necessary for everyone to hasten to repeat their praises. It was a real jostling of superlatives. Then the masters of the house put on their shimmering robes, embroidered with golden whorls. The crowd cheered. The *gadeirak* garnished Mishter's cap with rupees. He thanked them, obviously moved and exhausted. Then the *jamily* appeared, perched on the already crowded narrow roof of the house. They sang the *biramor* refrain, while Mishter and his brothers brought all the kids out of the enclosure and presented them one by one to each sister of the lineage, in observance of the duty of men towards their married "sisters".

"The horns of the goats clash together, and after clashing their horns they move back, before charging again as though they were dancing the *dusi*. . ." [A reference to the spring dance when the boys rush, abreast, towards the drumplayers, then move back, and again rush forward.]

"Upon the summit of Bahuk, you have cast shade with the horns of your goats, their great numbers hide the ground. . ."

"The wild sheep have mixed with your goats. Oh my brother, you are completing this work, and the multitude of your goats give your herd the appearance of a cloud. . ."

Each of the *jamily* carried off in her arms a kid born in the spring. In the enclosure, a *Dramese* of Balanguru married to a *Baloe* woman was suddenly caught up in a frenzy, spinning like a top, laughing, singing, shouting out the glory of the donors. "His heart is happy." This enthusiasm spread through

the crowd. A veritable downpour of rupees competed with the gentle fall of snowflakes. Fifty-six kids had thus been taken out of their enclosure to swell the herds of relatives-in-law. Mishter had done what he had set out to do, namely, to divest himself of his riches. He was now the equal in greatness of the chiefs of ancient times, elected to give. He was a *batcha*, a king, an *arman shah*, a king who had accomplished his desires. Rifles were fired in the air. Mishter had just come out of the stables, seated on a magnificent horse that had been purchased for this "coronation" and that was now draped in a ceremonial cloth.

The creation of this image of royalty is surprising on the part of a society that has always categorically rejected the idea of a separate power, considering that power rests in itself. The forces of opposing and complementary interests constituted by the exogamous lineages contribute to creating an equilibrium that needs no concentration of coercive authority in a single hand. Kalash society is acephalous, like that of the Kafirs in former times, and delegates to its men of influence the responsibility for maintaining its cohesion, and for rapidly repairing, through their wisdom, the rifts in the fabric of society caused by disunion and conflict.

This ephemeral king, clothed in gold, the colour of the exceptional, was invested with one of the ancient functions of the Indo-Aryan sovereign, protector of the territory, guarantor of fecundity and abundance, for he too had victoriously combated avarice.³⁸

A bull and 25 of the choicest goats followed the pastoring. Round the neck of one of the goats, a black one, was a bell known as the "*biramor* bell". Nurayat, a son of the previous donor, was also riding on horseback. The crowd followed in wild disorder, the great men hitching up their robes. The procession passed through the villages under a hail

38. In the words "I greet you, oh rich descendant of Sumbara", used at the beginning of each speech of praise, the word "rich" (in *kalasha*, *ra*) is derived from the Sanscrit *rajan*, meaning chief, noble, king.

of walnuts. The snow fell faster. The drums and the flute whipped up the excitement. A *gadeirak* brandished an ear of maize like a sceptre; the ear linked the *batcha* with fertility. The praise-givers continued their vociferations in the midst of the whitened fields. At Balanguru, gateway to the upper valley, the "king" was presented with a tray of grapes, in homage. Shots were fired, despite the high price of cartridges. The women went no farther so as to preserve the purity of the territory beyond.

The men and the herd reached the sanctuary of Sajigor, the warrior god of valour. Under the square altar made of stones piled one on top of the other and decorated with two small horse-heads, lay a knife, a trophy of a victory of the Kalash over the Bashgali Kafirs. Another version tells of 180 swords of the army of the victorious chief, Raja Wai, buried under the stones. It was undoubtedly because of this feat of war that the Kalash transferred the god Sajigor from Bashgal to Rumbur. In those times, the god had resided at Mamat Diwana, where a square hillock had served as the support of an image of Tirich Mir, the sacred mountain of Chitral. Then Naga Dehar, the great shaman, shot two arrows from a high pass. One, decorated with a red thread, like the blood of sacrifices, indicated the present site of the altar. The other, to which was attached a black thread, like the woollen dresses of women, indicated the most propitious place for a menstruation house. At Rumbur, Sajigor takes first place among the "resident" divinities. His sanctuary marks the place where the Kalash first established themselves in this valley. It is a circular area, open,³⁹ surrounded by carved posts, *maleri*, in the heart of a holm-oak forest. At the very centre of this clearly defined sacred area stands the very oldest holm-oak, rising high

39. The persistence of an open-air sanctuary denotes attachment to very ancient values. Moreover, the present-day sacrifices of the Kalash and their ritual practices are virtually identical with those formerly current throughout the Kafir zone (see G.S. Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 424-425). This fact, among others, suggests a parallel with Vedic or even earlier times, when the Indo-Aryans crossed through what is now eastern Afghanistan, and before the metaphysical elaboration of Brahmanic teaching and the influences received from the peoples of the Indus.

as though to mark the centre of the world. Goat horns are attached to its branches, the relics of former *biramor*, serving as reminders to fading memories. The river forms the upper boundary of the site, adding the element of "water" to this symbolic representation of a place where the world was created. In those ancient times, the Kalash who settled in this unknown territory had indeed experienced a sort of new creation, and felt the need to give it a "cosmic" sense. The god Sajigor, through the mouths of the shamans, assumed the guardianship of the herds, and gradually lost his warlike functions.

The officiants were designated: the sacrificator himself, a "holder" and a virgin child. They went off to wash their arms and hands, to effect a change of state through water, and returned untouchable, arms held far from the rest of the body. The sacrificator placed the juniper on the ground, prepared a fire in front of the altar, which was adorned with newly cut branches of sacred holm-oak, and set light to a branch of juniper, the plant of the gods. Tradition has it that Indra cultivated it in his garden, *indrakun*, in Kafiristan, near the pastures. Men had since learned that the odour of its smoke created a link with heaven. In addition, evergreen oak and juniper had acquired their sacred character by their association with the pure world of goats. Oak gives them its leaves, their only fodder in winter, and juniper is used to heat the milk for cheese, being the only wood available in certain pastures.

With the burning branch, the sacrificator described a circle three times from left to right, thereby rendering the encircled space sacred and separating it from the impure. This warded off the forces of evil, the devils, who were also attracted by the celebration.

The first goat was then pushed towards the holder, who was seated on a stone, and thrown on its haunches. Out of concern for purity, the animal must not touch the ground at that moment. With one swift movement of the knife, the throat was cut. The animal jumped, struggled, groaned. The

blood spurted and bubbled. The sacrificator gathered it in his hands and threw it on the fire, on the oak, and on the "first stone" of the altar, the stone of Naga Dehar. Then he adroitly cut off one of the animal's ears to feed the fire, *angar*, in the manner of the Vedic priest who has nourished *Agni*, the messenger of god. The faithful, the palms of their hands outstretched, beseeched Sajigor to accept the offering, the spirit of the goat. As in the most ancient times, they imagined that the gods were present, seated on the altar for the meal.

The head was then sawn off and placed beside the fire. If the animal had shivered violently during its agony, that was taken to be a sign that Sajigor had accepted the sacrifice. Then, in thanksgiving, everyone present kissed the air in the direction of the heavens. The virgin boy threw a new branch of juniper into the flames, as before each execution.

The order in which the beasts were killed was important. The first to die was intended for the feast of the participants, to be consumed on the spot. The second, bearing the bell, would go to the donor family. It lay decapitated against the altar, as a witness to the sacrificial contract. Next came the bull, its slaughter requiring another team of executants. Its inevitable contact with the ground by reason of its size jeopardised its purity. Its blood spread on the fir branches and must not be thrown in the direction of the altar.⁴⁰ The heads piled up. The persons who were to receive the meat pulled the carcasses out of the sacred area to be cut up and shared. The hosts had reckoned on providing one goat for three households. There again, the "sharers" supervised the distribution. At the end of the slaughter – 25 goats – the *dehar* fell into a trance, pushed Saidaman's sons towards each other and transmitted the gods' message of acceptance and pleasure:

"Because you have carried out this festival, I shall place

40. The Kalash, like the majority of Dardic peoples, attribute purity only to goats. This harks back to a prehistoric cult inherited from the most ancient inhabitants of the region. The prejudice against the bovine species is in marked contrast with the fervour of the Vedic cults of the cow.

in your hands a force as great as that of the beams of a house. . .”

He collapsed, and the men took up the refrain:

“Yes, make them strong as the beams of houses. . .”

The praise-giving broke out again, each man doing his best to outshout the other.

The meat consumed on that sacred spot possessed the virtue of divine food. The feast concluded under heavy snow. No one had picked up the bell of the *biramor* and rung it to inform the community of his intention to give another such feast. At Saidaman’s *biramor*, Katarsing had claimed the bell and announced his promise, but it had taken him eight years to collect sufficient riches to keep his promise.

Kasi Khoshnawas connects the origin of the *biramor* bell with the installation of the god Mahandeo at Birir:

“Khana and Gabaroti, Shomba and Tsipak – ancestors ‘in common with the spirits’ – were discussing one day the best way of bringing the god Mahandeo to Birir. Mahandeo resided at Waigal, in a house ‘that no one had built’. They went to his sanctuary at Waigal to persuade him to follow them to Birir and to establish himself there. Mahandeo rejected their offer, claiming that he was greatly respected where he was.

“Shomba and Tsipak insisted: ‘If you come with us, we shall offer you 60 goats a year, and if that is not enough we shall offer you a human sacrifice’.⁴¹ Khana interrupted them, saying: ‘Shomba and Tsipak have big families and can propose the sacrifice of a member of their households, but as for us, we cannot. If we desire you to come to us, it is in order to increase the population, not to reduce it. It is in order that we may pray to you. Come to Birir and we shall offer you 80 goats a year, and two bulls. . .’ Mahandeo burst out laughing

41. We found traces of “human victim” in another story. Two twin pines refused to be felled for the construction of a sanctuary for Jestak and, through the mouth of the shaman Naga, in a trance, required the life of a man. But our informant, Kasi Khoshnawas, was unable to give us any further details concerning these references to a “human sacrifice”.

and agreed. In reality, he decided to follow them because he knew that Waigal would shortly be converted.

“He gave Shomba and Tsipak a bell and requested them to return home via the Durik Pass. . .

“. . . At Birir, they hung the bell at the site chosen for the residence of Mahandeo and carried out a *Biramor*. They sacrificed 80 goats. . .”

Ever since, the bell has symbolised the keeping of the promise, and the donor has to show it to Mahandeo and Sajigor.

A consuming society

During the days following all the excitement there was no shortage of comments. But the remarks were in astonishing contrast with the concert of eulogies at the festivities. Inevitably, the *Mutimire* compared the volume of the expenditure for this latest *biramor* with what they had spent five years before. Entire evenings were devoted to such calculations, in which prodigality was contrasted with parsimony. Katarsing, thinking back, recalled:

“Twenty-six robes of honour, 133 *gas* (1 *gas* = 1 yard) of cloth for scarves, a total of 143 goats sacrificed and shared out, nine of which offered to Moslem neighbours and one to the Deputy Commissioner of Chitral, 8 *tim* (160 kg) of butter and as much of cheese, and the equivalent of three tons of wheat. Not to mention the fact that each participant received two walnut necklaces and three woven cotton bandoliers. The horse cost 2,600 rupees, and its neck was completely hidden from view by the woven belts, walnuts and flowers covering it. And the banknotes attached to caps in reward were too numerous to be counted.

“When the *Mutimire* gave a *biramor*, the festivities went on for five whole days. People came from everywhere around, from Bumburet, Birir, Chitral, Ayun. . . Grandfather Gada’s verandah sagged under the baskets of bread, stacked from floor to ceiling. Day and night, the women of our lineage baked

bread, their arms aching with the effort. . . At each meal, the women received a full bowl of butter, a basket of bread, and meat.’’

The women took up the refrain. It was not all the effort that counted, but the pride that they had harvested for their father, brothers or husband. At night, around the fire, they profited by the occasion to sing the hymns of praise that had been heard during those heroic days:

“The pure and the impure are mixed in our sacred valley. . .

[A reference to the intrusion of Islam]

“You spread the water from the golden spring on the fields, in the company of the fairies [a lucky man must necessarily be associated with the world of spirits]

“Listen, oh sun and moon [women and men]

“Oh happy brother, no one has a life like yours

“You have cultivated the land by the spring of Nokton, and your field has become as a dust of wild sheep [your life is filled with children]

“You went to the Assembly of Chitral, and there you gave such wise answers [a reference to Katarsing’s role as representative of the Rukmala at the provincial assembly of Chitral]

“And from there you returned home, and your household was buzzing like a hive

“People speak for nothing, they are born for nothing, they grow old for nothing, but you, oh my wise relative, your reputation is turned towards the heavens

“Mahat and Adurazek gather riches in the house [brothers of the same lineage who through solidarity contribute to its rise to fame]

“Valour itself is astonished at seeing your courage

“The spring month is coming and you lead your goats to the pastures

“At Ustui, seated under the juniper tree, you milk your goats. At the beginning of autumn, you lead the flock back to

the spring of Nokton. In autumn, you assemble gods and men [to celebrate a *biramor*]

“What words can I use?

“All the *Mutimire* are as arrows crowded in the same quiver. . .”

A great *biramor*, like that of Katarsing and his father, would be accompanied by the restoration of a sanctuary: erection of a sacred site, rebuilding of the stone altar. . . A great undertaking of this nature which precedes the festivities and is evidence of the donor's ambition, can be carried out only if the donor has one thousand goats in his enclosures at that particular moment. He will then announce his readiness to accept an evaluation by the elders, a *paye ishmari*k, a “goat count”. The elders go to the stables and there, seated on stools at the edge of the roof, they proceed to count the animals. The calculations are based on pairs of goats, one he-goat or four kids equalling two goats, and so on until a total of 1,000 has been reached.

Very few Kalash have been able to achieve this exploit, the principle of which stems from very ancient practices among the Bashgali Kafirs (Bragamatal). It is an inventory that results in incomparable prestige. And the homage paid to the gods will grant their protection in return.⁴²

At Mishter's house, the inroad on their fortune appeared sufficiently substantial to enable them to savour the thought of a duty accomplished, without any qualms. The expenditure was said to have amounted to 90,000 rupees: some one hundred animals slaughtered or given away, over a ton of wheat, 110 kg of butter, 100 kg of cheese, 25 robes of honour, 100 *gas* of cloth, plus 100 rupees for the praise-givers, the purchase of a horse and of a cassette tape-recorder.

The tape-recorder (transformed into *taprikot* in Kalasha) has made a spectacular entry into Kalash society. This symbol of ultra-modernity has proved extremely valuable in the

42. The restoration of a sanctuary also requires the sacrifice, after the “goat count” and before the *biramor*, of a bull and a goat.



The praises of the great men are recorded, thus forming part of the oral tradition

service of oral tradition, preserving the finest speeches and songs and introducing the voices of the most celebrated orators at evening gatherings in the home. It cultivates the taste for panegyrics, helping to inculcate the art even in the youngest, transmitting learning, values and traditional models. The *Baloe* travelled from one valley to another, *taprikot* in hand, so that those who had been unable to attend the festivities might be able to hear all the eulogies and record them for themselves.

The man who has gained a reputation cannot avoid an increase in the duties incumbent on one in his position. He must be constantly ready to offer hospitality; guests from all parts impose their presence on a man who has given such proof of greatness. He must be ready to outdo himself on every festive occasion, whether foreseen or unforeseen. And he must always hold himself in readiness, so as never to fall short. He is locked in a circle of ostentatious spending. The very

taste of life changes, and he is beset with worries. Often he loses his sense of fun, being obsessed by the need to manage his reserves, to share out the tasks to be performed by members of his household. The sense of tasks never fully completed keeps him from enjoying simple pleasures, the joy of social contacts.

Katarsing's sons were weighing up the consequences of their position: "Our riches are accumulated only in expectation of some event, such as a funeral or the arrival of guests. . . . At home, on our own, we rarely eat butter. If we wasted it for our own consumption, we would have to purchase more the day some traditional obligation had to be met, even if this was likely to ruin us. And given our reputation, we have to offer such precious foodstuffs to each and every visitor come from afar. How could we do so without permanent reserves? We also avoid eating wheaten galettes, we have to be content with galettes made from maize. For the same reason, we refuse to sell our animals to the Moslems, even though they urge us to and offer a good price; our herd must increase constantly. Our father sends us out of the valley to do road construction or to float wood down-stream, in order to bring home the rupees needed for purchases. If there is a surplus, we exchange walnuts, maize or wheat at the shop in the valley for tea, sugar and, in winter, powdered milk. . . . We are ashamed to serve salted tea to a guest. . . ."

Wealth is generally inherited. If a man is an only son, like Katarsing, or the eldest of several brothers opposed to the division of the family fortune, like Mishter, he will receive the heritage undepleted. But wealth is not all that is needed to be a giver of feasts, and a "rich man's son" is not necessarily a "distinguished man"; he must prove his worth. He must have the dynamism to produce surpluses, the will to accumulate them, and the wisdom to husband them over many years. In addition to this talent for developing his material heritage, he must prove his virility: engender sons, marry two wives if

necessary, increase the productivity of the household through their labours. He must also be able to impose his authority on his family and his ascendancy over his lineage brothers, from whom he will expect economic assistance.

But however much men display such talents, they know themselves to be only humble stewards of nature, which belongs, ultimately, to the gods. And the gods remain the masters of fortune, the dispensers of good luck. In any case, some men are born to give, to play a role on centre stage. . . The day comes when the destiny of a man condemned to be lucky is assured of differing from other men's. Strange signs indicate that he has been chosen; it is often through fear that the supernatural manifests itself. The shamans are not to be deceived; they decipher these phenomena and reveal their meaning: "You will be the son of a *biramor!*" The chosen one, thus placed in front of his responsibilities, can no longer escape them.

Tradition recounts:

"Gaha owned a stable at Mudijom (Birir). One day, at dawn, he saw a shield that gave forth a strong light on the threshold of the stable. He wanted to go closer to get a better look, but fell unconscious. When he regained consciousness, the light had disappeared, but the *dehar* Piota was at his side and told him: 'You must sacrifice a goat and sprinkle the blood on the door. Then you must give a *biramor* with 60 slaughtered goats for Mahandeo. Finally, you must move your stable to another spot.' Gaha did all this and his family increased."

"Nilibea, a young Kalash, went to the spring to draw water. Sensing danger, he raised his eyes and saw a snake in a tree, at less than an arm's length above his head. As swift as lightning, he drew his bow. The arrow pierced the snake, which fell so heavily that the ground subsided beneath it. The mark of its fall can still be seen in the valley of Atchwaga. In terror, the boy ran headlong to the stables, where he fainted. When he regained consciousness, his brother rebuked him:

Why didn't you take some part of the snake?' (And indeed, what use is an exploit without proof?) So he sent him back. Nilibea retraced his steps, but all he found on the edge of the hole were three feathers. He took them home and placed them under his pillow for safe-keeping. In the middle of the night he was awakened by a loud noise. Three iron pots were moving about, dancing and generally creating bedlam. He placed them under his arm and tried to go back to sleep. In the morning, the *dehar* Piota appeared on the stable roof and told him: 'Shut those three pots in a wooden case and sacrifice a goat. In the autumn, your father, Batak, may meet a similar snake. Warn him not to get bitten. He will have to shoot very fast.'

And indeed, in the autumn, Batak was almost caught unawares, but promptly drew his bow and killed so terrible a reptile that in falling it made a gash in the mountain. The opening was called Batak Ga, Batak's valley. . .

Five years later, Nilibea was milking his goats one evening, as usual. Suddenly, the stable began to shake and shiver. . . He grabbed his axe and struck down a spirit which was coming towards him. Then he lost consciousness, and remained in that state for seven days. To restore him, Naga Dehar washed his body in the blood of a kid. Then he ordered him to celebrate a *biramor*. To this day, in the valley of Atchwaga, one can see the skull of the spirit killed by Nilibea."

A typical story combines the idea of the supernatural origins of wealth and of the need to outdo oneself on festive occasions in order to honour that privilege, with the idea that disunion in a family accounts for bad luck:

"Jangir was a poor man. He married Madrak Deli, a woman of Shishikuh, who was dumb. Goshmir, her father, was very rich. He gave a *sariék*, a great wedding, and offered his daughter 60 horses, 60 he-goats, 60 nanny goats, 60 bulls, 60 cows, 60 calves, 60 rams and 60 sheep. As he was about to leave the stable to collect them, Madrak Deli, who although

dumb was able to utter one sentence a week, said: 'I don't want all these things, I want only a flute.' She meant here a flute that her father had received from the fairies. Her father agreed and gave her the flute.

"Inside the little instrument, Madrak Deli found 14 grains of wheat. When she left for her husband's house, all her father's goods followed her. Her father cried out in anguish: 'But you want to kill me! What have I done to you that you should wish my destruction?' So she gave him back seven grains, and half his goods returned to him. The other half accompanied Madrak Deli to Bumburet, to Jangir's house.

"Jangit, with his new wealth, wanted to celebrate a *goshaweng*, a feast of hitherto unheard-of generosity. He wished to establish a tradition of such extraordinary expenditure that no one would be able to equal his exploit. His wife encouraged him in this project. But for seven years, despite all his efforts, he was unable to build up the necessary reserves. When Naga Dehar was consulted, he explained that Jangir's wife, by eating fourteen galettes three times a day, was swallowing up all the surplus. If she did not agree to reduce her consumption, he would never be able to give his feast. Jangir at once reduced his wife's rations by half and began to economise. Thus he was the first donor of a *goshaweng* . . ."

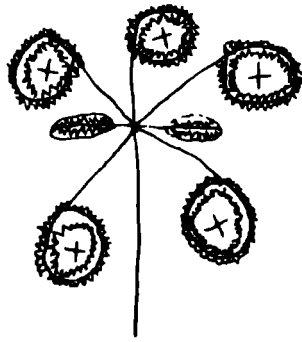
The basic difficulty of a *goshaweng* was that it required the gift of nine large clay pots filled with a strong cheese, *gwinda*, but not just any cheese: it must be cheese made from the milk of one-year-old goats. According to Kasi Khoshnawas, "In those days, the Kalash had the whole of the holly forest and the goats grew strong very fast. By the end of a year, they were able to give birth to a kid and therefore to give milk. Today, it would appear to be impossible to satisfy such a requirement. . ."

The feast also requires the distribution of nine he-goats without horns, nine bulls without horns (a rarity!), nine *weho* of wheat (half a ton), and nine pots of butter (about 100 kg).

Only one man, Madri of Rumbur, attempted the experience a second time.

“ . . . Later, Jangir had twelve sons and one daughter. But Madrak Deli died. Jangir fed the company twelve times. The mother had barely expired when the sons began fighting over the flute. So Jangir decided to seal the seven grains in the dead women’s mouth. But one grain fell out by the side of the coffin. There followed the death of his twelve sons. . . ”

Jangir, notwithstanding his virtues as a giver of a prodigious feast, was now in danger of dying without descendants. The story accuses him of having been unable to maintain his authority over his family. The quarrel had jeopardised his own destiny. For what hope is there for a rich man with none to carry his name in future generations?



"YOU RETURN TO LIFE
WITH THE FORMER SCENT OF RICHES"⁴⁴

THE CAPACITY FOR SURVIVAL

A tranquil Death
Belief in the survival of the soul

A wealthy man is only a link in a fortunate lineage. He has inherited riches and reputation, and he owes it to himself to preserve them and to pass on to his sons a patrimony of wealth and prestige which he has increased by his own labours. Throughout his life, he must work for the future well-being of his descendants, but in so doing he will also be preparing his own survival after death. He exorcises fear of the unknown by filling it with hope. His real objective is to achieve the ultimate status, that of an ancestor. Beyond the satisfaction of increasing his influence in this world, all his efforts converge towards his status in the after-life, towards his quest for immortality.⁴⁵ His ability to produce, to accumulate, to engender sons, to destroy his riches for the contentment of the gods, to achieve glory, to perpetuate his name, has one final aim: survival after death.

In his lifetime, such a man is fully aware of the transience of his destiny, and effaces himself behind the "metaphysical reality" of his lineage. His full enjoyment of this position of

44. A Kalash expression taken from a hymn of praise for the rite of passage of the deceased to the status of ancestor: "*Tu tu perazi aye mai baier ganduirak ti. . .*" "You return to life with the former scent of riches, oh my brother. . ."

45. The name achieves the highest degree of immortality if the ancestor has become the founder of a new lineage. See E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Les Nuer*, Paris, 1968: "Every man is the potential founder of a lineage, but in fact lineages derive from a few rare names."

influence is forever thwarted by the perpetual increase of his duties, and must be postponed to the after-life. Once he is dead and has become an ancestor, the great man will recover the honours which his qualities have earned him. Meanwhile, he is only a "fleeting link in the lasting chain of an ideally eternal family". He preserves "the name, the reputation, the status and the property of the family in trust during his lifetime. . ."⁴⁶ The individual has achieved immortality when posterity, and in particular his own descendants, recall and honour his name with pride.

During the feasts, the dead approach and listen to the eulogies, which gratify them and induce them to remain. A forgotten ancestor dies definitively. The descendants, who are the guardians of a man's posthumous glory, carry the onerous responsibility of providing for the subsistence of the deceased in his new condition as a soul, *harwa*. Nevertheless, these obligations towards the dead, however arduous they may be, are not undertaken without the expectation of receiving something in return. This equilibrium of reciprocity functions at every level of the Kalash universe. And the living, respectful of the terms of the bargain, are entitled to expect in return the protection, help and goodwill of this powerful society, which is so hungry for both verbal and delectable material nourishment.

A peaceful death, or rather, peace in death, is something that must be achieved. Generally, those who start out with fortune on their side will find themselves privileged at the other end. The world beyond death perpetuates the inequali-

46. See J. Haudry, *Les Indo-Européens*, Paris, 1981, p. 32, who cites C.C. Zimmermann: "The duties of an indo-european individual towards the lineage are those of the system known by sociologists as the "trustee" system."

The data which Haudry provides on the mentality of the early Indo-Europeans apply also to the Kalash mode of thought: "In fact, the individual exists only by virtue of his twofold membership of the community of his contemporaries and of his lineage. His value is measured by the manner in which he fulfils his obligations in these two spheres." (p. 31.)

"There is no Indo-European doctrine on the last ends of man. The only point in common is the importance of the glory of the lineage. . ." (p. 28.)

ties of this world. Those whom honour has bypassed, who have received no distinctions, are likely to fade from people's memories for lack of notable events to be associated with their name. Fortunately, the glory of their more illustrious relatives reflects on them, and as long as the lineage prospers, they will have a place in the long recitals of genealogies and will benefit from the long ascent through memory to the founder ancestor.

The inferior position of a woman continues in the after-life. Because of her inherent impurity, she must necessarily suffer discrimination. The patrilineal structure of society prevents her from receiving a heritage. With few exceptions,⁴⁷ she dies without attaining the rank of ancestress. And the hymns sung at her modest obsequies (at which there are neither dancing nor meat) will once again vaunt the lineages of the father or husband whom she has so faithfully served. Once dead, she is submerged in the sea of souls, and gains "sustenance" only from the evocation of the men with whom she was connected.

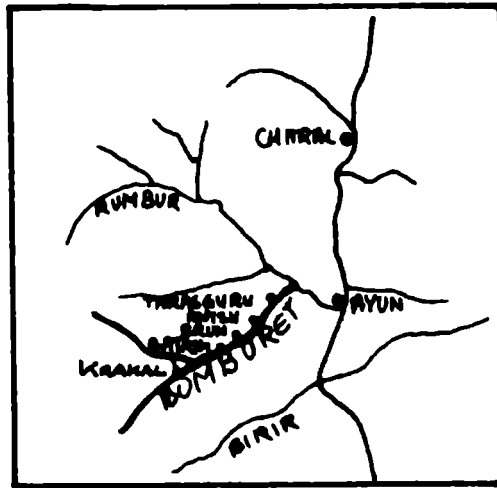
The funeral of a legendary man

The funeral rites mark the beginning of the duties of the sons (or brothers): the obligation to convert the fruit of the father's labours into expenditure, the amount depending on social pressure. Thus, the functions attendant upon prestige are continued. Sometimes, in the attempt to prove himself worthy, the heir will take a path leading to inevitable ruin. Only the solidarity of the lineage, whose concern it is to have some part in the glory of an exceptional person, will save him from disaster.

47. The name of a deceased woman may be associated with the glory of her husband if he had spent a considerable sum to obtain her in marriage. And the names of deceased women are not necessarily forgotten. The guardians of tradition have knowledge of all past alliances, and therefore of the lineal origin of each woman, from the first eponymous ancestor. But the Kalash have never honoured a deceased woman by erecting a statue to her, as was the case among the Kafirs. "Women as well as men are glorified after death by pious relatives, and in this way be placed on an equality with men by being given a throne to sit upon." (See Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 646, and Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 36.)

14 January 1983⁴⁸

The news came in the morning that Tingeli, a man of Krakal (Bumburet), had died that night. Two Momola brought the news to the Rumbur households, starting with that of the *mimbar* Katarsing. Many of the Rukmula began to get ready, including the women, except those with nursing children.



Map of Bumburet

The Kalash call Tingeli the last of the really great men, of those who give rise to legends. He had been strong, sturdy, unbeatable. For 20 years, no one in Chitral had been able to beat him in a wrestling match. Even the king had challenged him, but he had refused the fight: "If I kill you, the people will imprison me for life". An elder, his eyes wet with emotion and pride, recalled: "He had thighs as thick as this (largest) branch of a walnut tree! Everyone feared him. Later, he withdrew to his house, and refused to compete any more." Tingeli was over 70 years old when he died, and for the previous four years had been weakened by illness and had very rarely left his home.

48. This description goes beyond the chronology of the autumn festivities, but completes the account of the glorious path of man, as illustrated by other November celebrations.

Krakal forms the boundary of Kalash territory above Bumburet, the village closest to Nuristan and to the Bashgali who had found refuge at the end of the valley from the beginning of the century. The influence of their ex-Kafir neighbours is apparent in their houses, the facades of the verandas being decorated with goat horns and designs of solar wheels – the Kalash call them “flowers” – and of shields. The Momola had borrowed these insignia of Kafir rank to institute celebrations for the adornment of their houses, entailing the expenditure of specific amounts, in return for added prestige.

Whether decorated or not, the dwellings reflect repute and symbolise the hive, one of the most visible elements of social position.⁴⁹ The Krakal verandas bespeak opulence.

The fir trees surrounding the village show that we are here at a higher altitude. Just below the fir that pierces the sky on the other side of the torrent is the cemetery of the upper valley.

The dead man was lying on his bed, which had been placed in a snow-covered field at the confines of the village, on the edge of the path. All day long, his relatives and the people of Krakal had been dancing, singing and weeping around him, awaiting the arrival of delegations from the other villages of the valley.⁵⁰

49. The ceremonies of installation of new houses, like the decoration festivities, generally take place in November, but any account of them would imply a very lengthy consideration of the Kalash habitat. That is a subject in its own right, covering fidelity of society to the form of dwellings; ornamentation, i.e. distinctive symbols added according to rank; status of builders, the problem of artisan-slaves and Kafir influence; the various types of buildings (stables, storehouses, mills, menstruation houses, etc.), and their placement in relation to sanctuaries and lineage possessions; removals; influence of the Jestak Han, the ceremonial house of the lineages, on the architecture as a whole; reproduction of a model of a sanctuary on its original site; existence of a central pillar of the world; myths attaching cosmic significance to the territory; the house as a microcosm; the Kalash conception of the universe.

50. Shortly after death and before the first visits, the men had washed the body completely in the house, in the absence of the women. They had then carried the dead man, on his bed, to the dance area.

In the evening, the Rukmala guests arrived in their turn. They stopped first at some distance from the mortuary field, within sight and earshot of the dancing and the music. They formed themselves into delegations by lineage. There was no apparent gravity; they talked, they smoked. The *gadeirak* announced that they were going to give praise. Near the path was an isolated tomb, that of a convert excluded from the cemetery. Women relatives placed sweets on it as an offering. Suddenly, one of the lineages rushed forward. In front, the women walked at an exaggerated pace, crying out lamentations. The men fired rifles. The cortege gave the impression of irrupting into the field. The women surrounded the bed, moaning. The drumming ceased, giving place to the lamentations. The women relatives by marriage removed their coiffes and loosened their tresses in sign of mourning. The influential man of the lineage then brandished his stick or axe and made his speech with trembling voice. It was fitting, at first, to be almost sobbing. A member of the stricken family touched the arrivals on the arm to indicate that they should regain their composure. They obeyed at once. The praise-giver kept up the dramatic tone of his discourse. The dead man listened, his face uncovered. The eulogy closed with a kiss blown to the body with lips and hand. The company congratulated the praise-giver, greeted newcomers. The drums beat out a ceaseless invitation to dance; good dancing would please the dead man.

At the four corners of the bed, between the ropes, red banners had been placed to recall the high qualities of the deceased, and spears to recall his warrior forebears and his personal exploits as a killer of men. On his pillow lay silver handles with bells attached, and woven stems of wheat decorated with peacock feathers, insignia of his rank. This man had done everything during his lifetime; the eulogies recalled the fact. The men of influence approached his bedside, one after the other. He had killed snow leopards, those terrible enemies of man. He had given two *biramors* in his own name,

and his lineage could take pride in an exceptional *biramor*, with ibex instead of he-goats.

More rifles were fired. The *Mutimire* ran forward towards the deceased. Gada, the oldest member of the delegation, raised his arms, invoked heaven and the distribution of fortune, passed his hand over his face, conversed with him who was there and listening to the words of recognition addressed to him. He mimed the dead man's exploits and recalled the alliance that drew them together. After the kiss, Katarsing unfolded a splendid blanket embroidered with gold motifs, and covered the corpse. The dead man, who had been dressed in his ordinary clothes, was now draped in a red and gold ceremonial robe. A white turban was wrapped round his head,⁵¹ a bandolier serving as a chin-strap. His feet were shod in new moccasins, reserved for this occasion.

The young people danced, alternating slow rhythms, which enabled them to attend to the recitations of the elders, with explosions of joy – *tcha-tcha*. As at the spring festival, the boys crowded the "authorised" girls with a movement of the hip as they passed. It would of course have been indecent to provoke their *baba*, sisters, in the same way.

The great men chanted. An improviser seized the baton of the "namer" – and at once the others saluted his lineage – and embarked on a recital of the stories attached to the dead man's ancestors, a recital emphasised by expressive vibratos. Rocking from one foot to the other, he would bend forward persuasively to mark a point with his audience, then draw himself up at the end of a sentence and of a breath:

"As a child, Shurala was taken by his maternal uncle, Bangulaï, at Birir. In those days, enemies threatened the security of Bumburet. . ."

The elders, listening with great attention, approved: "Your words are correct, you speak the truth!"

51. Could the origin of the mortuary turban be the seizing of a Moslem enemy's turban, considered as a source of distinction by the Kafirs? See Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

“Then he grew up and kept his uncle’s flocks. . .” He pointed with his cane in the direction of the pastures.

“But one day, he told his uncle: ‘I want to go home.’ Bangulai answered: ‘Until you have worn out these shoes, you won’t leave.’

“Bangulai-associated-with-the-fairies gave him a pair of moccassins made of human skin. Three years later, the shoes were still not worn out.

“Shurala consulted his grandfather: ‘I don’t know how to make holes in these shoes.’

“The old man advised him: ‘Walk in hot ashes and jump in the mountains, and you’ll succeed.’

“In a few days, Shurala had worn out his shoes and Bangulai agreed to let him go. He asked him what he would like to take with him as a gift.

“The young man again consulted his grandfather, who replied: ‘Your uncle will not leave you much time to take what you want, so choose some goats that leave the stable quickly.’

“Shurala brought back 60 goats to his stable, Zarala in Bumburet. But in the absence of he-goats, they could not be fecundated. And Shurala, who wanted to offer a *biramor*, lamented in the midst of his goats.

“Then, from a trance, Naga Dehar predicted: ‘This night, the walls of your stable will tremble. Above all, don’t be frightened.’

“That night, terrible tremors rocked the ground and the walls. In the morning, he saw that ibex filled the stable. The ibex mixed with the goats.

“Shurala gave a *biramor* with the ibex, shared them and sacrificed them all.

“When his son was born, he named him Shiarakat, ‘luck of the ibex’.”⁵²

52. There is another, longer version of this famous story, with numerous details. Here we give the version we heard and recorded the night of the funeral, in January 1983.

The singer laid down his baton, and a refrain of praise was taken up in chorus. The men cast approving looks at one another, extending a finger to emphasise a phrase or an effect, waving their hands in the air to symbolise the increase in the herds, which cover the land so thickly that the ground can no longer be seen.

The field was enveloped in the snowy darkness. Sitting on beams around the gigantic bonfire, the company got ready to eat. Someone said that he would try to die in the summer for the sake of the guests. The food consisted of strong cheese, wheaten galettes, unlimited amounts of butter. . . . At about four o'clock in the morning, 17 goats were slaughtered.

The darkness belonged to the dancers from Rumbur; they took over from the Momola, who had been dancing throughout the day. It was freezing, and the neighbouring houses were havens of warmth, the occupants ruining themselves serving tea and sugar. But the women, although chilled through, could not stay and chat by the fire; they were ordered to go back and dance.

Hammering and whistling noises announced the return to a faster rhythm after the hushed mood prevailing during the chanted recitations, to the accompaniment of light drumming. Now, at each invitation of the drums, the men seized hold of the insignia of honour, spears, flags and bells, or brandished weapons, sticks and axes, spinning around, arms outstretched. Sadness vied with exuberance: the dead man had managed his life so well that his future was assured. He had reinforced tradition, and the recitation of his heroic deeds had given joy. The women danced in couples, contrary to custom, which is distrustful of even numbers and recommends dancing in threesomes. But at funeral ceremonies, the third member rests on his bed, and the women danced round that absent member plaintively repeating: "Oh grandson of Shiarakat. . ."

The Birir community arrived at sundown of the second day, and, after six or seven hours of walking, they danced, sang and offered praise all through the night. Before dawn, 27

goats were slaughtered for the meal of all who had come from the three valleys. The Birila, whose customs differ in a number of points, played the flute for the deceased, *turu-turu*, accompanied by muffled drums, *plok-jo*, *plock-jo*, to a slow beat.



The relatives of the deceased, bareheaded with plaits undone in sign of mourning, lament and wave their hands in the area above the body so as to assist the soul detach itself

Emotions were rekindled on the third morning; the moment of separation was at hand.

The women relatives, sisters and daughters, had mourned unceasingly during these three days, bare-headed, their hair unkempt: "Oh my brother, you are dead, we shall see you here no longer, when we die we shall find you again. . ." ⁵³

53. Tingeli had already lost his wife. But if the dead man leaves a widow, she strips off all her jewels and ornaments, removes her coiffe and undoes her tresses. She puts on an old dress with no belt. Finally, she covers her head with a grey rag. Thus attired in mourning garb, she remains seated, weeping, at her husband's bedside until the body is taken away.

Each passed her right hand over the corpse without touching it, as though caressing an invisible body. The lament is known as *bashikek*, as though tears were related to rain, *bashik*. Moaning is a part of the duties of lineage sisters, who are also called upon to lament to the point of exhaustion.

The praise-giving began again. The shaman of Krakal, an old man, made his speech holding a branch of juniper in his hand. He wept so much that his words became inaudible. People called out to him to speak up, to give praise properly, pointing out that a fine eulogy was worth more than an indecent show of sentiment. A *gadeirak* heralded his arrival by an explosion of dynamite in a neighbouring field.

Because of the long journey ahead of them, the Birila were the first to leave. They did a last dance, carrying the bed and firing rifles, then laid the dead man down, ate and left. The Rukmula took their place. The tension rose. Four men picked up the bed again and carried it round. The women circled about it in one direction, then in another, the men forming an outer circle. More shots were fired. The men of Krakal did the *tsir nat*, the dance reserved for exceptional warrior-hunters:⁵⁴ a complete tour of the village waving a red banner. The procession went round the *malbat*, the stone that had been placed in the village by the defunct warrior on his return from hunting or from a victorious raid.

Then the men snatched the bed from the weeping women, who climbed up on the roof tops to watch the funeral

54. If a Kalash kills an enemy, he returns to the village and sacrifices a bull to Mahandeo, the god specialised in purification from this stain. The victor then feeds the valley and, in former times, drove a decorated stake, *paha gundik*, into the ground near the altar so that the god should accept this victory over an enemy of the community and note the fact. Afterwards, he placed a flat stone in the middle of the village.

His descendants thus obtained the right to dance with a spear or a shield at the funeral ceremonies of a relative. On the last morning of the ceremonies, they would lead the assembled company round the *malbat*, the commemorative stone. Hence the name *tsir nat*, dance of the line or in line.

procession as it moved in the direction of the cemetery.⁵⁵ Not a sound was to be heard.

In the cemetery, the brothers cleared the bed of the galettes, bunches of grapes and tobacco, all the remains of the meal shared with the deceased. The grave had been dug in the area reserved for the Shiarakat lineage. The body was placed between four planks of pine, the head in the direction of the setting sun so that it could look towards the sunrise; Katai, a shaman, had told them to proceed in this manner.

The juniper attached to the dead man's turban indicated that he might have a "double nature": "Did this man derive his heroism from the protection of the fairies? Was he one of those humans associated with the spirit world?" When there is doubt, it is appropriate to honour unusual power by this symbol. That has been the practice since the days of Katsata, with his extraordinary destiny. The story is worth telling:

"Seven days after Katsata was born he could already walk. And as he wandered off, Naga Dehar had to bring the baby back to his mother. The shaman then slaughtered a bull near the baby's head. Later, Katsata came to Gasguru, in the valley of Birir, and decided to build an irrigation canal all by himself. It is a good mile [a detail provided by the informant] from the source of the canal to the point where it passes near the sanctuary of the great god Warin, and he completed this part in six days. He then sacrificed a bull and placed the head

55. At the moment of the removal of the body from the house, a sacrifice is celebrated inside the house for the widow. A story gives the reason for this and lays down the first rules of widowhood: "Once upon a time, a man and a woman loved each other deeply. But one day, the husband fell seriously ill. His wife asked him: 'What can I do for you?' The dying man answered: 'After my death, you must shut yourself inside the house for seven days, without seeing anyone.'

"After the man died, his wife in fact stayed in the house, stricken with grief, without leaving the house. By the end of that time, the smoke, her tears and the darkness had made her blind. Then she remained another seven days by the tomb of her husband. After that, Sherdast, the *dehar* of Jinjeret, revealed in the course of a trance: 'She has become blind because her husband's soul remains welded to hers. A lamb or a kid must be sacrificed inside the house at the moment when the body is taken away, in order to cut the cord between the souls and free the widow.'"

in the trench, after which he returned home. But the head continued the work and dug the canal as far as Biu-Shish, a very difficult place to reach. At once the water began to flow. Katsata therefore settled at Biu-Shish and built a menstruation house there.

“In those days, the king of Chitral sent his men to Birir, for no good purposes. But Katsata killed them all, single handed. So the king sent an army to get rid of him. The soldiers riddled him with arrows, cut off his head, and threw the body and the head from the top of the opposite sides of the hill. After rolling to the bottom, the head reattached itself to the body and Katsata immediately began fighting again. The war continued for three years. Each time the soldiers killed Katsata, cut off his head and strewed his remains all about, the head would rejoin the body and Katsata would rise for another onslaught. In their discouragement, the soldiers went to consult an old witch, who advised them thus: ‘Watch the head carefully when you throw it down the slope, and observe it well; after a few moments you will see fairies, in the form of wasps, entering the nose. It is they who bring him back to life. Kill the wasps and Katsata will cease to live once and for all.’ They did as she had said and Katsata died.

“The people of Birir celebrated his funeral for five days. During the dances, they placed a sprig of juniper in his turban, and the dead man kept it with him in his coffin. For seven days, the coffin moved. On the seventh day, a juniper tree rose from the coffin and grew in the cemetery. Today the tree, which has never been cut, stands in the midst of abandoned coffins.”

It is difficult to know with any certainty what links there are between a great hunter, like Tingeli, and the fairies. Only the betrayal of the secret would permit it, at the beneficiary's own risk. If in doubt, it is best to please the spirits of nature by following the above-mentioned customs by attaching a sprig of juniper to the turban of the deceased.

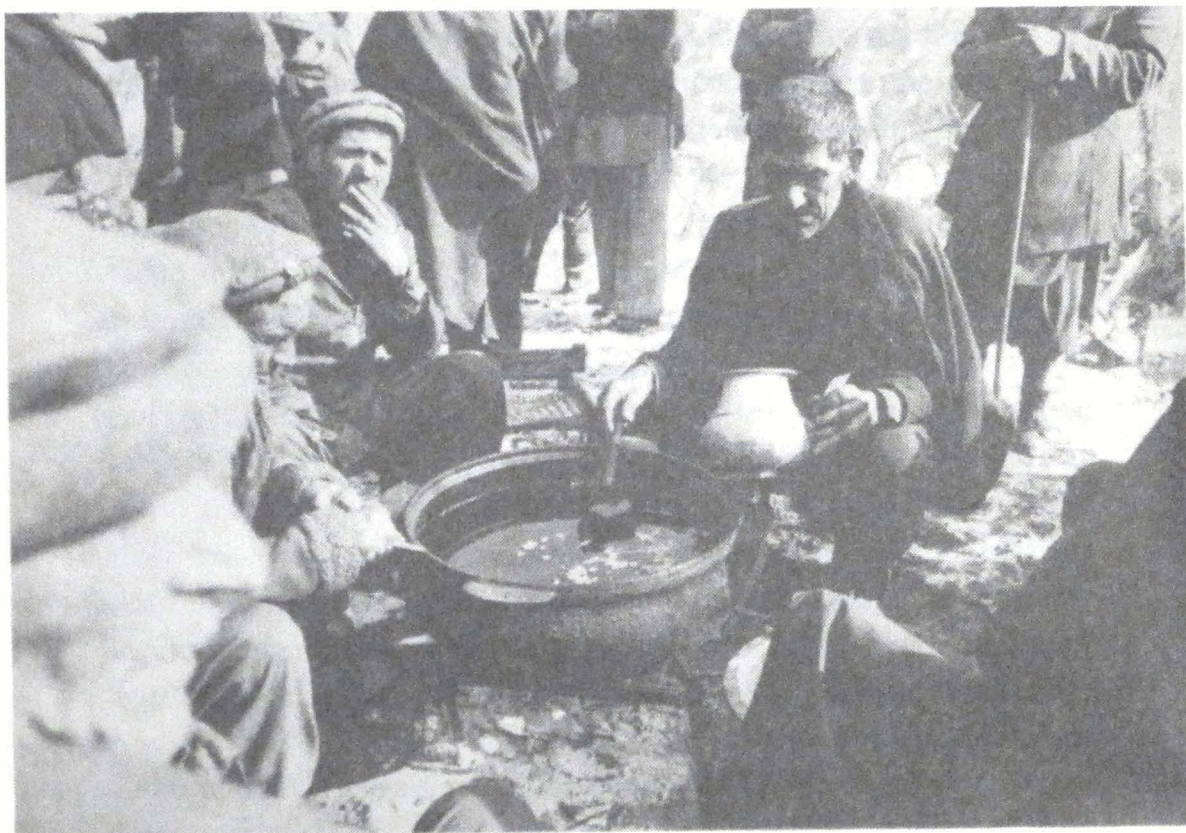
The left hand of the dead man is placed on his warrior's bow, and the right hand is dipped in a sack of flour to sustain him during the voyage and in his new existence. The lid is placed on the coffin, which is covered with earth, with the four banners at the four corners. The bed is placed upside down on the tomb and left for the dead man's use in the other world. But for it to be left, the dead man must have claimed it as his own property during his lifetime. If a man has given it no attention, has not stamped it with his personality, has constantly changed beds like a bigamous husband, the funeral bed can be brought back to the house and, after purification in the waters of the torrent, used again.

All is well. The customs have been observed. The men wash their hands for the sake of purity and rejoin the women on the long roof of the bereaved house. A final meal was served, the men sitting on beams on one side, the women among themselves. The "sharers" distributed baskets filled with wheaten galettes, soup made with clarified butter, and meat. The best pieces were given to the great men.

Soon the cost of all this would be announced; the guests must know the figures so that they could inform those who had been unable to attend of the degree of generosity of their hosts. A first estimate indicated the participation in the feast of 130 Rukmula and 150 Birila, and a distribution of 190 kg of butter, 240 kg of strong cheese, over a ton of wheat and 41 slaughtered goats. The feast had been worthy of the great man.

"In ancient times, after the loss of their child, the parents remained inconsolable. Their floods of tears gave birth to the sea. Then, to cleanse their faces of all sadness, Khodai-God told them to wash their faces the day after the funeral and to wipe them with cut hair. . ."

In fact, only the men – brothers and sons – wash their heads and shave off their hair in front of the door of the house. On that occasion they sacrifice a nanny goat and a he-goat or a bull, also in front of the door: two acts symbolically cutting off the tears and any further attempts to hold



Above: the members of the lineage in mourning share out the rations of the melted butter

Below: funeral meal; bread, butter and meat. Men and women eat separately



back the departed. At dawn of the day of this final gesture, the close relatives strew broken-up galettes on the tomb, so that the crows may carry off the crumbs and feed the dead man's soul:

"In former times, a man went hunting in the mountains, but in his pursuit of an animal he fell into a pit and was unable to climb out. After several days, it was assumed in the village that he was dead, and the members of his lineage decided to celebrate his funeral. During the ceremonies, they saw crows taking away bits of bread. And the crows were in fact stealing galettes, but it was in order to drop them into the pit, where the man was still alive. Thanks to that food, the prisoner was able to regain his strength and free himself. When he returned to the village, everyone was overjoyed. And when he told about the providential help he had received from the crows, the community instituted the practice of throwing pieces of bread for the crows on the dead man's tomb".⁵⁶

Another story recounts similar facts:

"Matoni had decided to go to Kafiristan to kill enemies as part of his race to achieve glory, which increases in proportion to the number of enemies slain in ambush. But two months later he had still not returned, and his relatives believed him dead. They organised his funeral ceremony, replacing the body, in accordance with custom, by a tree, *bizu*, whose slightly nauseating smell evokes the beginning of putrefaction. Matoni's family shared out bread among the guests, who saw that the crows were stealing bits of it. But instead of eating the bread, the crows flew all the way to Kafiristan to bring it to Matoni. Seeing this sign, Matoni thought: 'My family believes I am dead.' So he stopped his warlike actions and returned home. Everyone was amazed and overjoyed to see him again. Matoni told them: 'Three days ago, I received some bread from the crows.' And the family said: 'It is true, the

56. "In the tradition of India, the crow also personifies the shade of a dead man. To give food to the crows, for the Indians, is to give nourishment to the souls of the dead." (A. de Gubernatis, *Mythologie zoologique*, Paris, 1874, p. 265.)

crows indeed stole some bread three days ago during the feast given for your funeral. . .

“And that confirmed the custom of putting bits of bread for the crows on a dead man’s tomb.”

**The dead are equal, but some are more
equal than others. . .**

In former times, no one knew where a soul went. The Kalash used to think that it escaped from the body through the mouth and the eyes, which remain open for a few seconds after death. Then the shamans revealed that it went to the intermediate world of the peaks, midway between the divine and the human. This was a sort of promotion, since it is at that altitude that the fairies live.⁵⁷

The souls of the people of Birir, Bumburet and Rumbur go up to Palar, the white mountain above the Rumbur valley. It is said that heroes, the beings-associated-with-the-fairies, are welcomed at the peak of Tirich Mir, the highest point of Chitral.

In Kafiristan, the universe was divided into three tiers, with the world of the divine at the top, the human world in the middle and the underworld at the bottom. At Presun, a well gave access to the souls of the dead, whose state was that of shades in the underworld. To lean down over the well meant immediate death. Sometimes a horse was sacrificed near the opening, but the executant would operate with his back to it.

The Kalash preserve the memory of a metal pillar mysteriously erected near this well; it was hollow and pierced like a flute, and through it one could see into the “lower world”. But there are no other references of this kind in the oral tradition. It was believed that the “lower” territory belonged rather to the devils, the *bhut*.⁵⁸

57. On the origin of the soul and death, see the story of the creation of the world in Loude, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

58. See Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 393. The Kalash remain faithful to the notion of the tripartite nature of space, even if a certain ambiguity subsists between two conceptions of the three tiers: sky, earth, underworld, on the one hand, and sky, peaks, earth, on the other hand.

The terms "good" or "bad" have little meaning for the Kalash, the idea of punishment, of God's avenging action, means nothing at all.⁵⁹ Disturbing or litigious matters are settled, repaired and disposed of through the virtues of sacrifices, which imply an immediate sanction. And once purity has been restored, sins do not accumulate. Admittedly, the gods may turn upon a lineage because of an offence and strike its members with bad luck on earth, but the idea of hell does not exist. On the other hand, irreparable offences, such as the murder of another Kalash or incest, entail exclusion.

Some Moslems endeavour to sow doubt, repeating their warnings of a Last Judgement, painting alarming visions of flames and glowing coals as the fate awaiting every pagan. There is always someone who is frightened by their words. And even if there is a tendency to question Moslem doctrine, the subject crops up so often in conversation that it must inevitably shake people's convictions in a reassuring after-life for everyone.

Already, the explanation of the creation of the world had undergone a profound change, the ancient myths of the "golden age" type, in which gods, men, spirits, animals and plants lived in harmony, having given way to the biblical account of the birth of Adam and Eve, the fall of the angels, the temptation, the driving out from paradise and the divine punishment.⁶⁰ The strength of the Kalash resides once more in their ability to reinterpret the beliefs that the Moslems try to impose on them.

But setting aside the mental confusion about hell, the essential thing for a Kalash man or woman is to die in accordance with tradition. The funeral ceremonies, the rite of passage, help to guide the soul of the deceased towards the

59. According to Barth, "in the pagan times of Swat Kohistan, some 6-10 generations ago, the priests taught that there was no heaven and no hell, "and such nonsense". (E. Barth, *Indus and Kohistan Swat, an ethnographic survey*, Studies, vol. 2, Oslo, 1956.)

60. See the story of the creation of the world, Loude, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

realms of survival. However, there exists a preferable form of immortality, that which a man seeks to achieve by his quest for glory: to be raised to a sort of divinisation, materialised by the personalised cult of the ancestor.

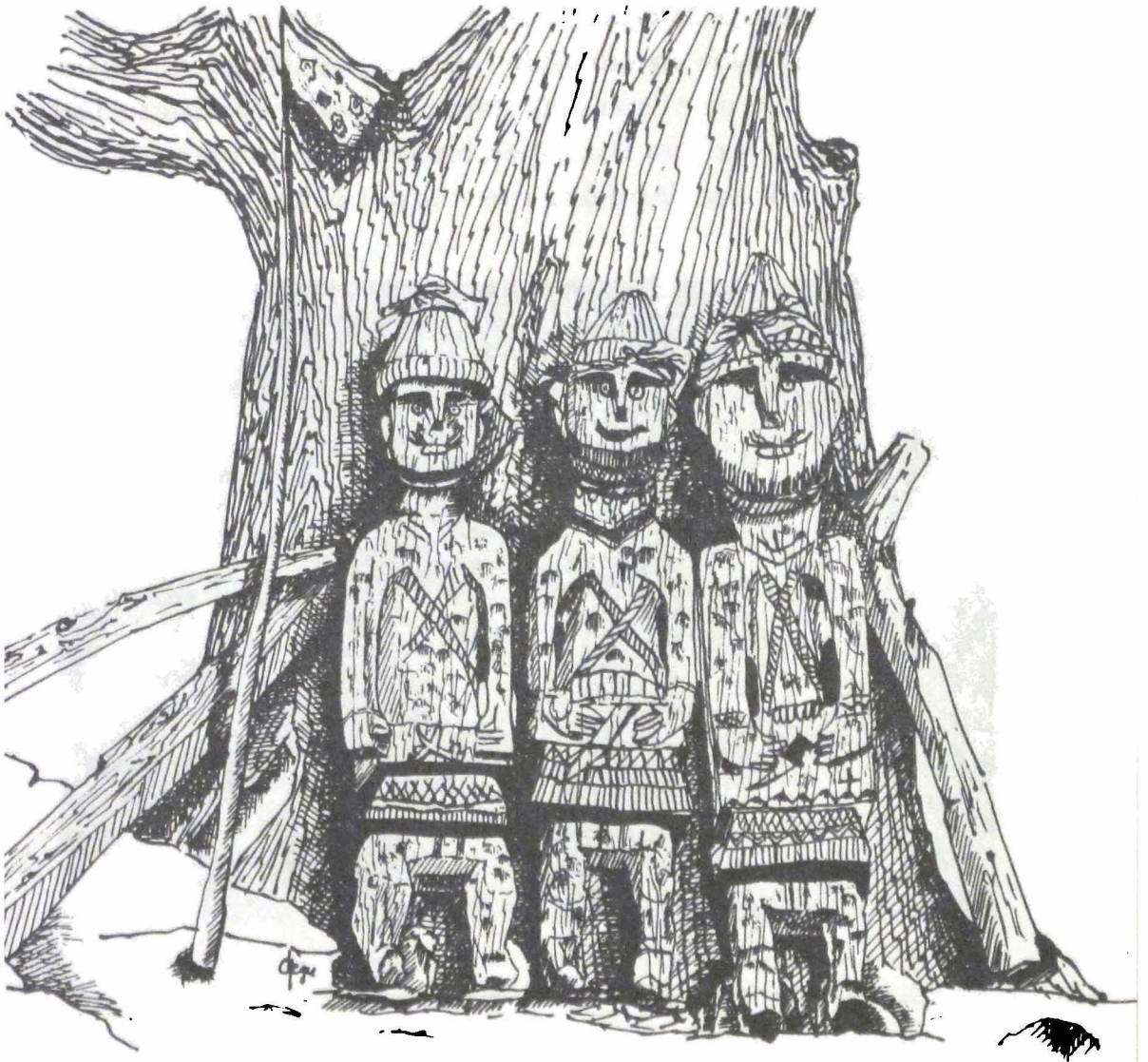
Images of ancestors/statuary

November is also the month of the passage of the dead to the state of ancestry. If a son wishes to honour the memory of his father – and social pressures see to it that he carries out his duties – he will choose the last days of this month to erect a wooden statue, an image of the ancestor, *gandao*.

A year at least must pass between the funeral and the erection of the statue. The family then waits until autumn, the season of abundance and therefore opportune for a second series of funeral ceremonies. As soon as the decision is announced, the female relatives of the deceased start to bake bread: a basket full of wheaten galettes and a tray of walnut bread. The next day, several men, woodcutters and carpenters, go off to the forest. There they look for the most suitable fir tree, and call upon the deceased by name, so that a link may be forged between them. When they find a tree with very fine knots, they fell it and then blow on it, so that the dead man's face may penetrate the wood. Once the tree has been felled, the men place a basket of cheese and galettes in front of the trunk, thereby inviting the soul of the deceased to take refuge within it. The woodcutters then cut the trunk down to the size of the dead man⁶¹ and carry it back to a field, close to the cemetery, where they light a big fire.

The family offers the guests pumpkins, cheese and dried mulberries. Specialised carvers fashion the face: a domed forehead, the mouth outlined by clenched teeth, a round chin. They hollow out sockets for the eyes and insert in them two white pebbles or two cowries. The head is large and out of

61. See R.L. Turner, *A comparative dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages*. The word *gandao* may be compared with the Sanscrit *ganda*, branch or joint (for a plant), or *gandi*, tree trunk, from roots to branches.



Three funeral statues installed in the cemetery of Rumbur in November 1980 for the glory of a father accompanied by his two sons

proportion with the body. It is decorated with an enormous conical turban with a rounded border. A heavy necklace encircles the neck. The arms hang free from the body, forming a regular curve from shoulders to hips. The costume differs little from one statue to another; it consists of a long tunic and ample trousers narrowing towards the ends to allow for the representation of puttees. The chest is covered by crossed cartridge belts or protective bandoliers. Some of these

may be adorned with cowries. A bow, a quiver or a rifle barrel may protrude over one shoulder. Generally, the statues have no feet. This type of standing statue is usually 160 cm to 180 cm high. The carvers use vegetable dyes to prepare red and black paints for the beard and the contour of the eyes.



The temporary statues are all carved after the same model. The turban recalls the bravery of the ancestors, the necklace their wealth and past generosity.

As night falls, the praise-giving and the dances start. The statue is set up in the field, and the dancers turn around it. The sturdiest of them pick it up, carrying it on their backs as they dance with heavy steps. The hymns to the glory of the deceased say that he is moving and coming back to life. . .

Here is the eulogy improvised by Kasi Khoshnawas on the occasion of the erection of a *gandao* in honour of Pilin Bek, at Rumbur, in November 1980:

“You return to life with the former scent of riches, oh my brother. Your grandfather Jugulak was the owner of so

many he-goat horns. In the spring month, he entered the ears of his nanny goats [he was always with them] when he led them to the valley of Chitral.

“Your ancestors opened up lands to plant new crops near the pastures. They built the stables of Kalashagrum, at the time your father was born.

“At the Jestak Han, they engraved the pillars as an insect bores wood. The radiance of those sculptures shone as far as the top of Latchiwau.

“Your father, Sher Bek, extended his wise influence over 20 households. Shiermun and Gulzar Khan keep in memory all his acts. . .

“Today you return to life and you look upon the world. . .”⁶²

At dawn, the relatives proceeded to slaughter goats, as many as for the funeral ceremonies. “When the sun confirmed its light”, the gathering ate the meat and the bread. Finally, the *gandao* was carried to the cemetery and set up near the coffin of the ancestor, surrounded by the red banners of killers of men and of donors.

Louis Dupree reports the following: “In Kafir times, the people placed the corpse in a wooden coffin in a special graveyard area. The body was exposed for the elements to absorb. One year after death, a wooden effigy replaced the corpse. The Kafir believed that the soul or spirit of the dead remained near his or her home for a long time, and would dwell in his or her wooden representation. Often the Kafir held village councils in the graveyard area, so that all members of the group, living and dead, could participate”.⁶³

The Kalash likewise observe an interval of at least one year, the time needed for the body to decompose. At Birir and Bumburet, custom prohibited burial, and the bodies.

62. For the problem of the origin of the shape of the *gandao*, see Loude, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41; also “La statuaire funéraire des Kalash-Kafirs du Chitral”, *Objets et mondes*, Paris, vol. 22, fascicle 1.

63. L. Dupree, *Anthropology in Afghanistan*, American Universities field staff, 1966.

placed in coffins⁶⁴ that were generally adorned with a solar wheel, rapidly disintegrated until only the skeletons were left. At Rumbur the community was so small when it first settled there that it admitted itself incapable of protecting the tombs from thieves and predators. It was so fearful of violation and of the pillage of jewellery and weapons, which it believed would lead to cataclysms, that it preferred to modify custom and bury the bodies after hiding them for a time in caves. In the other two valleys, such exposure continued until the 1970s, when it was given up for similar reasons of superstitious terror before the influx of the Moslems.

Formerly, the anchoring of a soul in a visible representation does not seem to have been a major preoccupation dictated by the fear that it might wander off.⁶⁵

“At the death of Mamur, his son Kamaran wanted to bring his father back to life in the manner of the Kafir statues. In those days, there were no *gandao* at Birir, and no one knew how to make them. So he had an embroidered robe taken to Dumu, a Kafir of Kamdesh, and asked him in exchange to carve a miniature replica that would be easy to bring back and copy. A carpenter was thus able to make the statue. But the people of Birir refused to dance round such a strange figure. Kamaran distributed twelve cows among all the participants so that this extraordinary expenditure would prompt them to dance.”

This story shows the influence of Kafir practices on Birir customs. Given the interchanges between the three valleys, it may be assumed that the same evolution in the cult of ancestors took place at Rumbur and Bumburet not long afterwards. To borrow from a neighbouring tradition in order to nourish one's own implies the existence of a real need, of a

64. See Turner, *op. cit.*, *mandau*, coffin in Kalasha, may be compared with the Sanscrit *mandala*, solar or lunar disc.

65. There again, there is concordance with the Indian attitude for, according to Herodotus, “the Indians never raise monuments to their dead, a man's value and the poems dedicated to him later being amply sufficient, they say, to perpetuate his memory”. (See J. Lacarriere, *En cheminant avec Hérodote*, Paris, 1981, p. 288.)

sense of something lacking. The establishment of the Kalash in the narrow confines of their present territory coincided with the distressing period of their defeat in their struggles against the Chitrali converts.

Some four centuries ago, the Kalash "kings", or charismatic leaders, disappeared with the loss of independence. The policies of the kings of Chitral in regard to the Kalash, aimed at their enslavement or conversion, threatened the identity of the group, already shaken by the meagre support they had received from the gods. The restoration of contact with the gods and the dead required the strengthening of custom or even the introduction of innovations, the sole alternative to definitive disaster. Having the ancestors stand watch at the cemetery or at the entrance to the village gave a sense of security to the living. The army of the dead, with their air of warlike ferocity, protected the territory in the place of the fighters who had been defeated. In return, the statues facilitated communication and exchanges with the ancestors. The anchoring of souls was part of the revitalisation of custom and the establishment of a system based on visible glory. The virtues of violence gave place to feats of generosity. Nevertheless, hunting and murder in ambush gave the young and the less wealthy access to recognition. Finally, the effigies served to resurrect the most deserving and strengthened the whole edifice.

In Kafiristan, among the Kam Kafirs, some men did not wait to die before celebrating their death. If they had succeeded in all the trials of honour, the only thing left to them was to accede to the rank of ancestor in their lifetime. A ceremony, *sanowkun*, was instituted at which the candidate was dressed as an "image of the ancestor", in conformity with the wooden representations. This practice inspired the apotheosis of the *pimasa* among the Kalash, consisting in a simu-

lation of death during a retreat in the forest, followed by a return to the village under the guise of an ancestor.⁶⁶

The feast of the autumn cows Extravagant funeral ceremonies

The Kafirs left statuary to their slaves, the *bari*, just as they unloaded on them all artisanal work, regarded as impure. The Kalash, on the other hand, having no inferior class of artisans, make the *gandao* themselves, and those who know how to carve the conventional figures are in no way looked down upon. Indeed, one of the seven specialists of the Rumbur valley, Satjuan, has the rank of an important man. Moreover, to produce a wooden image of the deceased is regarded as equivalent to making a fine speech of praise, in return for which the carver will receive recognition and prestige from the dead man's lineage. That is why a carpenter-carver must not make a statue for a member of his own lineage.

The erection of a standing statue implies duplicating the expenditure on food incurred for the funeral ceremonies the year before. It is evidence of normal generosity and worthiness, without extravagance. For an exceptional donor, custom envisages an equestrian statue.

Few men, only five in fact, have "returned to life" on horseback since the Kalash settled at Rumbur. But the community knows that when the patriarch of the *Mutimire*, dies, his son will have to erect an equestrian statue in his honour because of the succession of remarkable actions

66. *Sunowkun*, see Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 461-462. *Pimasa*, see Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

The Kalash also speak of the *junatsar*, an unprecedented funeral feast given by Su-Malik, the mythical Kalash king of Mastuj, in his lifetime. The feast lasted seven days. His descendants, probably some of the Kho, rejected the Islamisation of upper Chitral and settled at Tarasguru, a village at the entrance to Bumburet. They are now called descendants of Share.

which he has accomplished. For example, he gave a *biramor* preceded by a "goat count" and the restoration of a sanctuary. That feat assures him, at his death, of the honour of a magnificent feast such as has not been seen since the second decade of this century, the *shiaruga*, literally, "autumn cows". The practice of incurring such monumental expenditure is borrowed from the Bashgali, who hold bovines in far greater esteem. For the Kalash, who prize goats and own few cows, such an undertaking was aimed at creating an exceptional test, to be rewarded by exceptional prestige. In addition to the normal expenses, the descendants of the deceased have to supply a cow to each of the lineal segments of the valleys as well as to the representatives of the lineages of Birir and Bumburet, in all at least 60 heads. The sumptuous gifts do not stop there: they will also include 2.4 tons of wheat, 1.2 tons of millet, 12 skins of milk and 12 round cheeses, *kila*, of the Bashgali type.⁶⁷

The dancing goes on for five days, in a field that has not been harvested or that has been planted with winter wheat, according to the season. The stamping will ruin the crop. But the originality of these festivities does not reside in that alone: the relatives of the deceased tie ropes all round the assembly area on which they hang glittering robes "to make the countryside magnificent!" The lineage sisters dance with big round cheeses stuck on poles. And the musician plays a plaintive air on a horn flute, simulating the widow's grief, while seven men dance as they drink curdled milk. That is how the elders describe the proceedings, and they in turn go only by what their fathers have told them, for no one living has ever witnessed such an occasion.

A year later, the family of the deceased would reproduce

67. *Kila*, a big round cheese about 30 cm in diameter, of Bashgali origin. It is made with a particular form of rennet: a powder derived from the dried and smoked stomachs of one-week-old kids. This substance is diluted in water and milk, and boiled. When it is added to fresh milk, it causes curdling. The cheese thus obtained is drained, then pressed into cylindrical shape and left to dry.

a funeral feast at normal cost for the erection of the *istorgan-dao*,⁶⁸ the equestrian statue. If the number of cows distributed the previous year had really reached sixty, then the horse would have two heads, but if the donor had set the limit at thirty, the horse would have only one. The day following the installation of this imposing statue in the cemetery, there would be further festivities to mark the erection of the *gundurik*, a small statue of a man seated or on horseback. This figurine has the same anthropomorphic and vestimentary characteristics as the *gandao*. It would be hoisted on a decorated pole, placed in one of the dead man's fields or at the entrance to his village. The *gundurik* ensures the presence of the ancestor among the living better than does the *gandao* in the cemetery, a place that is visited only for specific reasons.

The Kalash do not fear the dead, but they avoid provoking them to anger. Their cult of the dead aims rather, as Lévi-Strauss has put it, "at monopolising them, at involving them at every instant in the struggles of the living".⁶⁹

The Kalash do not slaughter animals in the cemetery, but they may strew bread on an ancestor's tomb to pacify or propitiate him. They probably did so also at the foot of the statues in the days, not so far back, when many such statues were aligned beside the coffins.

If a man is stricken by an inexplicable illness, he will call upon a healer endowed with the power of discerning the root of the complaint by the oscillations of a bow, the *tum'kut-chawao*. If he determines that the illness is due to the dis-

68. Mahamarat, one of the great Kalash of tradition, requested his son to build a house in the cemetery to shelter his statue and his two-headed horse. The hooves of the front legs and the two heads protruded from the shelter.

This request may be compared with the portrayal of a horse's head protruding from a window to be found on ancient Hellenic tombs, symbolising resurrection. (See Gubernatis, *op. cit.*, p. 361.)

69. Lévi-Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

pleasure of an ancestor, then the sick man or a member of his family will carry out a *kushurik*, that is, break bread upon his tomb.⁷⁰

The ancestors play an essential role in everyday life. And during festivities, their goodwill is unfailingly sought by means of offerings.

The horse and the voyage of the soul

The fabulous statues of horsemen have now disappeared, but their image still haunts the minds of a once warlike people, who cherish the memory of their fighting chiefs. At the *biramor*, the herdsman/donor becomes king for a day: a proud horseman.

The horse retains an important place in Kalash thought, although, it is virtually impossible for the present-day Kalash to keep horses owing to the scarcity of grass in the valleys. The presence of the divine is symbolised by wooden heads of this revered animal in the sanctuaries of Sajigor, Mahandeo, Jestak and others.

When associated with man, the horse symbolises a change of state, a position far beyond that of ordinary mortals, giving access to immortality. An interesting parallel has been drawn between the two-headed horses of the Kalash and the representation on the coins of the Kushan emperors of Ahura Mazda, the all-powerful sun god of the Iranian pantheon.⁷¹ For the Indo-Iranians, the horse, effectively associated with the sun, always represented royal and military power. Among the Kalash, the tunics of the statues are adorned with solar wheels; moreover, the horse symbolises the rank achieved by the dead, a rank to which no living man may accede. But if the associated images of the sun and the horse indicate a man's

70. See V. Lievre, "Pratiques medicales avec interventions de guerisseurs lies au sacre -- Etiologies de la maladie chez les Kalash du Pakistan", *Bulletin d'ethno-medecine*, No. 23, June 1983.

71. Jettmar, *op. cit.*, p. 40.



Sanctuary of the god Mahadeo at Rumbur: four horse heads symbolise the presence of the divinity

social position, they also appear to be clearly connected with funerary symbolism, as attested by the ancient Indo-European cultures.

In Vedic India, the sun was sometimes depicted in the form of a stallion carrying off souls to the land of the dead. This assumption by the Divine Sun of the attributes of a horse represented its funeral role, owing to its daily voyages into the night.⁷² A similar idea may be found among the Kalash: they carved solar wheels on open coffins, always placing the body in the cemetery in the axis of the sun's daily round; and tradition has it that a horse carried the soul to the "gilded houses" of the after-life across an "invisible bridge".⁷³ As revealed by the shaman Bangutai:

72. M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Paris, 1974, p. 131.

73. See Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 28, "The houses of the after life and the bridge of souls"

To dream of climbing the mountain of Palar by the invisible bridge of souls is a premonition of the death of a relative. This "invisible bridge" of the Kalash is reminiscent of the *Çimât* bridge, the narrow path of the soul towards the cosmic mountain, in the beliefs of ancient Iran.

“Bangutai, a man inspired, fell ill. It was a long illness. One night, he became worse and the fairies carried his soul on horseback to the top of the mountain of Palar. There Bangutai saw all the souls of the dead living in gilded houses shaped like the Kalash houses today. But they were of gold. When they got there, the fairies admitted that they had made a mistake, that it was not Bangutai’s hour, but Tamin’s. They returned to collect Tamin, who was not sick at all. They carried back his soul on horseback. Six days later, Tamin died. Bangutai’s soul was able to rejoin his body, which regained health. It was he who revealed to the Kalash the existence of the gilded houses, the homes of souls.”

Today the Kalash place no solar interpretation on this function of the horse as a carrier of souls; however, the houses of the after-life are still “gilded”. They simply continue to reproduce models of statues and decorations which correspond, in fact, to the hope of immortality.

The role of the horse also fits into the shamanic context of Kalash society. It was indeed a shaman, a *dehar*, transported on horseback, who threw light on the topography of the other world, thrusting back the frontiers of the unknown through his ecstatic experience.

Here is a vision recounted by Kasi Khoshnawas:

“My father was ill; his elder brother, on the other hand, was well. I wanted to carry out a sacrifice on the roof of our house for my father’s health, and I went to the valley of Sanduriga to get a goat from our stables. I was accompanied by a relative. On our way back, when we had almost reached the village, we saw my father’s elder brother riding a horse, clothed in a ceremonial robe, a white turban on his head, and laughing as he passed us. But when we came home, we found him there, and he claimed that he had not left the house. The ceremonial robe was in its usual place. We sacrificed the goat and ate the meat, when suddenly my father’s brother began to complain of stomach pains, which rapidly worsened. Less than an hour after the meal, he was dead. It was his departing soul that we had passed. . .”

Kasi Khoshnawas also recounted:

“Nileshi was not at all sick. His brother Alamas was that day minding the goats in the valley of Sanduriga. Suddenly, he saw his brother Nileshi riding a white horse. Before disappearing, Nileshi advised him: ‘Mind the goats well, don’t let them eat the crops’. Another man, Taktak, who was minding the calves, also saw him and panicked (the apparition was so strange). That very evening, Nileshi fell ill and died after eating bread.”

It is possible that these revelations concerning the voyage of souls to the gilded houses coincided with the “infernal” pressures of Islam and of monotheism. This precise, and perhaps recent, localisation of dwellings for the dead near to Khodai affords the best answer to the Moslem arguments concerning the survival of the just near to God. But if indeed there has been any reinterpretation, it has used ancient symbols, the horse and the bridge of souls, an ancient Iranian idea.

Disappearance of the funerary statues and their renewal

The Kafirs believed that the disappearance of funerary statues, just like the violation of tombs, brought about the worst sort of weather and natural catastrophes, expressing the justified revenge of ancestors endowed with virtually divine power.

During the course of the present century, the cemeteries have lost their standing and equestrian statues, which were either destroyed by iconoclasts or stolen in order to be sold to Westerners or to museums. Some, it was said, had even been sold by members of the Kalash! The grave repercussions of these losses on the equilibrium between living and dead, on the cult of ancestors, can well be imagined. Whether they were the consequence or the cause of the growing corruption of the territory, the result was the same.

Hence the appearance of new *gandav* in the valleys since the autumn of 1980 has reawakened the group’s confidence in



The drawing of a gandao by a young shepherd: funerary statues. Such an unusual drawing of the images of the ancestors is disapproved of

its values, and seems to indicate a new surge of resistance. Since November 1980, three standing statues have stood in the Rumbur cemetery, depicting a *Baloe* donor and his two sons. In November 1982, two effigies honouring a father and a son were placed at the entrance to the village of Bio, which forms the upper boundary of the Birir valley: one upright, the other seated on a chair.⁷⁴

⁷⁴This feature is indicative both of a privilege accorded to the deceased and of the clear influence of the former Kafirs on the statuary of Birir. The models used in that valley are altogether different from those used in Rumbur and Bumburet; they are inspired by the creations of their Waigali and Bashgali neighbours. In the last century there was even a statue of a flute-player.

Similarly, the Birila imitate the Kafir memorials, building a gateway at the entrance to the village, near the funerary statues. For at Birir the images of the ancestors are a part of everyday life, not relegated to the cemetery. Since November 1982, a commemorative statue has stood within sight of the houses of Bio; it is made of rough wood, with no decorative motifs, and to cover its cost 24 goats were sacrificed "so that the lineage of the deceased portrayed might find itself at the head of the community".

The notion that they have equal access to the gilded dwellings reassures the Kalash concerning their after-life, but, had they given way to discouragement, they might well have abandoned the practice of erecting statues and therefore the pursuit of a better immortality, with the attendant danger of the breakdown of their system, which tends to smooth out the inherent inequalities of life.

Their Moslem neighbours are constantly making fun of the wealthy Kalash. They run down their ruinous generosity and term ridiculous their practice of festive expenditures in general. But if the wealthy were to give in to the temptation of accumulating goods solely for their own benefit, Kalash society would break down. At the same time, the progressive replacement of barter by money stimulates as everywhere, the desire to acquire riches without having to give anything in return. The immediate and individual enjoyment of wealth would thus be likely to destroy the practice of collective subsistence, whereby the privileged are obliged to give constant support to the poor. As this eulogy to Brumburyak, an ancestor of the *Mutimire*, recounts:

“In Brumburyak’s time, a stubborn winter spoiled the spring. The snow lasted so long that the ploughing season passed and work in the fields could not be completed. The same disaster occurred the following year, and famine gripped the valley.

“Brumburyak questioned his wife Kagayak and his grandson Khan: ‘What can be done, how can the people’s lives be saved? Can we share our grain among everyone?’ Brumburyak was a very wealthy man, and his storehouses were still full of reserves. His grandson and his wife replied: ‘No, it isn’t possible. If we distribute everything at the same time, the people are so hungry that they will fall upon the bread and eat it all up. And they will be hungry again afterwards. It would be better to have them come here every day and to prepare a daily ration for each.’

“Brumburyak summoned the 140 hungriest, those who had nothing left at all, and gave them each a *tatori*, a big

galette. He fed them thus until the summer tilling, the mulberry season. In this way, he saved the lives of the inhabitants of the valley, and today, when the *Mutimire* give a feast, the other lineages recall the goodness of Brumburyak, ancestor of the *Mutimire*, in their eulogies.”

The Kalash system, by its originality, challenges any political exploitation of the Sermon on the Mount by the Christian West. To “Blessed are the poor”, for they will be rewarded in heaven for the pain and servitude they have suffered at the hands of the powerful, the Kalash principle replies: Blessed are the rich, for they will gain immortality in exchange for their repeated generosity for the benefit of the community. This solidarity is based on a realistic conception of the soul, on a belief in the reconstitution, after death, of a society of individuals endowed with the personalities they have developed on earth. The rich will obtain the highest profit in the after-life for a proportional effort here below. And the poor will never experience complete destitution in this chance-ridden world. No one is left on the scrap heap.

This system has proved its efficacy by enabling the Kalash to confront the upheavals and reverses of history. The complex balance of the lineages among themselves and between the living and the dead is re-enacted each year. In autumn, on a more or less considerable scale according to the number and size of the events celebrated. These festivities, made possible through the initiative of individuals, do not necessarily imply the participation of the group as a whole. However, this cyclical reconstitution and consolidation of the social edifice, while relying heavily on the work of man, also asks much of nature, which at the end of November is exhausted by both man and the march of time, and enters into the disquieting phase of decay.

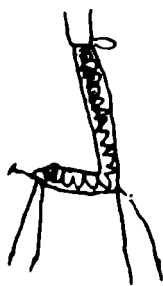
Then comes the second part of the Kalash festive activity. Here it is a case of human beings collectively, and no longer certain individuals, expressing their confidence in and generosity towards the gods, and returning to them a part of the

bounties accorded them, so that the forces of life may be renewed. For although the social structure is preserved thanks to the vigilance of all, the edifice as a whole remains, in the last analysis, at the mercy of the gods. It is upon the long feast of December that the safeguard of Kalash identity depends, and it is therefore an event of essential importance.



III

DECEMBER, THE LICENTIOUS AND THE SACRED



A DIFFERENT KIND OF TIME RITES OF CLEAVAGE AND OPENING

“Advents”

A Kalash saying announces the coming of winter thus: “Five days before it snows, the crows wash themselves and the cows dance” If the birds, too, clean their feathers with earth, December will be cold. Normally, if there is no climatic upheaval, autumn dies gently in the sunny quietude of the last days of November, among the yellowing leaves. Indeed, in the absence of prestigious events, such as a wedding or the erection of an effigy, November is simply called “the month of the falling leaves”. In years when there are no festive excitements, the end of autumn more obviously plays its role as the period of transition between the completion of harvesting and the advent of the winter ceremonies.

Once the goods of all its members have been stored and the herds returned to their stables, each lineage in turn closes the productive cycle by what is called an “autumn” sacrifice, *shiaru prejesh*, to thank the gods and the fairies for their constant protection, and to feed the community. These offerings to Sajigor – a goat per each stable owned by each lineage – effect both a break with the year that has just ended and a connection with a time of another kind, that of the winter feast, which is celebrated at the period when all activities have ceased precisely in order to prepare the most favourable economic future.

The reciprocity among lineages of these sacrifices, which Van Gennep calls "advents", confirms the cohesion of a group whose members have been scattered since the first spring labours, but who must be reunited on the eve of the great common celebrations of the revitalisation of all forces.¹

The path of the sun

At the end of autumn, the elders attentively observe the setting sun as it sinks behind the mountain, the last point touched by its rays before it disappears. They have long known its path, its coming and going from one solstice to the next, thanks to a series of landmarks they have noted on the peaks. Its yearly return over a particular tree, crest or rock enables them to ensure the strict periodicity of the rites. When the sun sinks near a certain fir tree standing alone on top of a mountain opposite Kalashagrum, a spot known as *daem utala*, "the high pomegranate tree", the oldest among them warn the inhabitants that the festivities will soon begin. They also say that the sun will enter its winter house for seven days, a withdrawal that coincides with the first serious onslaughts of the cold: the seven days of "little ice".

This repeated decline in the sun's strength could lead to the fear that nature's energy would be spent, thus jeopardising the fate of future harvests and of society as a whole. After all, even if the wheat sown in October is already showing shoots, these will soon be covered by snow, and no one can be certain that the snow will have disappeared in time for the spring sowing; in the past, for example, the persistence of the cold for two successive years reduced the community to famine. Similarly, the nanny goats have been fecundated and the kids, like the seeds, are considered to be buried. But who knows whether there will be a happy ending to it all? The winter, of course, cannot last for ever. But the Kalash, like most peoples dependent upon an agrarian cycle, need to feel that they are

1. A. Van Gennep, *Le Cycle des douze jours*, p. 2867. Part 2, vol. 7 in *Manuel de Folklore français contemporain, 1937-1958* (9 vol.)

implicated in the regeneration of nature. The renewal will depend upon their active intervention, especially since they realise that by their harvesting and gathering they are contributing to the gradual depletion of the soil. This feeling of responsibility demands a reconciliation with the active forces of the environment, the gods. And if the Kalash express no anxiety – quite the contrary – at the approach of so much uncertainty, it is because they know how to exercise it, through the feast of *Chaumos*.

There can be no doubting, the acts of this complex ceremonial scenario, dictated by a god, Balumain, the greatest intercessor with the Creator, revealed by the most inspired of the shamans, Naga Dehar, and carried out correctly each year by human beings, guarantee, by their strict succession, their expected efficacy: the fulfilment of the people's wishes. Armed with its sense of responsibility, Kalash society seems to arouse the same sentiment in the gods, the spirits and the ancestors it invokes, prays to and invites to feast with it. Renewal will depend upon this carefully codified series of gifts and counter-gifts between the living and the sacred: sacrifices, offerings and prayers in exchange for fertility, fecundity and health.

Therefore, as soon as the forthcoming celebrations are announced, the Kalash watch the path of the sun. Each notes the passing of the days from the eve to the heart of the feast. Each of these days has a name connected with the rites to be accomplished during the preparatory build-up to the high point of the festivities: the coming of the great god Balumain. He will come from the original land of the Kalash at the dawn, following the longest night, and leave again two days later when the light reasserts its rights over the darkness.

This feast, which is spread over nearly a month, starting before and ending after the solstice, may be regarded as a concentration of the cult of Balumain, who is absent the rest of the year. The Kalash believe that the god comes to take the prayers of his faithful and to think them over before the opening of the new time of the future. There is thus a long

complicity between the god and his people, the feast being simply the response to his teaching. A look back into mythology makes it possible to understand the establishment of the ritual models at the beginning of time, and the subsequent necessity of instituting this essential event of *Chaumos*.

Background to the *Chaumos* – myths and rites

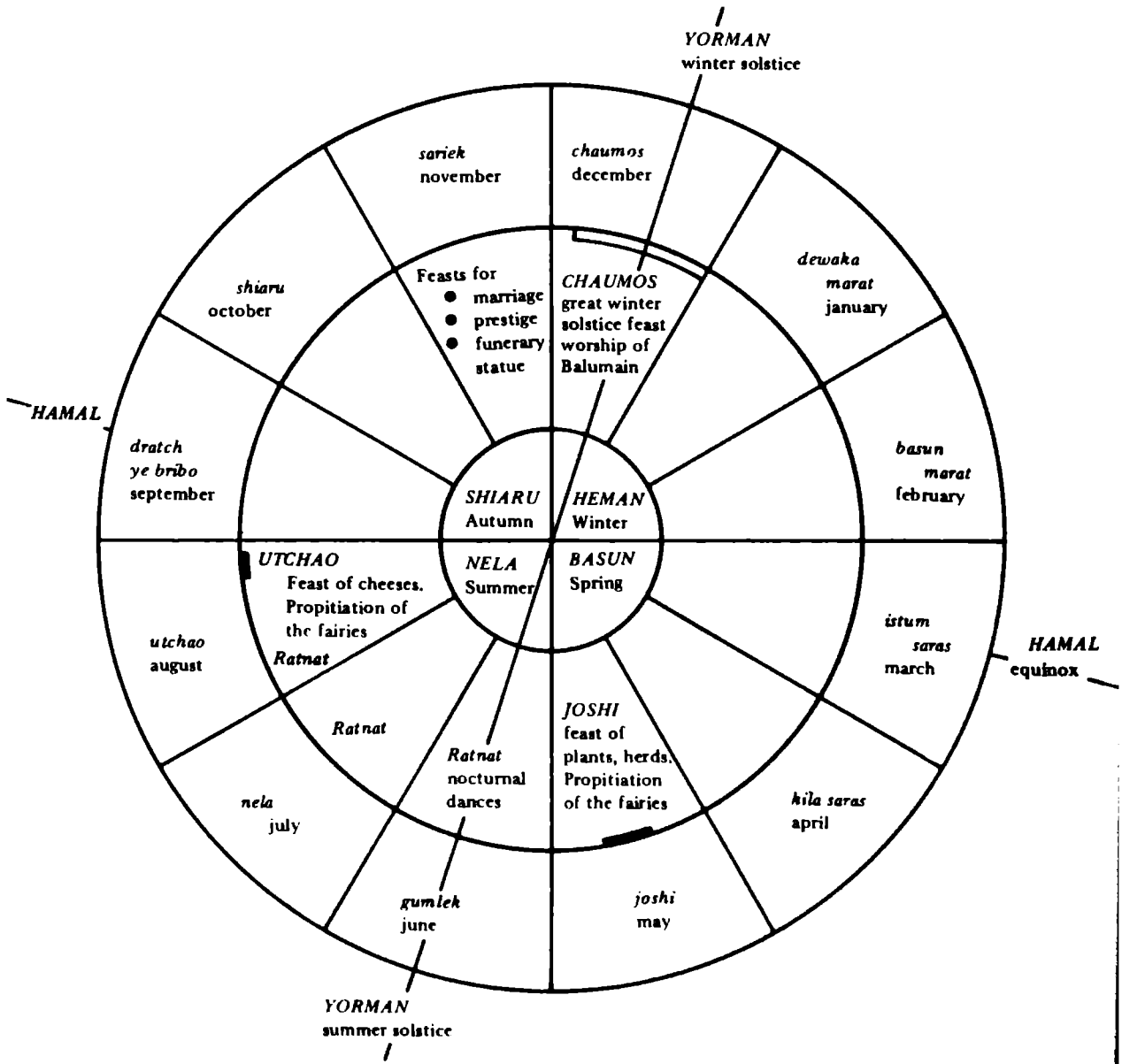
*“Man produces nothing that is not
authorised by the exemplary act of
the gods.” (J.J. Wunenburger,
La Fête, le Jeu et le Sacré.)*

The destiny of the Kalash cannot be placed in the category of great expansionist adventures. The myths recording it are marked mainly by changes, dangerous phases for a society faithful to a cyclical conception of time and concerned to endure with its own values. The description and interpretation of the various “settlement myths”, reveal a ceaseless effort by the Kalash to reduce the negative impact of unfavourable historical circumstances and to give them, as Eliade suggests, “a metaphysical significance”,² that is not only reassuring but also in accord with their way of thinking. Essentially, the feast of the *Chaumos* is a result of one of the recent endeavours to resist historical adversity by the creation of a mythical model and the reinforcement of ritual.

The Kalash recount that at the beginning of time their people had wandered about without knowing where to go, where to settle. This tale may hark back to the migration of the Indo-Aryans, to whom those distant ancestors may have belonged (about 1500 B.C.). Their wanderings would have taken them over the Iranian plateau and across central Asia, a long trek indeed. According to Kasi Khoshnawas, it was “a wandering that lasted 150 years!”.

2. M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, Paris, 1979, p. 166.

The Kalash calendar of Rumbur



The three regular yearly feasts, as well as the variable November feasts (their duration corresponds to the heavy line) appear in the middle circle. The twelve months of the year are indicated in kalasha together with their equivalent in the solar calendar.

“Then one man felt himself invested with the power to communicate with the Supreme Being, who showed that first shaman/dehar the way to Tsyam, where he must lead his people. The shaman identified a light in the sky as a sign from God. The light stood still for five days over a virgin territory, then disappeared. The inspired man assembled the elders and declared: “This place is Tsyam, revealed by God. Let us pray and offer sacrifice, we shall remain here. . . .”

Those days of pastoral nomadism were marked by the presence, however distant, of a celestial Supreme Being, Dyaus for the Indo-Aryans, Dezau for the Kalash. The two names stem from the Sanscrit *div*, light of day. Only the shamans could link man to this transcendent Creator through their power of speaking with heaven, and interpret his intentions. So the Kalash let themselves be guided by the “first shaman”, who could read the celestial signs. There was nothing surprising in that. They left central Asia, the territory of predilection of shamanism, and established themselves in Tsyam, a mysterious land but doubtless suitable for a pastoral people, a valley probably situated to the south-east of what is now Afghanistan.³

Thus, for the first time the Kalash ceased their wanderings and settled. Taking a telescopic view of history, it may be said that the other waves of Indo-Aryans crossed the Khyber Pass and the Hindu Kush, and continued their migration towards India (1,200–1,000 B.C.).

But settlement implied a quite different type of relationship with nature and the divine. The shaman taught the modes of sacrifice, modes that took account of a new activity: agriculture. Although, stock-raising remained the principal resource of the Kalash, vegetal offerings were combined with animal sacrifices.

3. See G. Morgenstierne, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

“The dehar laid down the sacrificial acts. He had a wall built (a stone table) and bulls placed at each of the four corners, and three goats in the middle. Wheat was strewn all round the sanctuary. A seven-year-old child circled the sacred area. He was the first “purified one”. The shaman explained the virtues of washing hands and arms.”

The myth describes a rite linking the territory with the cosmos, in the spirit of those who knew what the Indo-Aryans had done when they settled in an unknown place. The area marked out by grains of wheat and circled by a virgin boy reproduces the original centre of Creation. The place of “equilibrium of the world”, with a bull at each corner, would indicate a greater esteem for cattle in those times, when the Kalash were still close to the Indo-Aryan community.

Once the group was settled, it discovered, through the cycles of vegetation, a nature filled with tensions, dangers and uncertainties, quite different from nature as they had hitherto perceived it. And little relief from the anxieties it produced could be expected from the immutable indifference of a celestial god.

“For seven years, a light appeared continuously in a holm-oak. The people did not know what was happening. The shaman explained that this tree was sacred. A purified child must present offerings to it. He revealed the qualities of wine, of water and of milk, three pure liquids, and the beneficial action of flaming juniper.

“Then Balumain appeared. The dehar, who alone could see the god, revealed his presence, on horseback. Balumain had waited seven years for the purification rites to be understood and for a place to be made ready for his coming on earth. Before, there had been no known place for his residence apart from the sacred holm-oak. The dehar dedicated the stone structure to him: ‘This altar belongs to Balumain, you must honour him here.’ And the people prayed to Balumain in this place. . .”

Kasi Khoshnawas added: Balumain is the first assistant of Deza. No one has ever know anything about Deza, his presence has never been revealed.

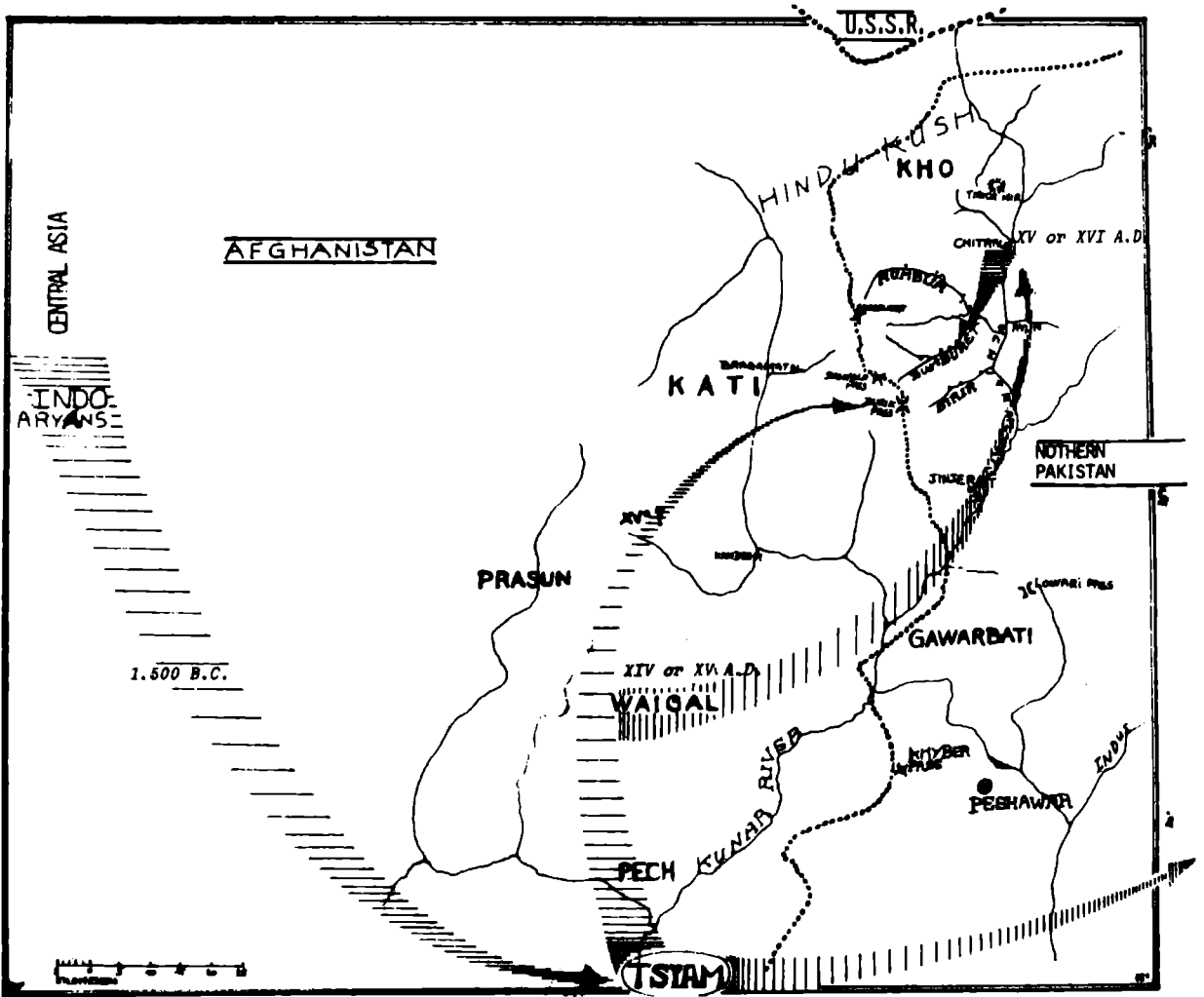
At Tsyam, the Kalash experienced the intervention of Balumain, the god of fecundity who, without upsetting the divine hierarchy, had robbed Deza of the privilege of maintaining the intercourse between gods and men. This is a typical example of the assimilation of the Supreme Being to the sun by the passage from the idea of celestial impassibility to the dynamism of a fertility figure. Balumain shines in a tree, then arrives on horseback: two solar symbols.

The Kalash revered the holm-oak⁴ in the first place on account of the vital force it represented: its "immortality", its astonishing power of disregarding the seasons by retaining its leaves. Because of this power, the tree ensured fodder for the goats even in winter; at Tsyam, the Kalash were probably closer to the mountainous regions where goats replaced cattle in the scale of economic values. The juniper tree and the holm-oak took on a sacred character through their association with the coming of Balumain. These trees made it possible for life to continue, and that permanent gift could only be the expression of a divine generosity, attentive and near at hand. From now on, the Kalash had a god who was interested in their existence.

"Shalak Shah came from Tsyam to Chitral. He waged war at the head of his army: The Kalash settled at Chitral, in the northern valleys. One clan, the Balalik, settled in Bum-buret. It was among the Balalik that Naga Dehar appeared.

"Balumain summoned Naga Dehar to Tsyam and ordered him to go to and remain at Waitdesh (in present-day Nuristan). Balumain brought Sajigor and Mahandeo to that place, after which he returned to Tysam. But two weeks later, Balumain recalled Naga Dehar to Tysam and said to him: 'Now we are

4. Holm-oak: *overcus baloot*.



Schema of the Kalash migrations from the time they occupied Tsyam until their establishment in today's territory

going to live in Bumburet, and we have to choose which of us, Mahandeo or I, should stay in Bumburet. Go back there and wait for us!''''

This myth can be explained only by comparing it with the neighbouring Chitrali and Kafir traditions. It would seem that a first wave of Kalash left Tsyam and moved into Chitral at the expense of the pagan Kho, a Dardic people. The Balalik appear to have been indigenous to the area, having settled in Bumburet and Rumbur before the arrival of the second Kalash migration to the region, in flight before other migratory

pressures. In the 14th century, there was a succession of movements of population in Kafiristan, perhaps as a result of the ruthless campaigns of Tamerlane (1398), each tribe driving out the other. The Kalash began by leaving Tsyam for Waigal.

Among the Balalik there "appeared" the greatest of all the shamans, Naga Dehar, whose power invaded space and time and penetrated the tradition of the Kalash, who badly needed a guide. His omnipresence in Chitral, from Waigal to Tsyam, twice saved them from extinction through the construction of a dynamic myth: the pressures upon them and the reverses they suffered were the expression of the will of the god himself. Thus, they were able to leave the responsibility to him – "We, the gods, are going to live in Bumburet" – and interpreted their retreat as divine advice "foreseeing the invasion."

And indeed, the Waigali tradition confirms that the Kalash remained in Waigal for only a short time, only fifteen years, according to the story. They were driven out and looked down upon. The Bashgali regarded the Kalash as their inferiors and perhaps used them as slaves.

To escape their lot, the Kalash pushed deeper into the labyrinth of the Hindu Kush, taking refuge in Bumburet. In that valley, they were joined by a previous group of Kalash who had occupied Chitral for a few generations, before being driven out in their turn by the newly converted Kho. This took place in about 1500.

The Kalash found themselves encircled. To the west were the fierce Kafirs, whose religion was similar to theirs but who indulged in raids and ambushes, particularly, at the expense of the weakest. To the east was the king of Chitral, who "protected" them under the banner of Islam by imposing taxes and forced labour on them. Defeated and faced with the loss of their identity, the Kalash no longer knew which way to turn. They had known Mahandeo in Waigal; his cult under the name of Moni is attested throughout Kafiristan. And they had known Sajigor in Bashgal. There was thus rivalry between the gods. The myth continues:

“Now we are going to live in Bumburet and we have to choose which of us, Mahandeo or I, should remain in Bumburet. Go back there and wait for us. . . !

“The two gods decided to confront each other on the Durik Pass. During the contest, the Kalash lit fires of juniper and drank wine. The duel consisted in digging an irrigation canal, one each, from the Durik Pass to the valley of Jingeret, in a single night. It was decided that the winner should possess Bumburet. Mahandeo won, but Balumain refused to recognise his defeat and insisted on a return bout at the top of the Shawala Pass. This pass separates Bashgal from Bumburet. They wagered that the one who awoke at the first light facing Bumburet should receive that valley; the loser would remain in Kafiristan. This time Mahandeo owed his victory to the complicity of Ingao, a far from impartial referee, who turned Mahandeo’s face, during his sleep, towards Bumburet, and Balumain’s, likewise during his sleep, towards Bashgal. . . Balumain was furious and withdrew, but not without this parting shot: ‘This valley will be a source of problems, I shall come there only once a year!’ ”

The fact has its importance. Balumain “gives up his place” as principal speaker with men to divinities with more specific roles. The pantheon expands in response to the daily needs of a community still under shock. Agriculture assumes a more important place in the economy – Mahandeo had proved himself the champion of irrigation – and the population required even more sensitive intercessors to express its urgent need for growth.⁵

But Balumain’s withdrawal does not mean his complete disappearance. He returns once a year, justifying his return at a fixed date by the refusal to live in this valley of “problems”

5. For a long time, agriculture must have been of only minor importance throughout Kafiristan, which explains its slow development as a means of subsistence from the first days of settlement. Agricultural work was despised by these warriors, who had preserved the mentality of the Indo-Aryan Kshattrya (with their contempt for artisanal work). Marco Polo, in his travel notes, describes (by hearsay) the inhabitants of this region, called Bolor, as “savage pagans clothed in animal skins and living by hunting” (1271–1275).

after his defeat. It is a curious defeat for the most powerful of the gods, who decides "not to use his powers for what was only a game" (to quote Kasi Khoshnawas), and who allows himself to be tricked by Ingao, a very minor divinity in comparison with himself, the god who shares out territories among the various intermediaries between the Creator and men.

One has the impression that the defeat of the great god was somehow necessary. The Kalash, at that particular time, seem to have needed to relate their own sufferings and defeats to the defeat of a god. Their faith shaken by adversity, they sought to restore the balance of their relations with the divine by manipulating this series of traumatic events. It was a case of interpreting history through a myth, as Lévi-Strauss points out:

"While remaining in History, these societies seem to have elaborated or retained a particular wisdom which prompted them to offer a desperate resistance to any modification of their structure which would enable History to irrupt into their midst."⁶

It is probable that in those moments of defeat, of self-questioning, the Kalash felt an overriding need for the intervention of the supernatural. Their suffering could not have come about by mere chance, and they must have recognised certain infringements of custom in their behaviour.⁷ They may have remembered the Supreme Being, who had been more or less forgotten the rest of the time, and must certainly have prayed to him to put an end to such adversities. But the Celestial Beings intervene only in the last resort, and in this instance did Dezau refuse his aid? The fact remains that the Kalash resorted to the myth of the defeat of Balumain, but a defeat voided and rendered obsolete by his triumphant,

6. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* II, p. 40.

7. See Loude, *op. cit.* These infringements include: having accepted the introduction of the chicken, linked by shamanic divination to the arrival of Islam (p. 19); incest committed by the last great warrior chief, Raja Wai (p. 65); bad treatment of Bashgali prisoners, also by Raja Wai (p. 61); ritual sin of the ancestors of the Birila, who sacrificed dogs instead of goats (p. 54).

eagerly awaited return once a year. And that return, moreover, was to take place at a time chosen by many of the Indo-European peoples of the northern hemisphere to celebrate the death and resurrection of the divinities of fecundity. It was also a reassuring intervention, for it preserved a means of perpetuating the cycle of time by subjecting the regeneration of nature to the return of Balumain to this new world. This "mythical slide" ensured that the old ritual gestures retained their efficacy, but as redefined to permit custom to serve as a force of resistance to change, to the dangers of proselytism.

On his first visit, Balumain laid down a number of additional observances aimed at consolidating the power of the rites already existing at the time when the ceremonies for the period of the solstice had been simpler⁸, so that the Kalash might thereby erect a rampart of purity against the increasing impurity of the outside world.

"When Balumain came to the Kalash valleys for the first time, he adopted the daughter of a fairy, and before reaching Bumburet, he asked her to find him a place to rest. She discovered a pasture called "Otak", and poured milk all over this rocky spot. The rocks took the form of animals, of humans. . .

"Naga Dehar was sleeping in his house. The fairies awakened him to warn him that Balumain was coming to Bumburet: 'Go and wait for him!' And they showed him the place chosen for the meeting, the pasture of sculptured stones. He went there, carrying three seeds of wheat and three branches of juniper. The great god was seated upon his horse. Naga Dehar took hold of the reins. A bird appeared in the sky carrying two fresh round cheeses adorned with designs of wings. He placed them on the horse and Balumain ordered him to tell the Kalash to make bread adorned with the same

8. According to Buda, Katarsing's father: "Formerly, before the time of Naga Dehar, the Kalash celebrated a winter feast that had been revealed in Tsyam, but it was a little "Chaumos."

designs as those on the two cheeses. (Bread, because it is impossible to make fresh cheese in winter – Kasi Khoshnawas.)

“Naga Dehar and Balumain went towards the first village of the valley. Balumain told Naga Dehar to follow his horse and to watch the hooves. The *dehar* looked and saw embers glowing under the horse’s hooves. He tried to gather them up. They arrived at Krakal and stopped there. Naga Dehar called Shiarakat: ‘Balumain is there, pray to him, and bring wine and branches of juniper.’ Then they went slowly down towards Kandirisar. There lived the *dehar* Buda. Naga and Buda climbed onto the roof of Buda’s house, and the three of them had a discussion. Buda’s son, who was inside the house, was worried and asked his father: ‘Whom are you talking to?’ His father, in a rage, came down from the roof and threw his son into the fire. The people of the village, seeing a great light but ignorant of the presence of Balumain, set off their dogs towards the source of the light. The god, in anger, struck the village with his whip. The village caught fire and burned down.⁹

“It was the time of the *Chaumos*, and Naga Dehar explained what Balumain had ordered.

“Balumain agreed to come and take part in the *Chaumos* each year, but he demanded that his horse be well fed.

“At Bumburet, the Kalash offered wheat for Balumain’s horse in a place called Indre’in.

“*Naga Dehar gathered the hot ashes which were appearing under the horse’s hooves. They arrived at Batrik. Balumain taught Naga Dehar the secret songs of the Chaumos. He asked him to spread the glowing embers from the horse’s hooves here. An ember sprang from Balumain’s thumb and set*

9. The village of Kandirisar was inhabited by Kalash of inferior status; they were artisans, probably what remained of the Balalik. Because of their position, they soon converted to Islam, a defection symbolised by the wrath of the god. The fire blotted out their kalash identity.

fire to the top of the mountain of Batrik. The god said: 'Every year, for the Chaumos, you must light a great fire in this place.'

"On the cheese brought by the bird there were designs of ibex and of goats: 'You must reproduce these designs on bread for each Chaumos and offer sacrifices at night. You must go to the forest and you will easily be able to hunt ibex.' The time of sacrifice arrived. Naga Dehar taught the Kalash: 'You must no longer sacrifice as you usually do. I shall communicate Balumain's wishes to you. Balumain has said: I have a servant called Pushao, who holds my horse's reins. You must sacrifice in his name. In remembrance of the fairies, you must make galettes and place them upon the shelves of the stables.'

"Among the revelations made at this first visit, Balumain informed the Kalash that two divinities protected the herds: Goshedoi in the summer season, Surisan in winter.

"When Balumain came the first time, Naga Dehar made the same demands on the people of Birir, but they refused because of the cost. So the Chaumos takes on a very different character in Birir, where they use drums, these being forbidden throughout the period of the festivities in Bumburet and Rumbur.

The day of the first offerings/sarasari

One of the key words for an understanding of Kalash thought is *pata*, proof: proof that something will happen, will be done, will take place. The news of an event seeps through the whole valley, becoming increasingly distorted as it is transmitted by word of mouth. One has to look for proof if one is not to be taken unawares by its "fall", its happening. "To begin" is always translated by "to fall".¹⁰ When would the opening day of the festivities of the *Chaumos*, *sarasari*,

10. *Curuk* (tchuruk), means "to fall" in Kalasha, but also "to begin", in connection with a feast or a religious event. The ceremonies of the Babylonian New Year could have taken place at the autumn equinox, in the month of Tishrit, derived from *shurru* to begin. See M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, p. 70.

occur? The sun had already reached the solitary fir tree, strangely named "the high pomegranate tree". The sun had brought its proof, the sign that the time had come, but would the community not be late? The women were ceaselessly grinding wheat at the mills. *Pata ne shien*, "there is no proof that they have finished." Only one man really knew, and that was Merjuan, who bore the title *Chaumos gadeirak*, the great man of the *Chaumos*. He had been given the role of master of ceremonies for a year or two. Merjuan was well known for his boundless enthusiasm and his mighty strides. He was tall, thin, with an emaciated face, his silhouette still further lengthened by the long socks he always wore, and which made his baggy trousers even baggier. He could be seen striding the length and breadth of the territory, undeterred by the steep slopes, asking each family: "Have you finished milling the grain?" For all the households must be ready at the same time. Finally, one afternoon, he ran through the villages at breakneck speed, calling out in front of each house he passed: "*Sarasari* will take place this evening! Get ready, everybody, and make bread!" He left the village seething with the excitement he had created. The women appeared on the thresholds of their houses: "This evening?" "Yes, it's this evening!" The girls rushed down to the river to fetch water. There was little time left before sundown.

This year, *sarasari* occurred on 7 December of the Western calendar. *Saras-arik* means "bring the juniper". At Tsyam, Balumain had revealed the sacred properties of this shrub. The fire of juniper lighted at the opening of the feast signifies: "A great purity is coming".¹¹

"At the hour of sunset" one herdsman per stable in turn relit the fire of the nearest sanctuary. These were the first purifying fumes rising into the air. A different time had

11. This was 7 December 1980. The harshness of the winter of 1982 restricted the magnitude of the feast, so we prefer to recall the atmosphere of the feast we attended in December 1980. The sequence of events was exactly the same in both years, but in 1982 the *Chaumos* began on 9 December, in accordance with the position of the moon.

begun. On the flat roof of each dwelling, the head of the household made a small fire with pine splinters which a virgin son, who had been purified, fed with branches of holm-oak. The boy threw in pinches of butter as the father called upon God: "Oh Khodai, I offer you this prayer, it is the time of Balumain's return, bring sons to the women of this house. . . Oh Balumain, you are returning, it is *sarasari* for the Kalash, the beginning of the *Chaumos*, make us rich and healthy, protect us from the evil eye. . ."

From each storehouse, the women brought out the cheese and the cream they had set aside for this evening. Since summer, these delicacies had been kept in a birch-bark container buried in one of the cavities dug under the irrigation canals. The coolness of the water preserved the quality of these foodstuffs, fit for the gods. A portion had in fact been reserved for them on the sacred shelf at the far end of each house, together with wheaten galettes. "The spirits feed on the taste and transmit our prayers to God!" Then each family exchanged a tray of cheese with another family of the same lineage, "for the sake of unity".

At night fall, the people of the lower valley met at the dance area of Grum, the oldest village of the valley. The adolescents were all present, as well as those in the prime of life. But the numbers depend greatly upon the weather. In very severe winters, the snow makes the paths slippery and the women of the upper villages find a thousand reasons for not venturing down the slopes: a child to be nursed, or a sick child. . . "We'll go tomorrow, the dance area will be nearer. . ." However much the elders may say that the efficacy of the celebration depends on the vigour of the participants and on the energy expended by the greatest possible numbers, bad weather sometimes transforms what should be rejoicings into a chore. Then the men complain: the feast will suffer if too many women stay away. However, in a normal December, the idea of the *sarasari* tends rather to arouse excitement among both sexes.

At the top of the rocky outcrop of Grum, the wind bent back the flames of a bonfire, forcing them down each time they threatened to flare up in people's faces. The women tried to protect themselves from the smoke by shielding their eyes with the backs of their hands. They were singing. Waves of light hollowed out the shadow of their faces, highlighting their features. Baraman, the "kasi", who was responsible for seeing that the ceremonies were carried out properly, emerged from the darkened slope, dressed in the traditional herdsman's clothes of thick white wool, with a vast tunic, wide-legged trousers and skin shoes. He raised his torch of resinous wood and announced: "The time has come to start upon your reserves." One woman opened her store-room, followed by others. Walnuts and dried mulberries must be shared out among all present; it was the time to show generosity, as well as serene confidence in the future. The gods do not appreciate avarice, and might consider the fear of winter, the fear of going short, as insulting to their power to provide for future needs.

An old empty basket, of willow, was upturned on the fire and disintegrated in a shower of sparks, joyously lighting the way for Balumain. The women sang and threw in other old baskets: "The dosser (*drai*) is burning, is going. The basket (*saweu*) is burning, going. The panier (*sohola*) is burning, going. . ."

With these worn-out baskets, the old year was burned up. A substitute was thrown into the flames to get rid of it, stains and all. It was a way of disposing of an inglorious past that could no longer serve, even as a memory, a way of rupturing the nature of time. *Sarasari* exalts the light, casting off the grip of darkness, heralding a new era. This sequence and the many others that follow fall into the classic schema of rites of passage from one year to the next, of the regeneration of time. But elsewhere they have usually subsisted in an uncertain fashion, fragmented in festive events that have become completely desacralised, or rather, emptied of all meaning. They

have to be exhumed from the influence of the revealed religions, which have sought to stifle them. Among the Kalash, on the contrary, most of these significant ritual gestures form a whole, in a sequence that gives the feast its "symbolic efficacy". All the richness of the *Chaumos* resides in its exemplariness, in the fact that it serves as a living, active model of a type of festivity to be more often found today in theoretical reconstructions than in reality.¹²

Outside the circle of light, the boys were talking about their girl friends with odd expressions on their faces. Tonight, desires were whispered, discreetly, with no naming of names. The dancing flames revealed the latent excitement. The darkness increased the pressure of this constricted setting, with its peaks and steep slopes.

The gathering were preparing to join the people of the upper valley. Down below, the village of Balanguru appeared to be aflame. The men tumbled down the slopes of Grum one after the other, holding each other by the shoulders, with repeated bursts of outlandish laughter accompanied by exaggerated movements of the hips: "Wahahaha, wahahaha. . ." The women followed. The people from the lower valley crossed the torrent over a bridge formed by a tree trunk, paying little attention to the ice. Then they moved on, the long line looking like an undulating snake. They pretended to be riding, *wishaten*, imitating the movements of a rider trotting, shoulders going up and down, and urging his mount on with both whip and voice. Because the god Balumain would come on a horse, whipping it, humans must dance in honour of the great horseman.

In the central square of Balanguru, the light of a gigantic fire vied with the darkness. The women turned their backs on the flames and sang a solemn chant for the god, covering their faces with their hands. The new arrivals surrounded them,

12. See M. Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 69: "It is of course seldom that one finds all these elements explicitly united". He is referring to the rites preceding and following the New Year.

forming a chain of men headed by the oldest and most respected, who were prodding the little boys to imitate the awkward and ludicrous equestrian gait. Gravely harnessed one to another, the little boys forgot to reproduce the bursts of outlandish laughter.

The people of the lower valley had met those of the upper valley, the world of men and that of women. They surrounded each other, approached each other, sized each other up, but never mingled. According to custom, the men should dance on this night holding juniper seedlings, *saras*, but the rarity of the species makes it difficult to observe this rule. In Bumburet, therefore, they wave great branches of fir. In Rumbur, where there is no sacred spot for feeding Balumain's horse, the dancers refrain from brandishing any symbol of plant life.

The women began to circle around, in a slow dance, chanting a prayer. One could feel the excitement heightening. Two young men, catching each other's eye, burst into the middle of the circle, between the chanting women and the fire, and began to move with sliding steps, heels to the ground, arms outstretched horizontally, jerking, tossing back their heads, laughing and panting at one and the same time. This male exhibition broke up the big circle, the women clustering in little groups, suddenly thrown into an inhabitual state of erotic excitement. Screeching as they spun around, they declared the contest open between "beautiful songs and dirty words", and began chanting lewd remarks, accompanying the words by explicitly obscene gestures.

There they were, taunting the male world, as though propelled by an irresistible force. It was an astonishing transformation. Here were women, usually so modest and gentle, breaking out in a verbal violence that reversed the established order of things, turning their backs on the reserve which they affected all the rest of the year.

The girls, especially, were bordering on hysteria as they used language that would normally have embarrassed them, language that veiled realities that were only half-known to

them. As for the married women, they roared with laughter, delighted in these refinements of vulgarity which demanded efforts of the imagination. This codified aggression remained strictly verbal, but it was aimed at stimulating sexual appetites for the laudable objective of procreation, after the seven-day period of prescribed abstinence preparatory to the coming of the god. So it was necessary to provoke the men, to hound them into proving their virility.

The men crowded together in groups to think up suitable rejoinders. They jumped up and down, then suddenly turned round, arm outstretched, index finger pointing at the girls, the better to deal out their latest strokes of inspiration. And each time a remark was repeated, it was met with peals of laughter.

Nevertheless, the men were not simply acting the part of dupes at a carnival, where prince and pauper change places. They too had to observe the decencies all the rest of the year; now was simply the time for letting off steam. The Kalash live their everyday lives without excessive prudishness, but also without departures from accepted behaviour. Although, custom tends to be permissive, tolerating premarital relations and occasional adultery, the sexual act itself, whether conjugal or not, must take place in strict intimacy. But it is above all at the level of language that a strict code exists, prescribing the rules of respect required in relations between individuals. Thus men and women must make no suggestive remarks in each other's presence. This restraint in words and attitudes is observed within the family, in the family by marriage and especially among persons of different generations; any smutty insinuation between members of two generations in immediate parental relationship is strongly reprovved. Hence, such common insults as "granddaughter of the old woman" and "grandson with the lecherousness of an old man" are careful to skip a generation. In any case, there is greater intimacy with grandparents in daily life than with parents.

During the *Chaumos*, the boys' songs are no longer poetic, but lewd. Whereas in spring they pine for the sweet

perfume of the girls, for the flowers of the rose tree or the jujube tree, linking the renewal of nature with the impulses of the heart and wishing they were as fruit falling at the feet of their beloved, tonight the tone changes and they shout out bawdy phrases.

The Kalash attribute great efficacy to this debauchery. The fecundating excitement, which is nevertheless limited to words and gestures, is aimed at increasing the population within the framework of recognised couples. It comes at an auspicious moment, where the god pays attention to men's wishes. The smutty and the sacred in combination improve the prospects of success. Tradition recounts that Balumain himself inspired this practice:

“At the time of the contest between Balumain and Mahandeo, Balumain retired defeated to Tsyam. He announced that when he came back to inaugurate the first *Chaumos*, the following year, one of his servants would precede him by 20 days: this was the *besharum dewa*, ‘the divinity without scruples’, who would teach the population the salacious songs of the *Chaumos*. And indeed this spirit, one of Balumain's 120 servants, arrived in Bumburet. He was naked. Naga Dehar, who saw and heard him, brought back the dirty songs to all the people.”

The myth justifies the acts. By the highly improper audacity of walking about naked, the divinity expresses the breach with normality, a breach that liberates people's grosser instincts for a well defined period. The Rukumula add that they have taken care to preserve the custom because their valley is better protected. At Bumburet, the Moslem presence has blunted the frenzy, and licentiousness never reaches the same heights as in Rumbur. As for Birir, where the percentage of Moslems equals that of “pagans”, sexual excesses disappeared with the disappearance of the *Budalac*.

At Rumbur, then, the first act of the *Chaumos* takes place 20 days before the *sarasari*, on a peaceful evening when adolescents of both sexes light fires in each village and feed

them with worn-out baskets. The "shameless divinity" takes advantage of this veritable threshold of the festivities to descend, and his presence gives free rein to invectives.

In the middle of all the commotion, Merjuan, the *gadeirak* of the *Chaumos*, ordered the continuation of prayers to Balumain for the protection of the valley. These prayers take the form of the famous *Bidra Kalein* chant, which may never be sung except in this month of December. Thus the sacred element reappeared. Voices mingled without dissent, in osmosis. The men took up, in chorus, the invocations of the old women, whose feet were bare in the snow or placed on still reddened logs.

"In the country of the Kalash, there are few medicines, few means of combating sickness. So we have to do everything we can to ask for health. The more dirty words we use and the more we pray, the more will health improve and riches increase!" (Mayun Bibi).

The prayers went on, punctuated now by sexual asides, which gradually took over from the pious requests. The object was again the same. The women thought up new couplets, to which the men replied in a similar vein. The women circled in the shadows. The men gesticulated and spun round, each on his own, in order to exorcise from his whole body the effect of the women's taunts.

The commotion continued until dawn. The community knew that it had entered upon the time of waiting and of promise, of gravity and of excesses. This period of uncertainty requires constant attention to matters of purity and impurity. Taboos are multiplied. From the *sarasari* onwards, no instruments may accompany the singing. The roll of drums associated with spring must not be heard until the vegetation

reappears, except in the case of funeral ceremonies.¹³ The god of Bumburet, Ingao, warned that he would go away if he heard drums beating during the *Chaumos*. The spirits and the ancestors too would flee, never to return.

Flutes are also banned because of their faculty of attracting rodents into the food reserves. The silencing of their shrill tones is thus aimed at protecting the storehouses. They will be heard again in summer, when the herds are driven to the pastures, when the crops are as yet uncut and when the mice are far from the houses.

Until the spring equinox, goat's milk may not be brought into the dwellings, as it is very pure in the period when the goats give birth to their young.

The upper valley is also closed to women up to the same date, so that the land, which was sullied by their presence during the summer season, may regain its purity. These two measures take effect from the very next day, when a rite of purification takes place in the stables and the gods are called upon to protect the herds.

13. Whenever a body disappears, as in a case of violent death or a fall down the mountain or into a river, the burial ceremonies take place round an armful of *sha*, a kind of reed that the Kalash formerly used to make their arrows. A dummy made of arrows replaces the dead man.

If a man dies during the very pure period of the *Chaumos*, the seven days of sexual abstinence, he is buried on the same day, with no other ceremony. But later, after the period during which drums are forbidden, if the family wishes to honour their deceased member and show their generosity as at a normal funeral feast, they will fashion a statue of arrows and dress it in a funeral robe to represent the body of the dead man. They can then offer food to their guests, who will dance to the sound of drums round the bed on which the substitute for the dead man lies.

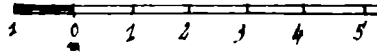
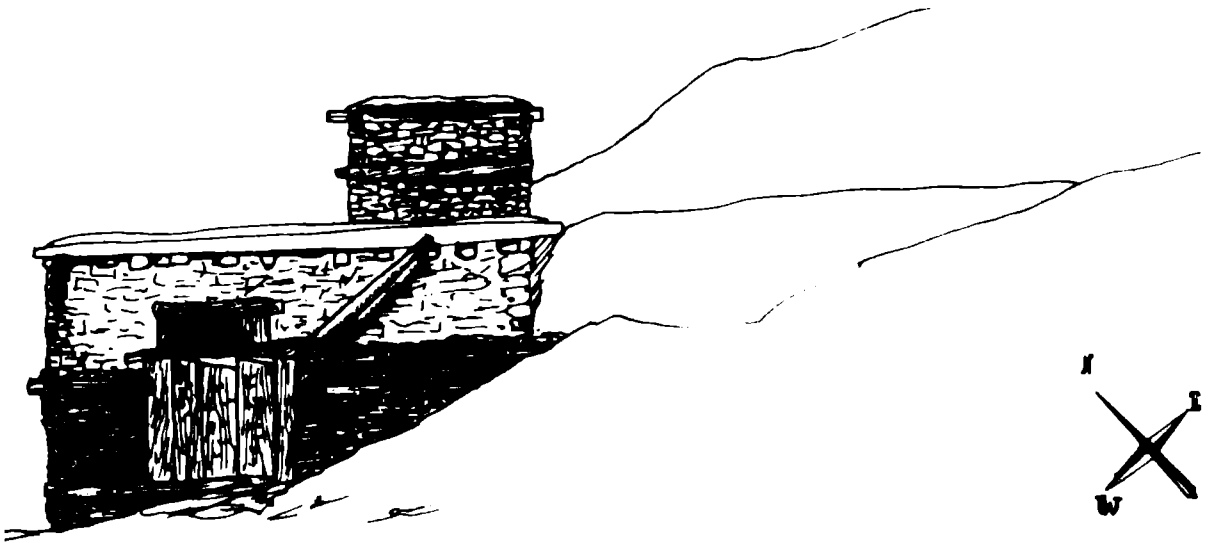
THE PROGRESS TOWARDS THE PERIOD OF PURITY

The day of the appeal for the protection of the herds

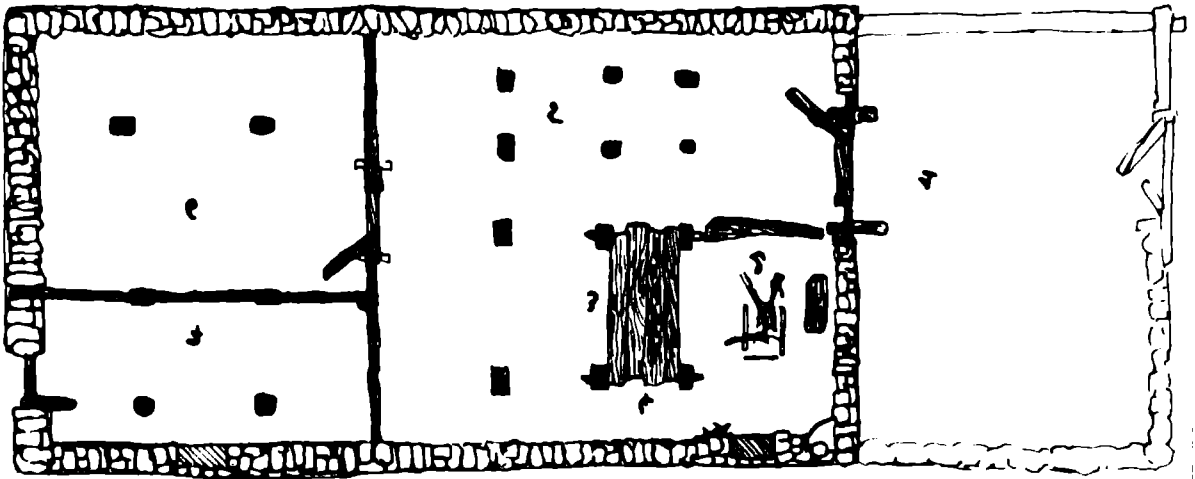
This day is called *goshtsaras*, literally ‘fumigation of the stables’. 8 December.

All morning, the exchanges of foodstuffs which had begun the previous evening continued. Little girls carried their portions of bread and cheese to each married lineage sister living in another village. In return, they received little presents, such as rings, beads and pendants. The community’s concern for cohesion finds expression, in Rumbur especially, in these exchanges, which are scrupulously observed among relatives. It is as though understanding – one of the aims of the festival – were strengthened by this often repeated practice of eating what another has produced, and by offering the other the best of one’s own reserves, at the same time confirming the blood bond with married sisters.

On that day, too, the women went down to the river to rearrange their tresses. Only girls who have not reached the age of puberty may wash their hair, which is considered impure, near the villages. To do one’s hair inside a house would bring on headaches and pains in the eyes, or some mishap to the family, such as a field washed away. Combs are



A stable seen from outside, with its pen and the forage store on the roof



Plan of Katarsing's stable: 1. pen; 2. hearth; 3. katar: raised planks upon which the shepherds sleep 4. the area where fumigation with juniper takes place; 5. the area where Buda, the patriarch, breaks the bread and the cheese, in the middle of the goat stable; 6. cow shed, 7. stable for the horse and the donkey

left hidden under a stone on the river bank, and the women always go about with covered heads, no excuse being allowed for carelessness.¹⁴

Katarsing had gone to Bumburet for the burial of an old blind woman who had fallen to her death from her terrace, in the manner of some old people. . . . In that neighbouring valley, the funeral ceremonies would delay the *Chaumos* by two days.

Buda, the patriarch of the *Mutimire*, went to the stables with his grandsons to prepare pure galettes before the animals returned. In every stable, one has to cross an open enclosure before reaching the door. To the right of the threshold is the area where the men gather, the "nook of life". When the herdsmen return from the slopes, they warm themselves here around the fire, and those who sleep there every night roll themselves in blankets and stretch out on a wide raised board, enjoying the warmth given out by the sheep and goats crowded below.

The pure bread used for the rituals is called *diuna*, "towards (to, in) the heavens". It is a foodstuff to be exchanged with the gods and it must therefore be prepared in an unsullied place, the stables, far from women, who are excluded from the sacred. The preparation is preceded by a fumigation with juniper at the nearest sanctuary. The herdsmen of Kalashagrum pray to Jatch.

Nurayat, sitting on the ground behind the hearth, was kneading the dough, which consisted of wheat flour and water. He formed it into balls, which he hollowed out like a bowl, filling the hollow with a handful of *jian*, a mixture of crushed walnuts and strong cheese. Then he flattened them and spun each galette between his hands to give it its thick, flat shape; you could hear the dull thumping sound of his hands on the soft dough. The cooking was begun on a convex hotplate,

14. See J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Paris, 1981, "How to discard nails and hair", p. 640: "Hair combed out retains a sympathetic link with the person. . . ."

hunza, continued under the cinders and completed by placing the galette on end against the edge of the hotplate. Sherzada, with almost automatic movements, turned the galettes as they browned, hunted in the cinders for any missing galettes, tapped the crust to see whether they were ready, then threw them to his brother to stack against the hearth.

When the galettes were ready, about 20 of them, or two for each man, grandfather Buda lit a little fire of resinous wood, "light wood", *lutch mut*.

The youngest herdsman, Golemdam, had rolled up his sleeves and washed his arms outside, in "water that has not crossed a village".¹⁵ So he was purified. It was he who placed a branch of holm-oak in the fire, which he then fed with logs and three or five walnuts that his grandfather had cracked open. He passed other unripe walnuts and grapes over the flames, and then hurled them against the rear wall of the stables, in the direction of the upper valley, of the sun's course towards the summer solstice. This was the first *saras del*, a prayer and an offering to Surisan, the goddess who protected the herds during the winter. Two kids, a white one and a black one, were held at the edge of the flames, while the patriarch murmured:

"Oh Surisan, oh Master of the *Chaumos*, you are coming down. Bring health and well-being. Balumain [here called Indra], make the men strong with the hooves of your horse. Grant us crops of both goats and wheat. Oh great god Balumain, god of the *Chaumos*, once a year you come as a guest, you permit health and well-being, you ward off trouble and the evil eye. You increase the number of people and of animals. Oh Balumain, god of the *Chaumos*, accept our prayer for health, oh most powerful god, oh Balumain. . ."

Having made this prayer, Buda squatted down in the middle of the carefully swept stable. Still praying, he crumbled a small galette covered with cheese so that the god might

15. The irrigation canal of Kalashagrum has its "source" near the sanctuary of Sajigor, and brings very pure water from the sacred area in the upper valley to the stables in the lower valley, which is penalised by its distance from the divine.

share the meal of men. The animals returned. Then he proceeded to clean all the galettes by rubbing them against a jute sack, having first blown on the edges to remove the dust from the cinders. After this, everyone started to eat the hot, badly cooked but nourishing pastry. Wine was passed round, a cool white wine, on the turn, acid from having been badly protected from the air for the past three months in its big aluminium pot.

Actually, once the festivities were over, and the month of December past, the wine would not even be drinkable. So it was better to drink it all up during these few days, if the family reserves permitted it, at the risk of over-indulging. The wine heightened the sense of abundance proper to that period, and stimulated conversation. Tonight, the central topic was the herds.

Grandfather Buda recalled that Balumain, during his first coming, had revealed that Surisan and Goshedoi would take turns in protecting the herds. Surisan "seats herself", according to the Kalash expression, on the evening of the *goshtsaras*, in order to watch over the herds and the herdsmen during the wintering. The second divinity, Goshedoi, would take over at the full moon in March, at about the equinox, when the goat milk was again freed.¹⁶ This goddess reigns throughout the summer, until the return of the winter feast. The influence of these divinities makes up for the absence of Balumain: it was as though that god had given over two attributes of himself so that the yearly cycle might be completed without hardship. The word "you", in the prayers addressed to Surisan and to Balumain, is always in the singular.

The sole personality trait known of Surisan was that she was short-tempered; she had gone away angry at the end of

16. Goshedoi: *gosht-dui*, milking in the stable. Goshedoi comes to power when the milk is again freed, and brought from the stables.

Surisan may be derived from *suris-han*, house of the sun, the reference being to the period when the sun enters its winter house and Surisan assumes her functions; or it may be derived from *suri(s)an*, of the sun, in the sun, attribute of the sun, which would be in accord with the solar character of Balumain.

one winter because the community had not given her a goat-hair coat. Since then, at the time of her departure, when the first buds appeared on the apricot trees, the herdsmen would shear the foreheads of four goats in each stable, a black one, a ginger one, a white one and a brown one, and weave a cord with the four tufts. Then they would attach it to a hook on the wall and twist it. They would accompany the gift by purifying it by fumigation.

“The Kalash are sometimes simple-minded”, said Gada, the “little grandfather”, Buda’s younger brother. His blue eyes were pensive as he considered the effect of this statement, which might explain Surisan’s anger: “In former times, they did not know how to make coats or blankets of goathair. They would give the Chitrali 15 kg of goathair, and get back a blanket of only five hands long. That is why there was no coat; they simply didn’t know how to make use of their resources.¹⁷ Since then, they have watched and learned, and meet their needs themselves. Now, when they barter with the Patu (Chitrali), they give them 7 kg of goathair for a blanket six hands long. . .”

The rite of the twisting hook was a recognition of the third blessing derived from the goat, together with milk and meat, and which at least partially ensured self-sufficiency in the matter of clothing for the herdsmen.

Silence fell again, punctuated by a few crackling sounds. One of the sons swallowed the contents of a large goblet of wine, “very fast, for the effect!”. The “sharer” urged grandfather Gada to accept a second round. Gada made a show of refusing, then drank down in a single gulp. The others watched for their turn: a dozen faces between the shadows and the firelight, the intimacy of men squatting on planks, sharing the

17. Weaving was left to the artisan-slave class throughout Kafiristan, and the Kalash shared the aversion to such tasks. But economic pressures forced them to become more realistic, so that some of them learned to prepare the goat hair and others to weave it; above all, they learned to have more regard for the exchange value of this raw material.

pleasure of talking. Buda, the greatly respected elder, told of the arrival of the first goat, and his tale threw light on the vastness of the expanse throughout which goats exert their fascination in this area to the west of the Himalayas:

“The first nanny goat came from Kashmir. And all the way from Kashmir to the Kalash territory, she asked the people she met: ‘Will you keep me?’ ‘All right’, the people replied, ‘we’ll milk you and then, when you die, we’ll bury you.’

“The goat did not agree. So she went towards Waigal, and on the way, from her heavy teats, there flowed blood from one and milk from the other. In Waigal, she asked the same question. The Waigali replied: ‘We’ll milk you, and when you die we’ll eat you and we’ll prepare your guts with crushed walnuts.’ The goat accepted that proposal. That is also the origin of tripe.

“Today, in the mountains, in the land of the goats, when one sees red rocks together with white ones, one knows that these are the marks left by the blood and the milk of the first goat.”

Sheep do not enjoy the same esteem: their meat is not liked much, and their wool is associated with women’s clothing; in addition, they are said to have originated in a gift from the devils. Buda went on, while his grandson, Golemdam, sat with his head in his hands, but his eyes wide with interest:

“One day, Juruhak left his stable in Grandili, in the valley of Birir, to return home. In the forest, he saw a strange animal eating grass. He was about to catch it with a rope to take it home, when he heard a voice coming from the top of the mountain: ‘Why are you taking this animal away? We’ll kill you!’ The animal was a sheep, and it belonged to the devils. Juruhak was terrified and sacrificed the sheep to appease them, then went home. Nothing happened to him. In the days of Rashibek, his grandson, the devils gave men a lamb, because they wished to be honoured with the blood of this animal. It is said that all sheep descend from this lamb (before it was sacrificed).”

And he concluded: "At the present time, in Rumbur, the *Dramese* still carry out sacrifices of sheep to the devils, but only in autumn, because it was in that season that the devils brought the lamb to men. They are the only ones to preserve that practice, because Mahadin, a son of *Dramese*, is said to have been the blood brother of a devil."¹⁸

Night had fallen, and one could hear the noises from outside. The women had lit a fire on the shoulder of land dividing the territory of the *Mutimire* in Kalashagrurum. Everything always began with a fire. They drove away the men. They told the little boys to go from house to house to collect dried mulberries, jujubes and walnuts. A boy gathered up the gifts in a big sack. Every family contributed, the *Baloe* from above and the *Mutimire* from below. The children were delighted. They shouted out the cry of the horseman and went off, as on the previous evening, mimicking the sound of trotting, "Awahaha, awahahaha...", winding in and out among the girls.

The cortege reformed and started on its way onto the darkened slope, by the gullied path along the cliff, worn down by the thousands who had trodden it. The deep-voiced mimicry of the sounds of horse and rider hollowed the men's cheeks in the flickering light of the torches. The men, in front, were shouting themselves hoarse, or trumpeting towards the night sky the song of the "Provider", Balumain, the "Hornless goat". They held on to each other by the shoulders. The *roy*, carrying flaming torches, saw to it that the chain was never broken. Dangerous sheets of ice made the progress even more difficult.

The body of the "horse" lengthened with the arrival of people from Batet. The cortege crossed over the roof-top terraces and poured down into the dance area, an empty field, at rest, bristling with twisted maize stalks, in front of the

18. According to another version, Mahadin was born after his mother had been raped by a devil. (See Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 111.)

village of Maleidesh. The high, severe facades of the two-storied dwellings overhanging the area seemed to be supervising the proceedings. The new arrivals surrounded the women, who were already praying near the bonfire, and wound around them several times, as the shaman Sindi had advised. At one time, Sindi had disappeared for 15 days. On his return, he told the people of his experience in these terms: "Balumain has ordered men to ride as he does, *wishaten*. As the population stems from women, the men must turn around them to bring down the blessings of the Horse. To break the chain is disrespectful and tantamount to breaking the chain of blessings. . ."

The mothers raised their voices in prayers for fecundity to the god "who will descend". But soon, as on the previous day, the gathering broke up into small and noisy groups, and vulgarity reigned again. It was inspired this time by the unfortunate consequences of eating too many mulberries. This was the evening of dried mulberries, *mashushtyak*, the distribution of which aroused rivalry between the inhabitants of the upper and lower valleys. The joking rekindled dissensions, the better to stifle them in reality:

"From a united community, for the god of the *Chaumos* is coming down".

"Oh my brother, the sharer, the distributor of dried mulberries, God does not accept your way of sharing [you gave most to the one you liked best]."

"Oh my brother, after sharing out the dried mulberries among everyone, there are none left for me. You divided them all up in secret [So you must have something against me]."

"Oh sisters of the lower valley, I knew nothing about this, this child has just told me that I did not divide them correctly."

"Oh my brother, you listen to what the child says and you are becoming disrespectful."

But the night of the *goshtsaras* does not have the same reputation as the preceding one, and the participants were

showing fatigue from the prolonged dancing of the night before. They had to keep up their strength for the days to come. By the "sun of the middle of the night", silence had triumphed over laughter.

The day of the raised fist Insults between villages

*"The exchange of insults is cathartic because it rids the liver of the members of the two groups of its impurities. It permits a purification."
(Marcel Griaule, L'Alliance cathartique.)*

This third day is named after the rite *T'chuin ari*, which is carried out very early in the morning by the *murayak*, marriageable adolescent girls. The name means to bring the *tchuin*, a shrub with evergreen leaves suggestive of continuing life. It grows by the side of the river, and is a synonym for hope.

The girls of Kalashagrum came out of their houses, calling to one another from the threshold: the sun was up, it was time to start. Carrying mulberries, jujubes and walnuts to be shared, they set off for the sanctuary of their lineage, that of Jestak. On the way, they picked thin reeds on the river bank, a bunch each, and a branch of *tchuin*, and went to join the *Baloe* girls, who were already waiting on the rocky outcrop of Grum. Two adults accompanied them to prompt these novices in the art of using the dirty words of the song prescribed for the occasion.

At the entrance to the house of Jestak, they laid down their reeds. Two of them went off to prepare the "ink" required for the renewal of the ritual drawings two days later. The operation consisted in transforming walnut bark into charcoal, which they crushed and diluted in half a gourd of water. They cut the reeds into six pieces, adorned with red threads, which were to serve as brushes. They left the ink and the brushes, together with three reeds, under the protection of

the goddess. The evergreen *tchuin* had its place in these preparations for the renewal of the drawings on the sanctuary, which would ensure the continuity of the forces of life, illustrating the overriding theme of the festivities, immortality.

It was the hour at which the sun reached its height, when the bottom of the narrow V-shaped valley in its turn drew comfort from the short moments of winter warmth. The girls from the lower valley joined those of the upper valley at Shigala, the customary boundary between the two parts of the valley. They began to jostle and threaten one another with unfeigned animosity. The girls from below retreated to the far side of the bridge; the river at that point formed a barrier between two well defined worlds, each made up of four lineages. That was in accord with the wishes of the common ancestor, who had divided the territory into two parts between his sons when he had first settled there.¹⁹ In the upper part, the people of Balanguru and Maleidesh belonged to the *Dramese*, *Wakoke*, *Bagalie* and *Dramui* lineages, which were linked by primitive and strong feelings of territorial solidarity. Below, the *Mutimire*, *Baloe*, *Shash* and *Dzoe* proudly occupied the villages of Kalashagrum, Grum, Batet and Maleidesh. Actually, the ancestral division is no longer so clear-cut, by reason of various marriages and purchases of land, and also of a crime which weakened one lineage to the benefit of another.²⁰ Although, some *Dramese* had emigrated to the lower valley, at heart they still belonged to Balanguru. And the girls were to recall the fact with force. For it was really a case of open hostility and rivalry between the two camps: that of the "sheep" and that of the "calves".

According to Saifullah Jan, of Balanguru, the Kalashe, or people of the lower valley, have had their reputation of being "sheep" for a very long time, as they often showed

19. See Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 67, account of the settlement. See also the genealogical table at the beginning of that work.

20. The only known crime in the Kalash community in over 400 years (*ibid.*, p. 64).



A day of ritual provocation between the adolescent girls from the higher and lower parts of the valley: insults are hurled at each other by the opposing groups and accompanied by aggressive gestures, for an entire day

themselves to be foolish in the past in their relations with the outside world, incapable of either defending themselves or fleeing before foreign incursions, acting like stupid sheep that let themselves be slaughtered by a wolf or a leopard. Those concerned maintain, for their part, that the people of the upper valley began to insult them because they were experts in the handling of dirty words, so they had to reply in kind: calves were considered fat, big-bellied and brainless. Moreover, neither calves nor sheep enjoyed the respect paid to goats: women had the right to mind them, which was unthinkable in the case of he-goats and nanny goats, which were pure animals belonging to the male world. It was precisely the little girls involved in the battle who looked after the sheep and the calves, and led them to pasture. Calves against sheep: the two sides entrenched themselves on either side of the river, in strategic positions for a danced combat, for verbal jousting and for a struggle conducted in song. . .

From high noon to night fall, the girls, from six-year-olds to young married women who had not yet left home for their husbands' houses, threw themselves body and soul into the fray, doing their best to force their opponents to retreat under the verbal deluge, to corner them into a loss for words through the accumulation of disconcerting insults. But let there be no mistake, the conflict was only simulated, regulated by convention and closely supervised by older boys, who prevented any excesses of violence. For this "game" of aggressivity must be kept within bounds, even though these bounds were weakened by overexcitement. It was only a fictitious dramatisation of latent conflicts, heightened in game form to prevent them from turning into a reality. These girls were as stakes in the rivalries between two complementary groups, stirring up original antagonisms in order to blunt their possible effect. Each girl loudly voiced her membership of her father's village before having to leave it for the disparaged village of her husband.

At Rumbur, marriages were originally concluded between lineages of different Kalash villages in order to foster good relations among clans, and subsequently between upper and lower valleys, once the gap between generations was sufficiently wide to ensure the proper distance between lineages. However, such distance meant the re-emergence of divergent interests. There are a thousand causes of conflict – pastures, land, persons – which the rules of exogamy seek to smooth out by exchange of goods and women. The sociodramatic sequence just described, with its letting off of steam, is another way of smoothing out conflicts. It is a part of the arsenal of "compensatory institutions" which the community has adopted to defend itself against its own internal tensions.²¹ It lies half way between the rite of rebellion (of an age group against its destiny) and the joking relationship (reciprocal) between two parts of a single social entity.

21. See R. Bastide, *Anthropologie appliquée*. Paris, 1971, p. 271.

So that we might really understand this notion of partition, a man who had worked for a long time in Peshawar and Karachi, and who claimed to know all about the political divisions of the world, made the following comparison: the people of the lower valley are like the *Yuropistan* and those of the upper valley are the *Kommunist*. The world divided in two!

"*Ushe ushe bareik,*" chanted the sheep. "*Pruyo, pruyo amein,*" returned the calves. These are the customary onomatopoeic sounds employed to drive on the herds or to dislodge a recalcitrant animal which has stopped to nibble the early shoots of wheat.

"Oh calves with burst guts, you are gobbling up my fields.

"Oh calves with burst guts, you have used up my stacked hay, but we use you for ploughing. . .

"Oh calves with burst guts, eaters of grass, tillers of fields. . .

"I'll pull you by the tail, oh calves of Balanguru, and make you cry out. . ."

The "sheep" occupied a raised point above the river bed. The "calves" gesticulated on a little platform below the dispensary, at the upstream entrance to the bridge. It was from these points that all day long the two rival groups were to hurl their "absurdities" at one another, above the incessant roar of the torrent. It would be necessary to shout for hours on end for the words to penetrate the minds of the adversaries, and that would require using body language as well. The little girls stretched out their arms so that there should be no mistake as to the target of their aggressiveness: a gesture starting from the heart and ending in a punch. Then screaming, laughing, they twirled in a wild and dusty dance, dragging their feet, throwing out their chests at each refrain. Kalashagrüm incessantly repeated that Balanguru lacked sunshine, that it was the land of shadow:

“After dividing up the valley, the Ancestor showed you a cave [showed you the site, which is as icy as a cave, where Balanguru was built], I can understand that you should be upset, but bad luck for you, oh people of Balanguru. I’ll make a fire to dry out the place. . .”

“Oh woman of Klamson, young calf, after dividing the valley, the Ancestor gave you this hole by the river, and that’s very annoying for you, oh people of Balanguru. . .

“You see or you don’t see, but as for me I’m going to push you into the mud of your village, oh people of Balanguru. . .

“Like rotten wild sheep’s meat, the village of Maleidesh is sinking [a reference to the *Dramese* houses swept away by the river in spate].

Some girls flashed mirrors at their opponents to annoy them. Sometimes the game degenerated into an open battle, as when the belligerents plucked up the courage to cross the bridge so as to carry their abuse into the enemy territory and shake their fists a little nearer. These brazen hussies were sternly repulsed; it was the only time there was any physical contact between the two sides, backed up by the throwing of stones to hasten the flight of the attackers, whose coiffes were sent flying.

The girls of the lower valley, who were coquettish, had all put on cotton dresses which did not pad out the figure so much, whereas the “calves” were satisfied with the traditional wide black woollen dress, which was heavy but warm. But by that time everyone’s clothes were covered with mud and dust. However, the actresses were aware of their public.

It was the boys who formed their audience, and they were thoroughly enjoying the wild spectacle. Their unspoken duty, of course, was to keep order and to intervene if the violence went too far, but in fact they spend the day watching the girls who were perhaps to become their wives. Generally, the *done*, the young bulls, crossed the bridge to get a closer look at the girls of the “sheep” camp, while the *mesh*, the rams, were more interested in the manoeuvres of the “calves”.

The boys would not have to leave their villages after they were married, and were therefore little concerned with the girls' resentment at having to leave theirs. On the other hand, they listened carefully to the words of the songs, which were often addressed to them as members of the opposing group:

"My brother Chapir [name of a girl's husband and word for "wolf" in Chitralli] has become a wolf and has gone.

"Oh brother A.K., go and have your teeth seen to [which were in fact very long].

"Eh sister of S., my friend M.K. slipped 25 rupees into your hand and took advantage of you.

"Oh my brother S.K., you shout, you weep, you disturb everyone. . ."

When the allusion to a physical defect went too far, or if the mockery was too pointed, they made believe to be offended, to be unable to restrain their anger. They then charged in among the girls, slapping them left and right, with furious looks on their faces. Most often, they were repulsed, pelted with lumps of earth, and sent back to their role of spectators. Once a girl was in her family by marriage, she would no longer have the opportunity to criticise or make fun of boys with such impunity: "Ah, ah, my brother N. wants to cut off your cheek by slapping you!"

From time to time the chanting would stop, while the girls clustered together in consultation. They would let the refrain from the opposite bank reach their ears quite distinctly above the noise of the torrent, then take up one of the epithets addressed to them, transform it, distort it, and hurl it back in renewed frenzy:

"Wife of B., your eyes are closed like those of a new-born puppy. . .

"Oh L.P., you are no more than a short-legged mill sweeper.

"There is an unsightly mark on your lips, oh sister of M. T.N. dances as if she were at the *Joshi* one leg in front, the other behind. A.'s sister dances as if it were the *Joshi*.

“Oh sister of J.S., when you leave for the *bashali* [the menstruation house], a lot of people gather to see you [whereas discretion would be called for at that moment].

“Oh calves of Balanguru, your brother has been taken away by the black eagle, and as for you, you are no more than a bad eagle.”²²

The atmosphere never descended from fever pitch until night fall. Fires were lighted; whose was the biggest? The little boys would sneak into the opposite camp and throw the burning logs into the river. But suddenly the “calves with burst guts” broke off the combat and abandoned the field. The victorious “sheep” invested the bridge to mark their territorial conquest. The wooden bridge shook under the charge of the victors. The brothers of the two clans began to squabble. Voices were raised. Then came the truce: the game was over. The girls of Kalashagrum, after proudly performing one more dance, returned in single file to their villages, in the sudden silence of the night, broken only by the tinkling of the bells on their coiffes. The next day many of them would be hoarse.

The adults, that day, had paid only sporadic attention to these events, which concerned only a specific age group. Since the beginning of the day, rice prepared with fat had been cooking in huge cauldrons inside the house of Jestak in Balanguru. While the young people counted up their grievances, the lineages of the upper valley offered their guests from the lower valley mountains of rice, a gift that the recipients would hasten to reciprocate the following day with huge basins of red beans. Actually, the exchange was not so simple, and was not aimed simply at social unification. Not all households could provide rice or beans. Only those families with one or more children who had reached the age of passing the rite of integration in society, due to take place in a few days' time,

22. In all the songs there is a confusion between the plural, the collective “people”, and the singular of the person addressed. The Kalash respect the eagle, but not the vulture, which they call *sagash*, the black eagle, the bad eagle.

shared in the heavy expenditure on beans, those symbols of fecundity and growth. The amount of their contribution would depend on the total number of little boys or girls involved in the forthcoming ceremony on their territory: it would be less if the number of candidates for initiation was high (9-10 kg), and reach up to 17–20 kg if it was small, so that the gift might remain respectable.

The rice was ready in the early afternoon, and the news spread. The women of the upper villages went down, singing, and carrying tin containers. At least, one member of each family went to the House of Ceremonies. The rice had absorbed all the water, and the cauldrons were overflowing. Rice has only recently been introduced in Kalash territory: previously, the reciprocal offerings consisted only of beans. The donors filled the large bowls which the women would take back to their homes so that those who were away, herdsmen and men floating wood downstream, might also take part in the feast.

Before the share-out began, one of the donors placed branches of holm-oak on the fire and threw walnuts towards the two wooden horse heads representing the goddess Jestak. The gods must always be the first served!

A few plates were then set aside for immediate consumption, and the men began to eat. Before regaling themselves in their turn, the young women embarked on a song, dancing the while. The subject of the song was the period of sexual abstinence that was approaching inexorably, as well as the conduct of the present ceremony. They mouthed the coarse words to the beat of fists on tin dishes.

The rivalry between men and women, like that between the upper and lower valleys, was reduced to vulgarity and plays on words. Fellowship in eating symbolised the reunification.

The day of the beans

This day is named *dau patchen*, "the beans are cooking". The people of the lower valley had to pay back their debt

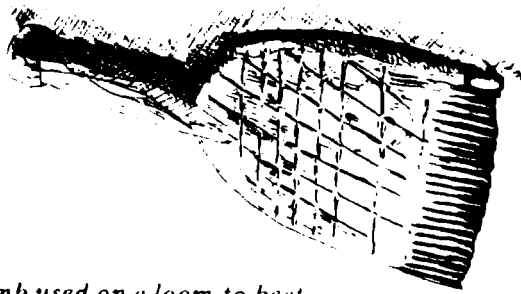
of generosity and feed the whole valley in return for the rice they had received the day before. Beans are a delicacy which imparts to the festivities the added zest of the unaccustomed. The beans grow in the maize fields, using the stalks as stakes. Some peoples have given this coupling a sexual symbolism. The Kalash, for their part, tend to associate seeds with birth and beans with growth.²³ In the lower valley, only seven children were to put on the first dresses or fine trousers of the initiated. And the families involved had to supply 17 kg of beans each, so that the quota of 100 kg should be exceeded.

The hour for cooking had been advanced on account of the threatening sky. Since the middle of the morning, three or four men, fathers or brothers of the children, had been watching the heating of the water in the huge cauldrons placed among the rocks of Batet. They used great ladles to stir the heavy mass of red grains which almost reached the rims of the soot-blackened cauldrons. Formerly, according to tradition, the preparations took place at Grum, in the house of Jestak, goddess of the family, who had an interest in this foodstuff and in the rite of passage associated with it. But owing to the absence of water on the rocky outcrop, the site of the cooking had been moved near the river. However, as long as Jestak had not been honoured by the smoke and the crackling of the holm-oak, as well as by a shower of hot beans, no one might taste the dish. The men added more water.

Not far from there, a woman was weaving on a vertical loom placed against one of the walls of the big dwellings belonging to the five *Mutimire* brothers of Batek. She was weaving the decorative motifs of the dress to be worn by Shaedi's little girl at her initiation. Not all women are skilled in the art of weaving designs, and young married women like

23. As soon as an infant's milk teeth break through, there are family rejoicings, marked by the cooking of a dish of grains and beans, consisting of wheat, maize and the five common varieties of beans, in celebration of their arrival and development: *don nesik*, "to seat the tooth".

Shaedi call on the recognised specialists in the village, even if there is no family relationship between them. These experienced weavers are usually happy to accept the commission, and produce delicate designs with a skill that still further brightens their reputation. It is in such relationships of mutual assistance outside the lineage that the women create their own universe and attempt to escape the weight of the social structure. The long hours of weaving, and even more the sessions at the mill, foster these relations among women, freed for a while from their domestic anchorages.



*Comb used on a loom to beat
down the threads of the weft*

While the beans were cooking and bubbling, grain was being sorted in each household for the manufacture of animals made of bread. This ceremony was to take place in two or three days, once enough flour had been milled throughout the valley. Everyone took turns at the mill, which never stopped turning; on no account must the festivities be delayed through negligence.²⁴ The community was advancing towards the high point of the festivities. Everywhere, the women were cleaning their coiffes. They heated little pans of wet cinders in the village squares to make a grey mud which removed the dirt from the frame of the *shushut* or the *kupas* and restored the shine of shells and glass beads.

24. Mills are the private property of the heads of households who have had them built. At Rumbur, there are four Kalash mills and three Moslem mills along the river. The Kalash do not know how to build them. The building of a mill requires 20 days of work by a Bashgali artisan, and costs from 1,000 to 2,000 rupees. Whenever, anyone uses a mill, he must leave the owner an amount of flour proportionate to the amount of grain ground. Confidence reigns, particularly as most of the users belong to the owner's lineage.



The loom, used only by the women, leans against the outside wall of each home. There is always some work in progress: a dress, a belt, a supporting band for a coiffe, leg bindings.....

Just as the beans were removed from the fire, Nurayat, Katarsing's son, and Asmail of the *Baloe* returned from the heights of Palar, where they had gone, at breakneck speed, to gather the sacred juniper and bring it back in time for the sharing out. . . The hot beans were steaming from the deep dossers into which they had been tipped. The voices of the women of Kalashagrum could be heard well before they came over the edge of the cliff, brandishing big basins. The women of Batet, clustered against the house with the long veranda, took up the same chant, which was amplified by the reply of the arrivals from Grum and Balanguru, who were slowly moving over the tree-trunk which had been thrown across the river. Only the women came to fetch the ration for each household. The donors distributed the helpings, in the first place serving the guests. The dishes were overflowing. Into each pyramid of beans, the distributors would poke a handful of walnuts, which must be eaten together, in the joint hope of a renewal of life in another form, and also for the taste, as the beans were not salted:

“It is the custom, salt is forbidden in cooking.”

“The ancestors in years gone by knew why! . . .”

“The ancestors in years gone by must not have liked salt. . .”

Actually, it was the god Balumain who had explained that salt was impure and displeasing to the gods. Its impurity came not from its own nature but from the fact that it was imported. If it were extracted in the valley or in the Kalash mountains, its addition would pose no problem.²⁵ However, inside the houses, salt may be added to food during the *Chaumos*. The Kalash take care to obtain some before the beginning of the feast, and purify it with juniper smoke, which frees each dwelling from stain: “As long as none is offered to the gods!”

25. The Kalash use little salt in their everyday food. Whatever, salt is used is rock salt, not sea salt. The permanent lack of iodine causes goitres, especially among women. This deficiency disease is endemic throughout the Chitral region.

Legend has it that some rocks in the Kalash territory contained salt, but that the ancestors who had discovered it had been so jealous of their secret that they had taken it with them on their death. The importance given to salt, by reason of its absence, is illustrated by the following tragic story told in Chitral:

“In former times, people did not know where salt came from. One man thought that if he planted some, he would be able to harvest it like wheat or maize. So he decided to grind up a salt stone and sow the powder in the furrows. Three weeks later he went to his field with his son to observe the result of his experiment. But nothing had grown. It was then that they perceived a grasshopper, and at once accused the insect of having caused this reverse. The terrified grasshopper, jumped onto the son’s chest at the precise moment when the father took aim with his rifle. The bullet went off and the son was killed instantly!”

A part of the beans was eaten at once, by the handful – a symbolic sampling. It was a moment for laughing and chatting, for an exchange of trivia, plus a few noisy verses. Some of the women were already going home with a dish for the family, and were sharply scolded by the *dehar* and the elders for their meagre show of ardour in praising “the god who is coming down”.

“They can only talk nonsense. It’s also necessary to chant good wishes! . . .”

The girls of Kalashagrur, after bringing back the beans, came out of their houses again and, leaning against a storehouse wall, they began to improvise new provocative songs; there was to be another duel, this time between the upper and lower parts of the village. The taunts flew back and forth over the empty field separating the *Baloe* lands from those of the *Mutimire*. The protagonists clapped their hands, then let fly their teasing words, both arms thrown forwards towards the rival terrace: “Here, eat my fist!” And the news of the day

got mixed in with the heavy jokes inspired by the beans: "After eating the beans, your stomach swells, and can be heard a long way off."

In Kalashagrum, the apparent split between the two quarters leads to the two groups avoiding each other in everyday life. The children often play separately. There is a curious absence of contact between two lineages which are by tradition interdependent and which possess a common Jestak Han, as though the recent possibility of alliances between them, because of the now sufficient number of generations separating them from their common ancestor, had made them strangers to one another. Joking relationships are thus a means of purifying and uniting, of strengthening existing commitments or fostering the possibility of new alliances.

The day of "nothing"

The tension of the approach of the solstice was abated by the *ishkyiane bas*, "days of nothing", days of waiting. There was also some uncertainty; if each household managed to complete the milling of its grain before nightfall, then the ceremony of the bread figurines would take place tonight. Otherwise, it would be tomorrow... There was so much milling to be done, and every family had to be ready at the same time.

It was a day for chatting and paying visits. The men went off to cut wood. The women did their washing or knitted woollen socks. Clothes and coiffes were hung from the jutting roof beams to dry. The cold was coming, the ibex were leaving the mountain tops; indeed, the men who had been gathering juniper claimed to have seen some a considerable way down the slopes. When nothing was happening, someone always turned up to break the spell. This time it was the old carpenter from the village of the converts at the end of the valley, the man who could do anything with wood and his two hands. He was called Shtaluk, by the name of his trade. He

had made stools of plaited leather for the Kalash, as well as beds, and he had built guest rooms for them. He seemed to have been there always. He said he was aged seven times twenty years, "plus five more" He claimed to have been present when the English first arrived in Chitral; that was why his father had fled to Kafiristan. He told how the people of the Hindu Kush had interpreted the colonisation of India by the *Englesi*:

"An Englishman arrived in Hindustan at the time of King Akbar. He was called Radcliff, and he requested the king to let him have a piece of land no bigger than a cow hide. The request was easy to satisfy, and Akbar accepted the contract. Then Radcliff cut up the hide into thin laces which, placed end to end, surrounded the whole of Hindustan. That is how the English took over all the land".²⁶

In the square of Kalashagrum, Shtaluk improvised some Kalash spring dances to prove his affinity with his pagan neighbours as well as his astonishing longevity. His whole face was one big smile. He boasted of having made all the beds in the village, adding lewdly and with appropriate gestures that beds were used to sleep on but also to put "what is inside the trousers into the hole formed by two circled fingers". The Kalash loved it all, clapping their hands, doubling up with laughter. Then Shtaluk concluded his performance with *kati* melodies (from Nuristan), love songs from the territories just behind the glacier, or heart-stirring Chitrali poems:

"When Kosh Bigin laughs, the milk flows in my breast,
All night I cry like the teapot bubbling on the fire,
Oh my little heart, Kosh Bigin does not know of my
thoughts for her.

I pray to see her just once again. Her head, as fine as that
of a mynah bird, and her slim body, drive me insane.

26. See A. Lousi, *Une étrange cité berbère due sud tunisien*, Douiret, Tunis, S'ID, 1975. This interpretation of a conquest by a single man, the founder ancestor, is to be found, similarly described, among the Berbers of the Tunisian Djebel, as applied to the settlement of Douiret at the expense of the inhabitants of Chenini.

Kosh Bigin is in the middle of the Gilgit Bazaar. Around her are flowers.

For her feet, I shall buy babouches, and for her body very expensive and glittering clothes. I shall attach myself with a chain and kill myself under her verandah.

Your eyes assassinate me. Sit down just for a moment next to me and chirp to me like a mynah bird.”

That evening, Merjuan, the *gadeirak* of the *Chaumos*, went from village to village to announce that the making of the figurines had been put off until the next day: “Everyone should know and hurry up the grinding of the grain!”

The day of the small ibex Rites of magic by contagion

The next day, 13 December, was the day of the *shiarabi-rayak*, the day of the reproductions of ibex.

“God created all things perfect, but humans are quite incapable of doing the same. They should not even think of trying. Therefore, if they want to draw or represent a wild sheep, a bull, a goat or any other animal in creation, they must do so clumsily. . .” For this reason, the day is also called *kuta mru*, the lame wild goat, with a short leg.²⁷

The sky threatened snow. The women of Kalashagrum were looking glumly towards the mountains. They were thinking of the loads of wheat they would have to carry to the mill along icy tracks, their feet freezing in their plastic shoes. Nor were they looking forward to the purification bath they would have to take before the arrival of the god, which meant

27. This explanation betrays a Moslem influence. See E. Dermenghem, *Mahomet et la tradition islamique* Seuil, Paris, 1955, p. 65, on the Koranic rules concerning art: “The basic idea is that man must avoid measuring himself with pride against the divine creative power. At the Last Judgement, God will challenge the artists to breathe life into their works, and they will be embarrassed at their inability to do so.”

undressing in the snow, and with no sun. But it couldn't be helped. A child stood in the doorway, pouting. Laughter broke out. The women immediately sang: "Where are you going, little brother? Where have you been?" The events of the day were spun together in a few words. Time was running out: the ingredients for the galettes had to be assembled, the walnuts crushed, the cheese crumbled, and more dough had to be kneaded for the animal figurines to be fashioned in the evening. The whole afternoon must be spent getting things ready, the whole night devoted to cooking.

That evening, custom weighed heavily upon the atmosphere. Moreover, a conflict between ancient and modern had broken out under the *Mimbar's* roof, and surged up again on this day of constraints. The previous day, the master of the house had set up a *tim*, a wood-burning stove with a long chimney-pipe that divided not only the living space but also the opinions of the occupants. Katarsing and his educated son, Sherzada, lauded progress: "No more smoke, no more streaming eyes, what could be better!" The women were regarded as conservative, old-fashioned: "There's no room for the fire to bake the bread, there's no more light! The kerosene lamps give only a little light and are expensive to run." The grandfather expressed his delight: "In the morning, we have hot water in the tank to wash with. . ." A woman neighbour got involved, alarmed: "But what's the use of this stove? When you sit on this side, you can't even see the people on the other side to talk with them!" The men spoke of modern ideas. Their wives retorted that progress also meant getting closer to the Islamic way of life. . . The elder mother concluded, in the absence of her husband, that all this discussion and all this bad temper concerned duties that actually concerned only the women. And she went back to mixing the flour and water.

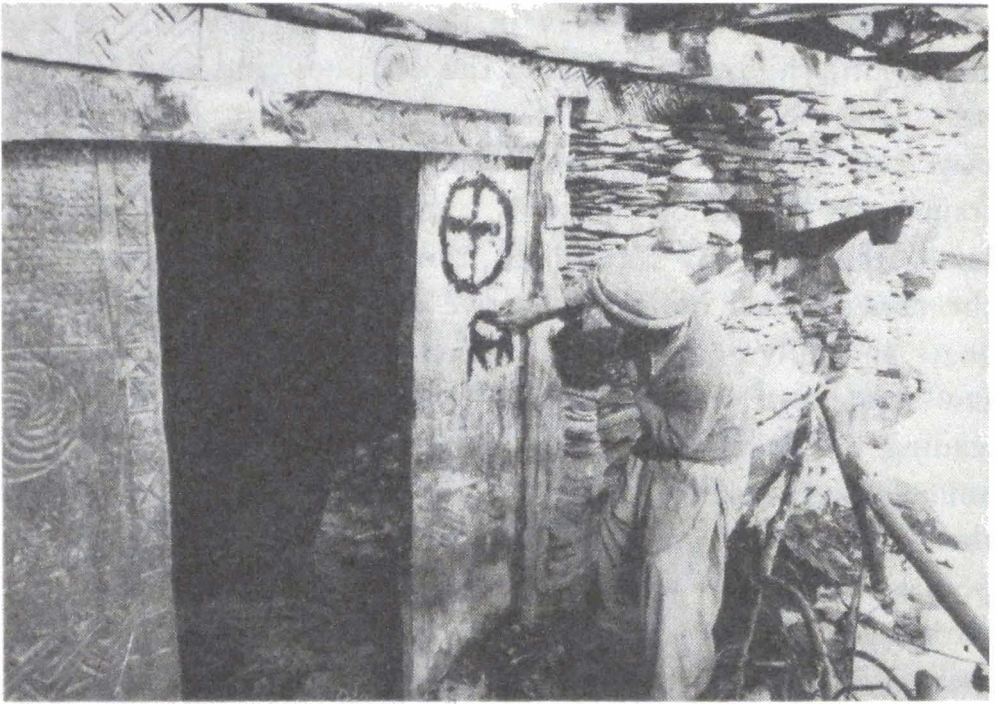
As the light faded, several boys went to the Jestak Han of their lineage. They took the ink and the brushes that the girls had prepared three days earlier in order to re-do the pictures

which had been worn away in the space of a year. In the afternoon, children had erased the old ones, and smeared the base of the pillars of the ceremonial house with a mixture of clay and water. They had done the same with the door frames, the planks on the walls, and the sides of the columns facing the fire. By torch light, the young artists reproduced the conventional designs evocative of the pastoral life, nanny goats and billy goats framed in enclosures, in stables. With a few strokes of the reed brush, they depicted the shepherd leading his flock towards the pastures. The outlines of the animals were highlighted by little black spots representing their droppings, which ensured the fertility of the fields. Sometimes a figure armed with a bow or a cudgel was shown pursuing a wild sheep in flight. The absence of a frame suggested the freedom of the hunt. On the doors there appeared pine branches, "shield" circles and hives, all symbols of security or abundance, as well as a stylised bed, associated with both death and the hope of an after-life.

The thickness of the brushes made it difficult to paint in detail. But aesthetics is not a primary concern in this rite of magic by contagion, which requires no more than simplified forms. The image of the animal is an extension of the living being, and the symbolic act of reproducing it has a favourable effect on its reproduction in reality. Similarly, the pursuit of the ibex will be transposed into success in the hunt, the game bagged becoming the more abundant in proportion to the number of such representations.

This practice has another, complementary, interpretation. According to the myth of the coming of Balumain:

"When Balumain came to the Kalash valleys for the first time, he adopted the daughter of a fairy, Guli, and asked her, before reaching Bumburet, to find him a place to rest. She discovered a pasture called "Otak" and spilled milk on that rocky place. The rocks took the form of splendid sculptures of animals and of humans. . ."



Ritual painting of the "shield" drawn on the upright of the entrance door of a lineage house, a sanctuary to the goddess Jestak

That place is known by the name of *Dizila wat*, "the stones of Creation". So that the boys were simply copying the models which had appeared and which they had been taught, and they remembered, that night, the circumstances of the first coming of the god. It is probable, however, that the myth of the arrival of Balumain replaced another, certainly more ancient belief, attested by Kalash custom and identifiable with very wide-spread myths of the golden age.

These stories about the origin of things always begin as follows:

"At the beginning of time, the gods, spirits, men, animals and plants all lived together, communicated, understood one another's language..." Then something happened that separated them all. There are several versions of the story:

In the first version, the Kalash belonged to a privileged but mortal human species, conscious of their difference from

the divine and of the precariousness of each existence. This knowledge was intolerable, the humans refused it and separated from the gods on an amicable basis.²⁸

In the second version, the Kalash invoke a conflict between men and spirits concerning bread, complicated by a gross error committed by a woman in connection with pure wheat. The golden age thus ended with a more violent break. Humans found themselves deprived of the ideal conditions of subsistence, like Adam and Bibi Awa in the version of paradise lost imported from Islam.²⁹



Ritual drawings on the walls of the Jestak sanctuary aimed at increasing the herds

28. See Loude, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

29. *Idem*, p. 91.

In the third version, other "Kalash" arrived and drove out the Kalash who were there,³⁰ a more realistic reference to unfortunate historical events transposed into myth.

Whatever the cause of the fall, the results were all the same: the animals and the humans (of that first "generation") separated from the fairies and the gods were changed into rock drawings and stone statues in an inaccessible place in the mountains. The present Kalash (of the second generation) recall this primordial drama by drawings and by the bestiary in bread which they consider equally useful for the increase of their livestock.

In ink and in outline, the pictures tell the story of the Kalash condition since the beginning of time. That is why they repeat the same motifs year after year: a bed (associated with death), shields³¹, animals (expressing the need to eat to survive, and dependence on hunting and livestock breeding), a pine tree, *tchijin*, the protector of the fairies (a reminder of the respect due to nature). The paintings and sculptures make it possible to actualise the initial moment when everything was decided, when the annual cycle of plant life and animal reproduction was first set in motion. The ceremony is a part of the typical sequences of a feast of renewal of the year when a society, by restating its original myth, goes back to the virgin days of its beginnings and at the same time inaugurates an era where everything is new and in which it can map out its tomorrows.

In each household, the mistress of the house had begun the interminable work of preparation, all done by hand: kneading, placing the dough on the hotplate, filling the galettes with walnuts and strong cheese, revolving each one between her palms to flatten it. The little girls smiled happily as with a sense of their burgeoning responsibility they imitated

30. See P. Snoy, *Cultures of the Hindu Kush*.

31. For the symbolism of the shield, see F.T. Elworthy, *Horns of Honour*. London, 1900, p. 79: "the shield would guard against the fiery darts or the open attacks of the enemy, but against the unseen, insidious, more dreaded, fatal glance..."

their mother's gestures, endeavouring to acquire the skills that would be demanded of them later. Dozens of galettes mounted up for tomorrow's great communal feast, galettes to be shared between the lineage sisters. It was an arduous job for the women, bending over for hours on end. At Katarsing's house, both his wives had their hands full, so much so that they would not take part in the fashioning of the figurines. The darkness was deepening.

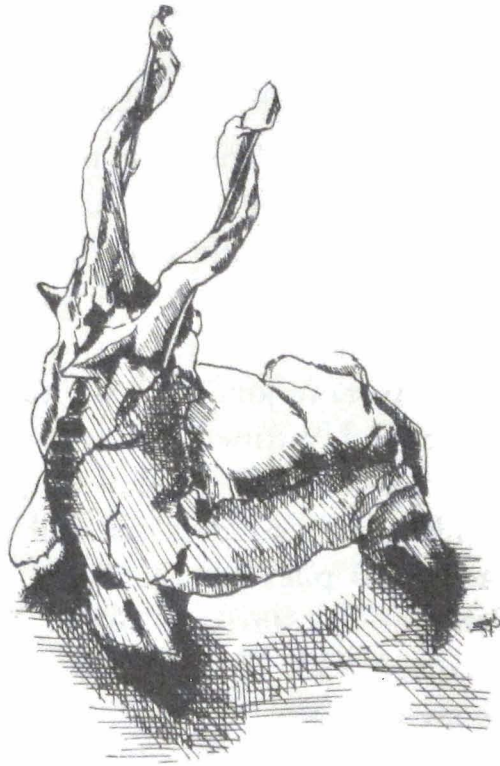
Everywhere else, the men and the children were modelling balls of a thick dough made from flour and water mixed with barley, wheat and beans. Each was absorbed in the joyous creative competition, remarking on the consistency of the dough, fashioning little animals (about the size of a hand) of naive shapes, with unsteady legs and horns delicately pulled from a still ill-defined head. Success in modelling the horns of the ibex was the supreme test and much looked forward to. Narrow strips of dough had to be twisted round thin slivers of wood to suggest the long, ringed antlers of the famous *shiara* or *markhor*. The mothers, in the background, looked on proudly at the display of their sons' talents, and lit up the shelf so that the growing number of livestock could be generally admired. It was unthinkable to improvise at will by producing figurines of leopards or of bears, which stole maize and fruit; only useful animals should be multiplied.

Those who showed particular talent went the round of houses where the lack of men made it difficult to people the shelves with figurines. The artists applied themselves, making it a point of honour to produce the best work possible. The opinions of the onlookers gave zest to their pleasure. The little girls hid their productions for fear of being laughed at. Everyone was enjoying this manufacture of animals by humans.

At Katarsing's house, this undertaking was not left solely to the inspiration of members of the immediate family. Satjuan, his brother-in-law, had come especially to contribute his talent to the event. He was skilled in the art of funerary

sculpture and sanctuary pillars. He possessed the secret of forms, and from his deft fingers there emerged a collection both of familiar animals and of animals belonging to the fairies' herds. He had brought along his cassette tape-recorder, on which he had recorded recent Kalash festivals. He assumed the air of importance befitting a man who could transmit tradition, perpetuated through the magic of the tape-recorder. The gathering took a grave delight in listening to the rivalry of the drums (here permitted) and to the eulogies which reinforced their sense of identity. Satjuan ate the grapes offered to him as a guest, then placed his stool near the light and started working on the dough that had been handed to him. And to the sound of the eulogies pronounced at the feast for the erection of funerary statues for the *Baloe*, he fashioned a sheep, a small barking dog and a ram with heavy rounded horns, which joined the other figurines on the concave side of the small metal plate on which they were to be baked. A goat was hooked over the edge by the legs, so that the head could dry over the flames. Then the horns of the ibex were inserted in the soft dough forming the head, and made fast by running glowing embers around the joins.

Once the figurines were hardened, the boys of the family placed them, one by one, on the sacred shelf at the back of the house. Buda, the grandfather, softened a large ball of dough which his daughter-in-law had respectfully handed to him, and which he said was to be a cow. He pressed the stomach gently to produce the teats, at the same time listening with emotion to the recording of the *Biramor* which he had given several autumns before for the whole Kalash community. The tape recalled the pride he could take in his long life: "Your stables have become very beautiful. Your kids have been rounded up. And the gods have come from Waigal to congratulate you. Sajigor has made a statue from the horns of your goats. The countryside around the Nokton spring becomes clouded with dust from the multitude of your goats. I look all about me, you have assembled all the gods and all the people."



Model of an ibex in bread dough

There were now 33 miniatures on the shelf. It was time for Satjuan to leave, in order to play his part in his own household. Later in the night, once each family's herd had been completed – a strange menagerie, commanded by the awkward forms of great wild he-goats – some of the boys left the house to go to their Jestak Han. There, two adults who had also been purified were kneading dough and baking galettes on a thin slate. During the period of the festival, it was unthinkable that cooking plates fashioned by Moslem artisans should be introduced into the ceremonial houses.

In the Jestak Han at Grum, three big *markhor* were hardening on the slate and in the cinders. The participants were discussing the time at which the ceremony was to begin, and the number of stones permitted for the "slaughtering" of the ibex of bread. The sacred scenario was ready: the simulation of a hunt of which the result, happy or not, would prefigure the successes or the reverses of the coming year. The

rite was perpetuated, even though the opportunities for hunting had become far fewer. Barsengi, one of Katarsing's sons, volunteered to "shoot", and went outside to purify himself. Baraman, the *kasi* of Grum and master of ceremonies, burst in at just the right moment to make sure that custom was being faithfully observed, and that the number of stones was correct. He counted the twelve tiny galettes, which were still hot, that he would have to place in the cemetery the next day to invite the ancestors to join the festivities.

The man who had purified himself placed the three *markhor* on the sacred shelf of the altar of Jestak, under the wooden horse-heads of the goddess, as well as three piles of three galettes each: two piles for the *Baloe*, who were more numerous, and one for the *Mutimire-Shash*. The wind rushed in through a collapsed wall, and the half-ruined building was submerged in the icy darkness.

At one o'clock in the morning, an adult lifted Barsengi from the ground. The boy took three galettes from the shelf and rushed out into the night, brandishing a branch of juniper. Gujur Khan, a man who had also been purified, set off in pursuit, carrying a torch. They climbed up an icy hillock to the altar of the god Mahandeo. The dark heads of the god's horses were outlined in the flickering light of the torch. The flaming juniper and holm-oak gave off an acrid smell. Barsengi broke off the edges of the three galettes and threw them to the god over the fire. After saying a prayer, the man and the boy stumbled down the dark slope. Barsengi picked up six pebbles, which were immediately purified by his touch, and dashed into the ceremonial house, thoroughly excited. Here he again broke the bread, this time for the goddess. Then Baraman pointed to the sky through a gaping hole in the roof, in the direction of the mountain tops. The boy threw a stone, which went straight through the hole. "Favourable!" Baraman pointed to the door, in the direction of the stables. Barsengi turned right round and again his throw succeeded.

“Favourable!”, the others shouted. Very quickly, Baraman told him to kill the ibex. The first fell to pieces, the second was hit, and the third finished off with a handful of pebbles. This was a good omen: there would be plenty of game and the marksmen in the mountains would not miss their targets. The omen would have been for failure if the figurines had remained intact after the prescribed number of projectiles had been used up.

All the little boys rushed to the door and ran through the village, shouting to the figurines of the *markhor*: “Leave for the mountains and turn into real animals!” And they informed the villagers that the purification had been accomplished and that the walnut bread could be eaten.

Just before dawn, all the men got up to drive the souls of the animals to their mythical destinations. They beat the air with sticks and blew, *push, push*, herding the spirits of the figurines towards the wide open door, *sutch, sutch*, “pure, pure”. A chant accompanied them on their voyage to *Dizilawat*, the “stones of Creation”.

“They leave as in a dream for the land of Dezau, propelled by a mere breath. . .”

In the morning, the very little children who had fallen asleep the evening before would find the shelf covered with fabulous beasts which, now that their souls had gone, would be given to them to play with – to play at herdsman, of course.

The day of the coming of the dead

Today was *mandatk*, “to come from the coffin or from the cemetery”, a very important day, when the living invited the dead to share their hopes by taking part in a sumptuous festival meal. This was the time when the sun had reached almost its lowest point on the slope of the crest, when the solstice was drawing nearer and darkness was eating away most of the light. It was a propitious moment for the union of the dead with the living. As is attested by numerous festivals

celebrating the passing of the year in the Indo-European area, the expression of the duality of day and night serves to reduce the opposition between life and death.

Since morning, there had been a buzzing of inhabital preparations. The *gadeirak* of the *Dramese* for the upper valley and the *gadeirak* of the *Baloe* for the lower valley had gone to the cemetery before sunrise to alert the dead and to strew the tiny galettes, prepared the previous day, round their coffins, with a prayer that they might accept these gifts from their descendants. Dishes of food were also placed for them at the entrance to each house of Jestak: "Come and eat!"

It was a day for visiting and copious eating. The men took walnut bread to their married lineage sisters. They then forced themselves on their allies, while other men did the same thing in their houses. Rice, pumpkins and various goodies were handed round, including grapes from the storehouses. All the adults were served as "guests", for on this day of the dead everyone knew that the dead were watching the living and relishing the abundance, and that they were "coming to recover their taste for life on earth", as Van Gennep suggests.³² It was important for mortals to believe that the souls were attracted by the promise of the resurrection of nature. The *Chaumos* allowed that hope. The little ones, too, stuffed themselves with sweets, fruit and biscuits, all treats that would benefit the souls of departed children.

Again, in the afternoon, each household pillaged its reserves to fill dossers or cover trays with delicacies, not only the best walnuts and mulberries, but also rare pomegranates, apples and lightly crystallised pears, grapes and necklaces of almonds for the guests, the inevitable strong cheese, onions (rather a rarity), expensive rice from Chitral, packets of banana-flavoured biscuits and, finally, pumpkins, which came from heaven, which God had given to the ancestors for use on exceptional days, as well as different sorts of bread. Bottles of

32. A. Van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, Paris, 1981, p. 255.

wine were also opened. The women left the villages at the "hour of the lengthened shadows", with baskets overflowing with generous gifts. They went in procession to their own Jestak Han, at the entrance to which a deep dossier awaited the tribute due to the ancestors; this was extracted in handfuls from the basket of each new arrival. A few glasses of wine were also left. Inside, the "sharers" assembled all the individual offerings, arranging them by category of foodstuff under the altar of the goddess: all these provisions laid out side by side for an extraordinary communal banquet.

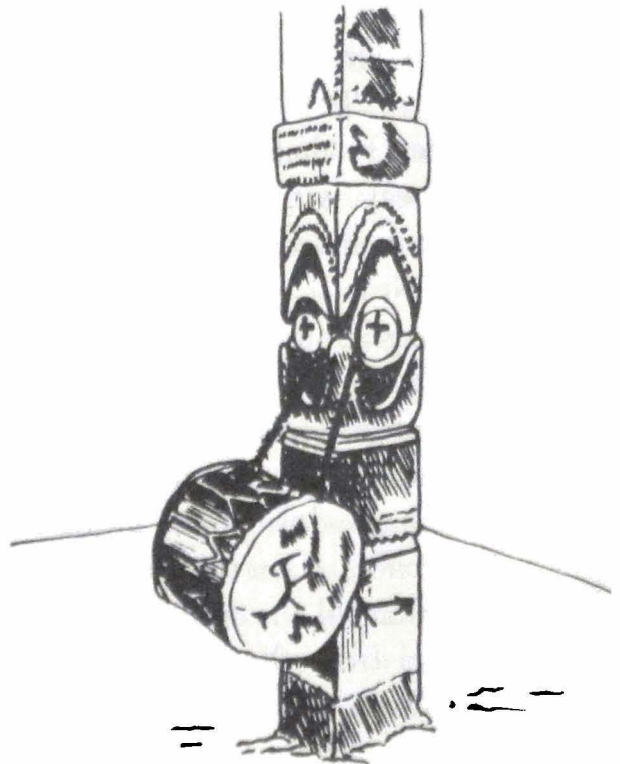
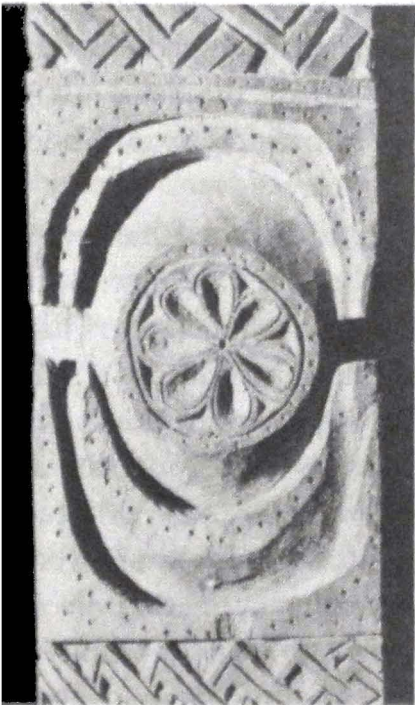
The people of the lower valley filled the house of Jestak at Grum; those of the upper valley the one at Balanguru. In the villages, only the old people and invalids were left, together with the herdsmen and mothers with very young children. Virtually, the entire community had shut itself inside the two covered sanctuaries, squatting around the fire, waiting. "The ancestors will soon come!" To keep up their patience, the participants would pick up little bits of food, just enough to keep greed at bay. The children were treating themselves to pomegranates, larking about and laughing loudly. The older people scolded them, reminding them that if they made a noise or showed lack of respect, the dead might go away without eating. Today, all smuttiness was taboo; trivia would take their normal course tomorrow.

Near a pillar, Kasi Khoshnawas and Gujur Khan were arguing about the significance of the decorative carvings. Both were sons of *ostat*, "builders-carpenters", and their fathers had built this Jestak Han. Kasi repeated that the famous circle surrounded by two horizontal crescents represented the shield that had adorned the armour of Balumain's horse on all four haunches, as on the four sides of the column here. He pointed out that all the visible decorations in Kalash sanctuaries were copied from the designs on the *pareloy tum*, the metal pole at Waitdesh, and that those designs had themselves been inspired by the various ornaments on Balumain's mount. Naga Dehar had seen them and had brought back copies. Gujur Khan did

not deny this but said that he had always heard his father describe them as representing the three phases of the moon, the ascendant, the full moon and the waning moon.

The argument points to a certain confusion in the interpretation of symbols. While it is possible, without too much risk of error, to discern solar wheels and lunar symbols on the poles and pillars of the sacred sites, the Kalash have a tendency, today, to connect all these models, which go back to time immemorial, with the revelation of Balumain. And yet it is undeniable that the Kalash, in former times, had recourse to lunar symbolism: the very widespread correspondence between the moon, water and fecundity is clearly manifest in the

Carvings on the pillars of the Jestak sanctuary. The Kalash interpret them in different ways: the phases of the moon, the shield of the god Balumain.....



display of cowries on the women's coiffes. The moon, *mas-truk*, remains the star of the rhythms of life, and its phases serve as measurements of "living" time, a time that is exhausted and renewed at the end of the year with the joint expiration of the lunar and solar cycles, with the *Chaumos*. It is not surprising to find illustrations of the different forms taken by the nocturnal star in the sanctuary of Jestak, the divinity who presides over the phases of life. Human beings have in fact often sought to identify their destiny with that of the moon: birth, growth and death, but a death regarded as repose before regeneration. This comparison prevents despair in the face of a death that is definitive; it makes death acceptable. An observation of the perpetual movement of the moon leads to an optimistic view of the human experience; the dead disappear, but continue to exist in another form, and that is why they can mingle with the living on this day.

The children put a stop to the argument by whispering that the "circles" on the lozenges were "vulvas". Then they repeated, with bursts of laughter, the word they had always heard: "vaginas". The synthesis was plausible; the female sex has always been connected with the moon. The adults repeated their scoldings of the excited children.

Outside, Danjak, the son of Gujur Khan, was cutting long slivers of "light wood". Two rites remained to be performed before the arrival of the dead. The first was to reproduce a funeral bed made of pieces of resinous wood crossed by diagonals to represent the rope work. This replica was placed on a shelf near the threshold.

"In the days of Katai Dehar, a man died. His relatives took him to the cemetery, but brought back his bed (even though it had belonged to him). The next day, the people discovered a bed in the *Jestak Han*. Katai entered into a trance and commanded: 'Make a copy of this bed out of sticks and place it at the entrance to the house of Jestak in memory of the ancestors. Then take the bed back to the cemetery.' "

According to another story, the bed belonged to Mahara: "There is a constellation which pictures this bed in the sky:

the rectangle and the diagonals. In former times, indeed, when Mahara died, his bed rose to the sky and his three daughters became stars: one near the funeral bed, for she had not reached puberty and was therefore pure, the second some distance away, for she had given birth, and the last further away still because she was pregnant. . . .”

In ancient times, the Kalash did not use beds but slept on litters of straw. The bed first “appears” in a dramatic incident which is recalled in the following story. Since then, the Kalash have adopted the use of a bed, but associate it with death.

“Shingtchot and Walanshe, two brothers from Batrik, in Bumburet, had decided to go hunting in Nuristan; to get there, they had to cross the Shawala Pass, the pass of the twin lakes. When they reached the edge of one of these lakes, Walanshe sat down, while Shingtchot got ready to hunt. Before leaving him, Shingtchot warned his brother: ‘Whatever you do, don’t look at the twin lakes until I get back.’ But Walanshe could not help casting a glance at the lakes, and the waters were turned into blood. A bed emerged from the depths, a bed such as the Kalash use today, but which at that time was unknown to them. The culprit was thunderstruck by the vision and died shortly after. Then Naga Dehar appeared, followed by Shingtchot, who did not know how to transport the body of his brother. The shaman told him: ‘Do not worry, return alone and make an offering of grapes to the fairies at the top of the mountain of Budjisht. Then return to Batrik.’

This he did, and announced the death of his brother to the inhabitants of the village. By common agreement, the people of Batrik decided to go to fetch the body the very next day. But at dawn, Naga Dehar appeared, holding in one hand the body of Walanshe and in the other the bed. So the villagers placed the body on the bed and accomplished the funeral rites.”

The second rite was that of the “little fort”, *kotik*. In front of the door, Danjak and Sherzada silently began to erect a miniature tower by placing small pieces of resinous wood one on top of the other. The top of the little construction,

which was 50 centimetres high, narrowed until it closed completely. But first, one of the builders dropped a few twigs inside the fort, at the same time murmuring some names. The *kotik* represented a prison, a dungeon, into which the Kalash threw men of evil thoughts, enemies, before symbolically burning them. Once in his life, Katai Dehar had met the ancestors who had told him: "We can help you if the Kalash make a little fort at every *Chaumos*. While thinking hard about them, you must throw in the declared enemies of society so as to ward off their evil actions. . ." The names repeated were those responsible for forced conversions, of looters of cemeteries, of cattle thieves, of woodcutters; this was a manifestation of group defence through a rite of expulsion of negative influences. But once the *kotik* had been set on fire, it was supposed also to give light to the ancestors so that they could see their way, notice the food and share it. The brighter the light, the happier they would be.

The sacred moment was approaching. The big dossier set against the outside wall of the sanctuary was overflowing with food. The men were keeping watch over it. A juniper fire had been lit on the altar of Mahandeo above the village, and as soon as the officiants returned, the *gadeirak* Badchara Khan set light to the *kotik* with a dry shrub picked in the cemetery that morning. The great men, facing the dwelling of the dead, called upon them one last time: "Eat and then leave!" Then they rushed into the *Jestak Han*. Two boys held up a stretched blanket; the door was gone. This attitude of avoidance betrayed a certain fear; no one must look towards the opening. The men of repute insisted that everyone be silent, and cast reproving looks at some little girls who were giggling. It was a time for propitiating the ancestors, for asking their indulgence; there must be no question of annoying them and having them turn their power against the living. At this very moment, the deceased formed a community that was complementary to that of the living. The rite was one of communion.

The juniper offered because its scent was agreeable to the spirits and the gods was thrown into the fire. Each of the participants lit three sticks of light-wood. A purified boy threw a bunch of grapes and some walnuts through the hole in the roof. There were silent prayers. The ancestors were now eating. It was a moment of great tension. Suddenly, Janduli Khan, the *dehar*, began to turn nervously round the central fire. His frightening look presaged a communication. He cried out, in exaltation: "Oh men of the territory!" Then pacing up and down the sanctuary, he called: "Hey, Baraman, hey, Katarsing, hey, Badchara Khan. . ." The three *gadeirak* concerned signalled their presence. He went on: "Oh you, this Jestak Han is broken, the god wants you to repair it. . ." He repeated three times the names of the men of authority within each lineage, and demanded a promise. The men who had been named proclaimed their resolve: "We will do it, we are ready. . ." Then the *dehar* collapsed in a state of catalepsy. It was the end of the trance. Still in the arms of the men who had caught him, the interpreter of the gods emerged from his ecstatic state, his eyes seeking reality, looking for the present.

The light sticks were flickering out. Baraman announced that the ancestors had eaten. All that was left of the *kotik* was a heap of ashes. They had gone. The light sticks were thrown into the fire. Kasi Khoshnawas, the man of learning, explained why each participant had carried an uneven number of light sticks. Even numbers, he said, were suspect, indicating a lack, an absence. Today, the absent had returned, surrounding the living. The community, past and present, was reunited. No one must be missing. And he went on: "We could hold five or seven light sticks, but they would not burn up fast enough and would still be burning after the ancestors had left. . ."

Meanwhile, the children who had not been initiated had rushed outside and upset the dossier. They alone were entitled to touch this choice food, and there was quite a battle as little hands stretched out for the pumpkins and dried fruit.

The confusion was compounded by the irruption of two Gujurs, hawk-faced gypsies who shoved the children out of the way and grabbed the precious food, stuffing it into big jute sacks in the face of general disapproval and despite feigned resistance. The Kalash let them steal these ritual gifts because the food had lost its savour, since it had been "eaten" (by the dead), and was no longer edible save by children and by these landless beggars. The Gujurs had been seen prowling around the terraces of Grum since the beginning of the ceremonies; they had even witnessed the erection of the pyre for enemies. They made off without a word, having secured their windfall in the shape of bulging sacks on their backs.

Inside the house of Jestak, the people were squatting to share out and eat the "edible" foods. There could be no waste among the Kalash; food offered to the gods acquired qualities that were beneficial to mortals. Once eaten by the dead, the food was passed on to the poor with the feeling of an action well done. As night fell, everyone returned home with an assortment of foods from a variety of sources, a pledge of unity among all members of the same territory.

The *Chaumos* reinforces all relationships, particularly that between each lineage and its ancestors, who for a moment become contemporaries of the living. This banquet assures the social equilibrium of the group by uniting past and present at the threshold of a new beginning.

Intermission

Today was *papaik adu*, "to put off for a day". It was an interval between two moments of great intensity, between two festive sequences. The first period of cathartic rites, of the reunification of the forces of the collectivity, of prayers for protection, was drawing to a close. Tomorrow, 15 December, would begin the purest phase of all.

During the night, a slight earth tremor had driven away the stars and brought back the clouds. According to the Kalash, earth tremors reverse the order of the heavens. As

soon as the first tremors are felt, they throw flour on the fire so that the gods may enjoy the pleasant smell and cease provoking this disturbing phenomenon.³³ On this occasion, they interpreted the tremor, which incidentally caused no damage, as a favourable sign of the coming of Guli, the fairy "daughter of Indra". The tremor that had occurred during the night of the *sarasari* had been stronger, and had announced the arrival of Balumain.

This morning, all the houses without exception were emptied, but exclusively by the women. They moved out the furniture, coffers, kitchen utensils, blankets, bedding, and cleared off the shelves; the rooms were now simply smoke-darkened cubes. They swept the ceilings with branches, bringing down showers of soot, dust and cobwebs. They washed the floor. The brooms, made of wild grasses and soft holm-oak leaves, raised a fog of earth and ashes. The *mimbar's* "elder" wife had protected her head with a scarf. Then she carefully cleaned the terrace, the roof and the threshold, on each side of the door. It was a complete clean-up from top to bottom, an operation warranted by the coming of the god.

Once the house had been cleansed of the stains of everyday life, one of the sons purified every corner: the walls, the living space, the reserves, certain foodstuffs imported from Moslem territory, with a branch of flaming juniper. It was a veritable rite of passage for the dwelling prior to that of its occupants, a stripping down, a regression to nothingness, a change of condition through fumigation.

Clothing was subject to the same requirements. Water was heated in a cauldron in the middle of the village for the washing of the woollen dresses. Luckily, the water of the irrigation canal at Kalashagrum, which had been frozen during the previous nights, was now flowing again. Had it remained frozen, the women would have had to leave the village to do

33. Formerly, the Kalash also said that the earth rested on the horns of a bull, and that when the bull, annoyed by a fly, winked its right eye, the earth trembled on the right; if the fly bothered it on the left, the bull stirred and the earth trembled on the left.

the washing, carrying down the cauldron and the wood, and returning over the rocky outcrop with the wet clothes. Alternatively, they would have had to carry heavy pitchers from the river to the top of the cliff. Two young married men, standing on wooden boards, trod down their wives' thick clothing, for "only men have legs strong enough for such work". They had rolled up their baggy trousers and were swaying their hips from side to side as though they were pressing grapes. The dirty water flowed away. Once Kamader had completed this chore, he proceeded to shave his father-in-law, Gada, and cut his hair. The whole day was devoted to cleaning of every kind. After the clothing, came the turn of the coiffes. A paste made from ashes and water, and spread by hand, worked wonders. The *kupas* and *shushut*, left in the sun, then rinsed, shone with the sparkle of hundreds of whitened shells. The women worked with shawls on their heads so as not to go about bareheaded.

In the afternoon, the "elder mother" made haste to finish weaving the material for the fringed trousers which her grandson, Yasir, was to wear for the rite of integration. Only two more days were left. Despite the cold, she worked outside, under the veranda, where three looms were positioned vertically. The beautiful geometric designs looked like embroidery, and their colours enlivened the raw wool background. Afterwards, the woven strips would simply have to be assembled to make the trousers.

Inside the house, the women and children sat around the fire as usual. Nurayat's wife, Sonogur, was nursing her one-year-old son; as soon as he demanded, she would extract a breast from an opening in her sleeve. During the rare moments of leisure that her lively baby afforded her, she had undertaken to repair one of her numerous necklaces of red and white beads, several rows of which had given way. As the hole in each bead was so tiny that no needle could pass through, she would stiffen the thread with saliva and patiently string the hundreds of beads, one by one. It took hours and hours.

Another daughter-in-law busily took up the knitting that she had to put down again and again to deal with more urgent tasks. Using miserable twisted needles, she was making woolen gloves for Rajimen, her brother-in-law, who tended the herds and suffered from chilblains. Each woman regularly threw wood on the fire. The “younger mother” was crushing dried mulberries in a mortar made of walnut wood, a succulent sweetmeat. The children gobbled up huge quantities of this pinkish powder, nibbling without stop, constantly asking for more. Once the children had had enough, she took up her wooden spindle and began spinning the black wool. Rumour had it that the husband of Raimo’s mother had bought his wife a sewing machine – what an event! She would become the first Kalash seamstress to make black cotton dresses adorned with multicoloured embroidery. “We won’t have to use outside tailors for the spring feast. . .” Comments were made, followed by silences, broken only by the crackling of the fire. A woman relative dropped in to share the family cheer, then left again; she had been provided with a cup of sweet tea both as a treat and as a protection against the cold. Mayun Bibi came in and squatted down for a moment. She said that the previous evening her eldest daughter had gone to the menstruation house for the first time; in three days, she would bring her daughter a *zatio*, the big galette for puberty, to be shared with all the women there, as custom demanded. And so the afternoon passed by.

On the roof of the house, grandfather Buda was sorting wheat which had been spread out on a blanket. Throughout the valley, the men were similarly engaged. At night, after the women had finished grinding for the day’s needs, the men would go to the mills with big skins of wheat to make pure flour, the flour used to make the bread for offerings and sacrifices, and which must be kept far from the houses. They would first clean the mills of the contamination caused by the presence of women by lighting a fire of juniper and muttering the warning: “*Sutch, sutch!* The male sex and the female sex are separated, they are purified. . .”

Meanwhile, the men were removing all impurities from the grain on the flat roofs, which were endowed with the virtue of high places. And from these observatories, they watched for the disappearance of the sun. Would it reach the very lowest point of the mountain crest tonight, the point marking the solstice? Was it about to enter its "winter house?"

That is the name the Kalash give to the conclusion of the sun's course towards the winter solstice. The sun always sets at that precise point for seven days. This period coincides in principle with the duration of sexual abstinence, the very purest period, in complete breach with everyday normality. Like many other Indo-European peoples, the Kalash measure time by a solar calendar (marked in Rumbur by the western mountains) and by a lunar computation (twelve cycles minus a few days). The time difference noted each year between these two cycles serves as a propitious "margin" to contain the moment, beyond the natural order of things, at which the festivities reach their paroxysm: the coming of the god Balumain. As though, by the law of cause and effect, his departure would shortly be followed by the re-emergence of the sun from its retreat and its new progress towards the summer solstice.

Throughout the Kafir area, the experience of the winter solstice seems to have been regarded as sufficiently crucial to govern the transition from one year to the next. The Kalash maintain: "Balumain chose this period to foretell the future. So we noted the position of the sun when he arrived for the first time."

"The people of Waigal valley describe the solstices as the points in the surrounding mountains where the sun appears to rise in exactly the same place for fifteen days. They say that the sun 'sits' in that place."³⁴

Imra, the creator god of the Kafirs, governed the course of the year. His principal temple, in the valley of Parun, was

34. S. Jones, *Men of Influence*, p. 275.

dedicated to that power: "The function of the building must have been to serve as a sun observatory in which the first beam of the rising sun on the winter solstice was to hit a statue of the god inside the temple and, then, to indicate the beginning of the new year."³⁵

However, not all agrarian societies subject to closed time cycles chose the winter solstice to mark the new year. That is true even within the great Indo-European family from which the Kalash and the Kafirs descend, and for whom these mythico-ritual scenarios of the passage of the year have been a cultural constant, from one people to another. Often it has been the spring equinox that has been chosen as the principal date of the period between the beginning of winter and the appearance of the first buds. However, this mobility in the commencement of the new year is really of less importance than the permanence of established rituals marking a breach in time. Once the need for such a breach is recognised, the season chosen for celebrating it depends in fact on local characteristics and on conditions of existence in a given environment and climate, in other words, on the face-to-face with nature in a particular area.

A distinction must also be made between the time of the new year and the start of the agricultural year, which is also marked by the Kalash by a sacrifice, the *basun marat*, "when nature awakens and when the change can be perceived by the appearance of a few leaves" (Saifullah Jan). This sacrifice takes place at the full moon in February. A cow is offered at the altar of Sajigor "for everything that is eaten by animals, for all the harvests". This concern with a relationship between religious festivals and agricultural activities has given rise to the development of a multitude of calendar systems in what was formerly Kafiristan. "Each village in Nuristan has its own calendar", noticed L. Edelberg. "This is not surprising when we consider that each village has its own special circumstances

35. L. Edelberg, *Imra, the Creator God of the Kafirs and his Main Temple in the Parun Valley*, p. 515.

– it is higher or lower than other villages; it faces south, or east, or some other direction; it is located down in the valley, or it is sited on a high spur well above the river. . . . These circumstances, combined with the fact that villages are economically independent of one another, has contributed to cultural differences, among them, different calendar systems.’³⁶

Thus, even in zones geographically very close to one another, time has never been defined in exactly the same way. The cultural consequences of these cleavages between neighbouring valleys can well be imagined. G. Robertson, after spending a year with the Kafirs in 1890, admitted: “I was never able to count up the Kafir calendar satisfactorily, even with the help of the most intelligent of my Kamdesh friends, and failed entirely to discover how the days were fitted in so as always to make the Giche, the new year, fall on the same date. The impression left on my mind was that the Kafirs did not trouble themselves about such niceties, yet when away from their villages, the men with me always knew accurately the number of days intervening before the next festival.’³⁷

But as G. Dumézil concludes concerning this “uncertainty of date”: “Over large portions of the Indo-European area, the beginning of the year seems to have been set not at the end but at the beginning of the religious season, in winter.’³⁸

In the last analysis, the cycle of the winter solstice furnishes a frame which lends itself to the visualising of the “great time”, of the infinite present, to the burning up of a past burdened with the errors of the individual and of the group, to the localising of the power of the divinity whose irruption will make it possible to assume everyday life in the future while at the same time aspiring to another vital dimension. The properties of the “crisis of the solstice”, in which

36. L. Edelberg and S. Jones, *Nuristan*, p. 54.

37. G. Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush*, pp. 582-583.

38. G. Dumézil, *Le probleme des Centaures*, p. 6.

opposites are made evident – between winter and spring, day and night, abundance and barren land, living and dead – thus appear to be linked with the idea of a continual regeneration. Among the Kalash, they have favoured an interpretation of time that has led them to organise its course, to construct a very complete festive scenario in order both to meet the need for economic survival and to develop a concept of existence, before and after death.

If, on the evening of this day of “intermission”, the sun were to “sit” in its “winter house”, the passage of the year, *kao badel karik*, would take place under good auspices, but nothing more. If, through an unfortunate conjunction of human activities and the solar movement, the sun had entered its house on the previous day, the day of the dead, the prospects for the future would have been coloured by dark forebodings. Ideally, the sun should rest for exactly seven days from the start of the period of sexual abstinence, so that there might be a perfect concordance between the revitalisation of the forces of man and those of the sun. This year, everything pointed to a harmony between the sun and the progress of the festivities. The solstitial point had not yet been reached, but almost. It would be for tomorrow, the day when the business of love most cease. The ascendant moon had just risen to illuminate the heart of the festival, and the Kalash rejoiced at this other good sign, for “whatever grows, assembles”.³⁹

39. Etymological transcriptions and tentative interpretations of the *Chaumos*. *Chaumos*: name given by the Kalash to the festival of severance which takes place at the end of the productive cycle of one year and permits the opening of a new one. Its different phases cover almost the whole of the month of December; it achieves its paroxysm at the moment of the winter solstice.

R.L. Turner, in *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, compares *chaumos* with the Sanscrit *cāturmāsya*, the name given to three sacrifices taking place at the beginning of the period of four months (Taittiriya Samhita), or with *cāturmasa*, the beginning of a four-month season (Mahabharata).

Among the Kalash, too, the period is of four months: *čau*: four, *mas* < *mastruk*: month.

If one refers to the Hindu calendar: "In India, the only break is that of four months situated at the end of a cycle; it is then that the festivals proper take place, the feasts *par excellence*, in which reversals and disorders achieve their paroxysm, at the same time as the radical setting to rights announces the renewal of the cycle." (M. Gaborieau, "Fêtes, temps, espace", *L'Homme*, July–September 1982, p. 25.).

In his study of the structure of the Hindu calendar in its Indo-Nepalese version, the same author adds: "During the short division of four months, . . . normal life is suspended in order to start the end of the cycle, an ill-fated period from which ceremonies of good omen and prosperity cults are excluded; it is the period of disorders, of reversals and of setting to rights . . . this season of autumn is that of the great setting to rights at the cosmic, political, social and family levels." (*Ibid.*, p. 24.).

Among the Kalash, this space of four months may correspond to the descent of the sun which takes place between the last propitiatory cult, the feast of *Učau*: *ut* < *utala*: high, and *čau*: four, and the winter feast. Four months in fact separate these two sacred poles: *utčau* in the second fortnight of August opens the final phase of the productive cycle, and *čaumos* concludes it, instituting disorder before the setting to rights of a new cycle and, as in India, an eight-month division preceding the four months of intensity.

"The other festivals that take place in the eight-month division are simply cults or carnivals which do not reach a sacred dimension; in particular, the spring celebrations marking the new agricultural year remain secondary. They do not disturb the course of everyday life." (*Ibid.*, p. 26.).

This remark applies also to the Kalash ceremonies that take place in this long period (see the spatial representation of the annual cycle of festivals) even though the spring festival, the *Joshi*, assumes great importance because the gods must be thanked for granting people's wishes.

It should be noted that Professor Morgenstierne interprets the word *čaumos* in connection with the Kalsha *čau*: four, and *mos*: meat, and thus translates it by "four (days) of meat". The reference is to the most intense days of the coming of the god, when a hecatomb of bloody sacrifices is offered to him. (G. Morgenstierne, *Report on a linguistic mission to north-western India*, p. 37.).

THE VISIT OF THE GREAT GOD OUT OF TIME

The day of the purification of women

The Kalash do not consider a child as a full member of society until after the ceremony of "initiation", the *goshnik*, when the child officially puts on adult clothing, at the age of seven for a boy and four for a girl. It is a rite of passage. However, this membership is not regarded as acquired once and for all, as a definitive commitment; it has to be confirmed each year, on the assumption that links are strengthened by repetition and prevented from loosening.

During the "preparatory progress" of the *Chaumos*, Kalash society seeks to redefine its identity as a community, uniting its complementary forces and allying itself with its ancestors. In the second phase, marked by sexual abstinence and the descent of the great god, the priority of the group gives way to that of the individual, who must in turn put himself in question. Each member must purify himself in order to renew his "contract" with society and with the sacred, must make a voluntary act of adhesion. And he has the opportunity, each year, to reaffirm personally his belief in a common ideal and to proclaim in front of all that he is a Kalash and wishes to remain so.⁴⁰

40. It was precisely such acts of adhesion that were denied to the *bahira*, the semi-excluded Kalash, for having chosen to live with their lineage sisters. See the chapter on unions.

The ritual for women precedes that for men by one day. It is the *shishao sutchek*, "the removal of impurity by pure bread over the heads". But first comes purification by water and fire. This year, the day of the purification of women fell on 16 December.

All the women and adolescent girls between puberty and menopause went off to the river to wash at the time when the sun gave off some warmth. But the air was piercing even at noon, and was felt even more keenly as clothing was stripped off. The river banks were covered with snow and the water of the river was icy. To be able to wash, the women carried wood and big pans to the river to heat water. While waiting for the water to heat, they worked on their five tresses. Bent over near the river, they disentangled their long hair with the plastic combs that had been hidden under big stones. They poured cold water on their heads, for even in mid-winter hot or warm water was supposed to make hair fall out. An ointment made from the resin of the jujube tree and crushed on a slate was used to ease the disentangling process; it would also protect the hair from dust once it hardened. Then came the plaiting, a very skilled operation, and the replacing of the hair grips; this was an act of great coquetry performed with eyes glued to a piece of mirror to gauge the effect of the multi-coloured strips on the shining black hair. All this took at least an hour.

The water finally reached an adequate temperature, and the women retired behind large rocks and washed, entirely naked, squatting down uncomfortably, either alone or assisted by a friend who poured warm water down her back. The element of water was believed to wash away the secular, the soiled marks of one's previous condition, which must be shed in order to be able to accede without danger to this period of suspended time filled with the presence of the divine. It was an "ablution", "sweeping away" as Caillois puts it.⁴¹ Some of the women used a cake of soap, which they shared with the

41. R. Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré*, p. 44.

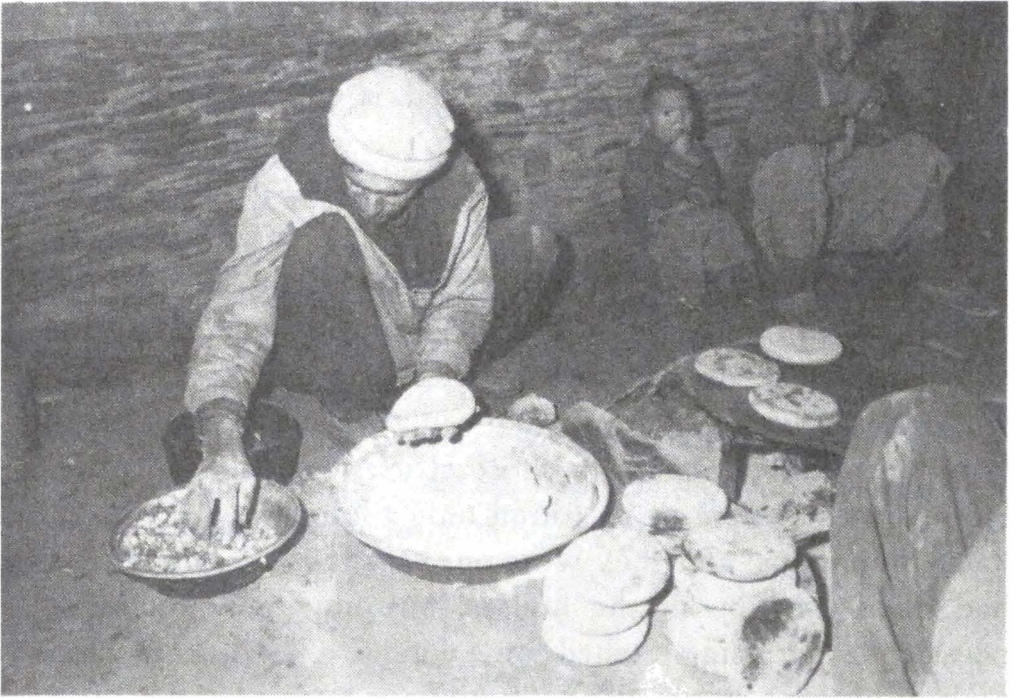
others. Most of them were slightly built, and even thin; modestly, they covered up their genitalia. They were traversing an initiatory passage, naked, as though obliged to die in order to be reborn, undergoing a regression in the form of stripping off their clothing, followed by the pleasure of putting on either a new dress or an old one that had been washed the previous day.⁴² It was in fact a total renewal.

They dressed quickly, still wet, and went home to warm up, their soiled clothing under their arms, coiffes sparkling, necklaces gleaming, belts clean. Their bodies were ready for abstinence. They laughed as they talked of their husbands, who were now untouchable. The purity acquired through water, prolonged by seven days of renunciation, allowed them to meet the divinity in a communion which in everyday life could not be borne. But in reality, between their laughter and chatting, the women regarded all this as a joyous collective event; they took care to protect themselves from the eyes of voyeurs, and were interested in the novelties introduced in their friends' clothes: "But who made that pretty dress for you?"

Since morning, the men had been preparing galettes for the ceremony in the stables. Those who had no stables prepared them in the open, in a field situated high up and which could not be soiled by the urine or excrements of such animals as dogs, sheep or cows. Just as the animals were leaving the stables, Katarsing's son, Nurayat, arrived with a heavy black slate on his back, the *pretchawat*, for rolling the dough. He also brought a thin slate, white on the inside, *gorabat*, to serve as a cooking plate. The use of metal plates obtained from Moslem areas was now strictly forbidden in a pure place.⁴³

42. Actually, women go through a similar change of state, imposed by custom, each time they leave the menstruation house, so that they may again be able to frequent the pure world of men without danger; they have to wash all over, naked on the banks of the river, the waters of which carry away all impurity, and they must put on freshly washed clothes. At all other times, washing is often perfunctory, confined to face and hands.

43. See C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structure* II, p. 374: "For all acts of ceremonial life, innumerable examples could be found of the prohibition of locally manufactured objects or of objects recently introduced. . ."



Nurayat purified, bakes the "bread of the women" in the stable on a slate which is used instead of a metal griddle, regarded as being impure during the period of the feast

Nurayat and Sherzada entered the stables after first purifying themselves, arms held away from the body. They set apart the cooking area by fumigating it with juniper. Then they crushed green walnuts on the black slate. Golemdam, the little nine-year-old herdsman, emptied a sack of flour in front of Nurayat, who stood stiffly against the wall for fear of being touched, arms outstretched horizontally. Their father was supervising. The two brothers began to count up: the household comprised eleven persons, and each wife, daughter-in-law or daughter must receive five *shishao* galettes and one *kuturuli*. The *shishao* looked like any other thick galette, but before placing it on the heated slate, Nurayat pinched the edge at three opposing points, symbolising three teats. This was, because the fairies had three breasts, and because the women owed it to themselves to be as pure as the fairy Guli, who had helped Balumain on his first arrival in the valleys by opening up for him an unsoiled path. The *kuturuli* was a galette shaped like a turnover and filled with the mixture of crushed

walnuts. It resembled a half moon,⁴⁴ and symbolised women's genitalia. Koshumai, goddess of the grapes to come and of all the fruit to be picked, had revealed it to the *dehar* Piota, who had repeated it to men: "Thus, the women's vaginas will be pure for the fruit to come."

Sherzada threw the baked galettes to his brother with scant ceremony. The *shishao* were stacked in piles of five, with the *kuturuli* on top. Katarsing arranged a bed of twigs on which to spread the browned galettes. He remarked that the white slates were reputed to spread the heat better, not to burn the galettes and to be more efficient than metal plates. However, they were to be found only a long way away, in the Palar mountains, and they wore out very fast. Formerly, they had been used in all the houses, but now only on sacred occasions. Katarsing fetched some wine in a bowl, from which each of his sons drank with his head bent forward and his arms held out behind, to avoid all contact. The greenish beverage in the bowl was covered with a layer of ferment.

The galettes were ready. The laughter, and also the prayers, of the women could be heard even in the stables. They climbed up the steep slope, but stopped at a distance, since they were not allowed to go farther. The men went out to meet them, but remained at a higher level, in a dominant position. Society was thus re-enacting the separation of the two worlds of which it was composed. The men, above, lit a fire which was out of bounds for the women, who were associated with the lower values. It was an essential complementary division imposed by the masculine cultural approach to an understanding of life. The women gaily awaited the men's gift. They were draped in superbly ornamented woollen shawls, which covered the upper part of the body. All wore their magnificent *kupas*, for "here, the divinity Jatch is near". The women might not go bare-headed, not even for an instant, near the sacred areas.

44. This is yet another symbol attesting to the relationship between the moon and the female sex, showing that the Kalash initially had recourse to mental syntheses of the type "moon-fecundity-water-cycle-shells".

Nurayat bent forward to pour water on the hands of all his female relatives. They rubbed their hands hard, then rolled up their sleeves and held out their arms, in the manner of those purified and untouchable. Sherzada gave each one five galettes, which she held stacked, one hand beneath and one above. Nurayat then lit a branch of juniper, moistened it so that the smoke should thicken, and passed it three times, from left to right, over the head of the youngest girl, while she held out her galettes. He then threw away the branch and repeated the operation for each woman in inverse order of age, finishing with the eldest. Then Sherzada took the *kuturuli*, breaking off a small piece for the fire and for the gods before giving them to each participant. In this way, without saying a word, the women had renewed their commitment to custom. They could eat the bread and, by "swallowing this creation of man", increase their chances of bearing sons.⁴⁵ For the rite of the *kuturuli* is one of the propitiatory gestures which are an appeal for fecundity, practices inspired by a divinity to meet the concern for the maintenance of demographic equilibrium.

When the Kalash refer to the dangers of a reduction in their numbers, they mention, of course, illnesses and epidemics, which they are unable to combat because they are "subject to the will of God", in the same way as the fecundity or sterility of women. On the other hand, conversions to Islam, whether through influence, seduction or deception, depend on the decisions of human beings, on the strength of their convictions. Demographic growth is based both on resistance and on births, the two aims pursued and included in these annual rites of passage to which each member of the community must submit. The underlying ideology is thus one of procreation.

The women went off singing the praises of the god who was to descend. One of them decorated her coiffe with juniper, "the winter flower". From now on, they would sleep

45. See M. Mauss, *Oeuvres*, Paris, 1968, p. 355. There is an analogy with Hinduism: "The ceremony for the obtaining of a son in which the Brahman, among other rites, gives the woman certain grains to eat. . ."



Shishao: the integration rite of the women begins by washing hands. Purification by water



Shishao. pure bread and flaming juniper passed three times above their heads; in this fashion, each year, the women renew their membership of the community

apart from the men, for the period of sexual abstinence, *ditch*, had begun. And it was this evening, precisely, that the sun was entering its winter house. This temporary renunciation of the act of love, a token of the break with normality, was accompanied by the "physical" expulsion of all non-Kalash from the village. They were forbidden all access to Kalash houses. Only the track that was indispensable for the movement of the Bashgali at the end of the valley remained practicable. The converted former Kalash left their houses and found refuge outside the area of the territory redefined as sacred. This reappropriation of the ethnic domain would eliminate the risks of contamination through contact either with men or with foodstuffs from outside, which were prohibited. The Kalash were hurling evil and all negative influences far from them.⁴⁶

By reaffirming, in the face of the Moslems, their will to remain different, by remaining stubbornly attached to their beliefs, the Kalash are performing a political act of the greatest importance. The exclusion of the Islamic world may be regarded as a disposition to take the offensive, as an affirmation by the community of its will to resist fundamentalism. Submerged from every side, the group is no longer fighting its enemies with arms, as in the past, but with the strength of its customs, used as a defensive rampart. During the period of the *Chaumos*, the Kalash simulate a return to the past. They endeavour to re-experience an earlier situation, that of warriors, through the symbolic destruction of their enemies, burned in the "little fort" of the ancestors, and of exclusive occupants of their (part of the) valley. In Rumbur, they display this grim determination to fight on, the very determination that has enabled them to maintain their identity. Here, the period of abstinence and of the exclusion of converts is seven days. But in Bumburet, an adaptation of custom has reduced the period from seven to three days, the incomprehensible time of Balumain's visit. That is because the Kalash there

46. See Van Gennep, *op. cit.*: "The prohibition to enter a territory has the character of a specifically magico-religious interdict. . ."

have difficulty in isolating themselves from the far greater numbers of Moslems in the village, so that contact becomes inevitable.

“Piota Dehar came to Rumbur when the people of Bumburet decided to reduce the abstinence. He explained to the Rukmula that at Bumburet the practice of throwing wheat to feed Balumain’s horse in the place named *Indre’in* made it possible to finish up the sacred stores of wheat more quickly, in three days. As there is no *Indre’in* in Rumbur, the seven days required for the obligatory consumption of the quantities of sacred bread must be maintained. None must be left over after this pure time. But Piota assured the Rukmula that the daily offerings made at the sanctuaries near their stables ensured that there would be food for Balumain’s horse.”

This evening, the men’s meal would start only after the completion of the ceremony consisting of the throwing of three lots of walnuts and grapes towards the back wall of the stable, and the offering of a cheese galette in the middle, as for the *sarasari*, the first day of the festival, today being a second opening day. Buda, the grandfather, implored Surisan to hear his prayer of the “night of washing”.

The night of the washing of the men

It was now the men’s turn to carry out their obligations of purification. *Nigilao rat* means, literally, “the night of the bread of washing”, the washing of the men. Most of them would sleep away from their houses, in their respective stables.

The women, that night, cooked a pumpkin in the cinders. Katarsing’s “elder” wife divided it in two with an adze and placed it in the fire, the flesh against the embers, and covered the two halves with hot ashes. The beautiful orange vegetable seemed to preserve the nostalgia for immortality of the garden of paradise from which God had taken it to give to humans. The Kalash offer it to the ancestors and associate it with the rites of rebirth of the living. In the stables, the men, too, were eating pumpkin. At about midnight, a prayer was offered to

Balumain in an odour of juniper, which had been set alight to purify the area around the hearth:

“You, Balumain, you who are descending,
this is the night of the washing, it is our great memory,
bring us health, spread it
like the smoke of the juniper in the midst of the herd.
You Balumain, guest from afar,
come down and bring health, wealth and power,
eat, drink, and return satisfied. . .”

Rajimen, the herdsman, milked a goat, directing the teats towards the crushed walnuts in order to consecrate them. Then he took three pinches of flour, which he threw in the sign of a cross, corresponding to the three points of the eagle: one for the head and the other two for the extremities of the wings. Tonight, in each stable, the men were to make eagle bread, *mandawar watch*.

“When Balumain came from Waigal to Bumburet for the first time, a bird – according to the Kalash, an eagle – brought from the sky two fresh round cheeses, decorated with designs of wings, which it placed on Balumain’s horse. Balumain commanded the Kalash to reproduce those designs on galettes on the night of the washing of the men, in the manner of those engraved on the cheese. . .”

The Kalash respect the eagle with russet-coloured plumage. They distinguish it from the *goruelik* (from *gora*, white) whose plumage is light coloured and which they shoot down because its flesh is so tender, “as white and tasty as a fowl”. Grandfather Buda had dropped off to sleep on the only bed in the stable; now he sat up for the pleasure of taking part in the talk. He explained: “As the *goruelik* eat the carcasses of animals, we leave out a dead sheep in the pastures and the hunter hides behind a bush in order to shoot the bird as it approaches the bait. . . But once, it was the herdsman who was borne off, Saifullah’s grandfather. He found himself dangling in the air, grasped in the claws of an enormous *goruelik*. . . The meat of the white eagle is good, and so is its

fat, which is an excellent remedy for deep cuts. . .” Katarsing continued: “When I was a young herdsman, I gashed my knee with an axe as I was cutting holm-oak leaves for the goats. And although, I was bleeding profusely, I was able to get back to the village. There, I smeared white-eagle fat on the wound. Next day, I went off to mind the herd. And six days later, although I had never stopped dashing all over the mountains, the wound had healed. Everything is good in the *goruelik*, the meat, the skin, the powdered bones, everything can be used as a medicine. . .” “But we would never kill a golden eagle,” added his father.

“In the old days, a hunter wanted to shoot a golden eagle. But as he took aim, a man seated on a stool took the place of the bird. He lowered his rifle, and the bird reappeared. Three times this happened. As soon as he aimed again, he saw the man seated. Then he fell unconscious and became ill. The medium with a bow⁴⁷ was consulted, and he said that the *mandawar* was Mahandeo’s wife and that, to regain his health, the sick man must slaughter a kid in honour of the god he had offended. . .” The grandfather added that if one saw a pair of eagles “whistling by playing their wings” during the *Chaumos*, it could be considered as a good omen for the year. That was also the case if one saw an eagle gliding over one’s house or one’s stable. . . He said that a man had told him of the dream he had had the night before. Three golden eagles were flying over the rocky spur of Grum and hovered over the sanctuary of the goddess Jestak. “The gods are coming!” he had exclaimed with certainty. This was another good omen.

Nurayat, as he listened, was kneading an enormous mass of dough on the slate. He formed it into a big ball, which he hollowed like a normal galette and filled with walnuts. The

47. The medium with a bow, *Tum kutchawao*, is a healer who practises divining by means of a bow. He diagnoses by invocation and by interpreting the movements of the bow. The diagnosis is followed by prescriptions, offerings and purification.

galette was so big that it covered the entire cooking slate. Then he designed an eagle on it, a thin strip of dough for the body, applied the length of the diameter, with the two extremities flattened down to represent the head at one end, and the claws at the other. Another strip, perpendicular to the body, represented the wings. Using an acorn cup, he decorated the bird with regular circles. Once cooked, the design would form a part of the galette. The eagle was inscribed in the disc of bread as in a circle representing the sun, of which the bird of prey had been one of the first symbols.

“As already stated, the horse and the bird (eagle) were invoked in the early Vedic age symbolically to represent the sun-god. Now, a few more symbols for the sun-god came into vogue. The wheel, the golden disc. . .”⁴⁸

Even though the Kalash claim to conform exclusively to the orders of Balumain and repeat them, it is the solar symbolism of this god who arrives in a period of shadow that throws light on the rites perpetuated. The joint retreat of the sun and of human beings is thus filled with luminous symbols of hope. In the myth, the god comes riding a horse with hooves of fire. With a stroke of his whip, he sets fire to a village of little faith. With a flame springing from his thumb, he sets fire to a mountain. And finally, he gives the faithful the design of an eagle, one of his representations, a tangible presence.

“In mythology, the bird of prey generally represents the sun which shines with all its brilliance and sometimes indicates its presence in the midst of cloud and darkness by sending out gleaming flashes of lightning, thunder claps and solar rays. It is because of the frequency with which the solar god assumes the form of a bird of prey in the Vedic myths that the place designed for the accomplishment of the sacrifice was in the shape of an eagle.”⁴⁹

48. Lalita Prasad Pandey, *Sun worship in ancient India*, 1971, p. 11. It is interesting to compare the root *manda*, as in *mandawar*, eagle, with the Sanscrit *mandala*, “solar disc”, as Turner (*op. cit.*) compares *mandau*, a Kalash coffin on which a solar disc appears, with *mandala*.

49. A. de Gubernatis, *op. cit.*, p. 190. This “shape of the place of sacrifice” is perhaps recalled in the gesture of the herdsman who makes the sign of the eagle in order to set apart the area where the cooking and the offerings are to take place.



Eagle bread, held by the Nurayat, one of Katarsing's sons.

Nurayat then made a figurine of an ibex with zigzag horns similar to those made on the night of the bestiary, and placed it near the embers to harden. Next, he started on another huge galette, the *kilawatch*, from the word *kila*, a big round cheese, in memory of Balumain's command. He designed a stable on the surface and placed a border of dough round the edges, like a wall. An opening in the border represented a door. He placed a strip of dough right across the galette, dividing the stable, the kids on one side and the goats on the other. Using an acorn cup, he reinforced the sides and peopled the fictitious enclosure with a multitude of dots, all representing unborn kids given over to the protection of the gods. This was yet another rite of magic by contagion.

Balumain had also asked that on that night seven galettes should be made in memory of his adopted daughter, Guli, born of a fairy. The Guli galettes are called *Indras shishao*, for the Kalash also call Balumain by the name of Indra. Why that name? Buda smiled and nodded: "Because the gods have always had lots of names!" Indra, the solar and fecundating god of the Vedic era, may be constantly discerned behind Balumain throughout the festivities.

Golemdam, the little boy who had been purified, placed the seven galettes, the ibex and the two big galettes, into a basket. He was lifted up so that he could place the basket on the high sacred shelf behind the hearth. All night, Katarsing and his sons made more galettes. They used 33 kg of flour to make 100 galettes, a full dossier to last throughout the period of abstinence. The men would eat all their meals in the stables.

At the end of the night, the men washed all over, one by one, in the darkness of the rear of the stable, standing on a slate placed in the midst of the bleating kids and constantly putting their heads in the pan of very hot water.

The day of the great sacrifice

A woman's cry preceded the dawn, piercing the lingering darkness. On this day [17 December] Balumain was to arrive,

sowing prosperity and fecundity under his horse's steps. Standing in front of her door, Bibi Ara, a *Mutimire* girl, was delighting in shouting insults at the *Baloe* wives of the upper part of the village. She was denouncing their excesses:

“Why did you eat so many pumpkins, oh mother of S., why didn't you control yourself, oh mother of R. . . Your bottom is like a mortar, oh mother of S., you can't even jump any more!”

The wind brought back the outrageous replies of the women from above. Her voice, as she began again, was a strident shriek:

“You have eaten one and a half *mon* (63 kg) of *shishao*, and after that you can no longer move, oh you up there. . . Eh you, up there, you have had an affair with the foxes. There's a holm-oak forest above your houses, and you mingle with foxes. Hey, mother of S. . . . When the abstinence began, you were sleeping, oh mother of S. . .”

The deep voice of a man solemnly chanting put a stop to the women's piercing reveille:

“Balumain is descending, he is arriving.
Make the males spread like shadows.
Balumain is descending, he is arriving.
Bring joy, multiply the people like stars in the heavens.
Chaumos is the feast of the gods.
We are going to meet the great Sajigor.
After you have brought us health, you can leave again.
Give us health, Balumain, we beseech it of you.
Take away our worries and our troubles.
You Balumain, give us cascades of milk. . .”

The day of the great sacrifice, the most solemn and most essential day, had finally arrived. Balumain,⁵⁰ the powerful intercessor, the generous distributor, was coming towards men,

50. The etymological transcription of *Balumain* is as follows: In Kalasha: *balush* (riches), *main* (distributor): the sharer or distributor of riches. In Sanscrit: *bala* (force, power), *mayin* (magician), *may* (to change).

to listen to them and to feed them. Until evening, the men were to be in a state of dangerous vulnerability. The “washing” in the small hours of the morning had placed them in a situation of extreme untouchability which would end only at nightfall with the rite of membership “through blood”. They lived through this interval outside their normal condition, transformed, detached from the secular. They avoided their houses and, if they had to go in, took care not to sit down on stools or beds and quickly went out again.

The women stayed in their houses, cleaning the ashes and the dust near the fire, cracking walnuts at the four corners of the hearth, pouring water all round it, purifying household receptacles, pouring out the water drawn the previous day, washing their hands and their mouths. These were all acts signifying a break with the past and an introduction to the period of suspended time. Nothing of yesterday might remain, not even the stores of tobacco, which had been renewed for the seven days. Its preparation required the presence of two ingredients, the leaves of a solanaceous plant, *tamaku*, grown in gardens but also bought in Chitral, and juniper. The dried leaves of the *tamaku* are crushed and reduced to powder. The juniper is set alight and its ashes collected. The mixture of these two residues, in equal proportions, provides the “tobacco” that is used and appreciated by the whole adult population – at the expense of their teeth, since it is taken per lingua, but for the benefit of conviviality, for one would never take a pinch without passing round one’s “tobacco pouch” (any discarded box, plastic bag or piece of cloth). Early that morning, the smell of juniper filled the air. The women were hard at work.

The valley was bathed in sunlight. The hour had come. Behind the walls of the enclosures, the herdsmen watched for the arrival of the procession from the highest stables. It was the herdsmen’s day of honour. They had selected the finest male goat of their respective herds, a six-year-old animal. They knew that, while praising the god, each participant would secretly inspect the quality of the offerings, gauging the

size and aspect of the goat brought by another. It was a silent and discreet rivalry, but nonetheless very real.⁵¹

The men of influence had put on their ceremonial robes with the golden embroidery. Gada, the "little grandfather", had put on an impeccable European-type jacket, and blackened his eyes with khol. The procession was forming. The herdsmen were pulling the goats, whose horns were decorated with juniper. The men were praying. The women followed from their terraces, draped in shawls.

"Oh Balumain, ram without horns, you will bless us with your head.

Bring the seeds of sons and of wheat. Spread health.

We shall give you a flood of blood.

Oh Balumain, accept our prayer.

You, Balumain, make the people like a forest of young pine trees.

Give very good health to all, make everyone stronger.

Give more health and strength to all.

Bring new leaves to the bosoms [new babies to the breasts]."

The praise-givers shouted out their appeals, one arm extended towards the heavens as they prolonged the final "oh" of the refrain: "Oh Balumain, ram without horns, you will bless us with your head. . . Ohooo!"

Here Balumain was a "ram", force of the supernatural, promise of all gifts, guarantor of growth. And the words were improvised around the theme of this confidence, for this was a ram of power.

In the Veda, "the ram is called *mesha* [Kalasha: *mesh*], that is, he who pours or spreads, *mingens* [Kalasha: *minj*, cloud], it thus corresponds to the *megha*, a urinating cloud, a

51. See Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 275: "in the winter month, *bradul mas* (kalasha: *badel*, exchange), in Kafir times, each household kept a large male goat which was specially fed. In this month those goats were killed. The ghee from each goat was weighed and the man with the most was acclaimed. The man with the least had to pay cheese and ghee to everyone in the village."

rain cloud. Indra, the god of rain and thunder, is represented in the first verse of a Vedic chant as a much invoked heroic ram. . .”⁵² There again, Balumain the fecundator assumes an attribute of Indra. But the Kalash refer to him as a “ram without horns”. There is no pejorative intention in this anomaly. The Kalash are not repelled by abnormality; rather, they see in it a sign of the sacred. Rams with four horns or with none are regarded as bringing luck, as a promise of growth. Similarly, when a reaper discovers a double corn cob, he is very careful not to mix it with the crop, but rather places it on the sacred shelf in his house, conducts a sacrifice and sprinkles it with blood. The grains, which are reused the following spring, bestow their virtue of abundance on the rest of the seeds. “The abnormal is rare, therefore pure!” The word for “rare”, in Kalasha, is *naga*, and the incomparable shaman of Kalash tradition, the greatest enlightener, prodigiously inspired, was named “Naga Dehar”, the rare, unique, *dehar*.

Kasi Khoshnawas, the guardian of tradition, used the accepted myth and the visions of Naga Dehar to interpret Balumain: “The theme of the ram existed on the *pareloy tum*, the pillar which connects the three worlds, in Waigal, and also appeared on the handle of the god’s whip.”

Naga Dehar is said to have formerly revealed the god’s will that this day of sacrifice should be dedicated to his servant *Pushao*, who held the reins of the horse or rode pillion, behind Balumain. “*Pushao* is responsible for the first holm-oak, in Tsyam, the country of the ancestors. By this holm-oak Balumain revealed his presence and still indicates it. *Pushao* makes the tree disappear when the god leaves for his annual visit and puts it back as soon as he returns. His function is that of first assistant.” (Kasi Khoshnawas.).

It was to honour him – *Pushao marat*, the sacrifice to *Pushao*⁵⁴ – that the stream of men and beasts climbed up the

52. A. de Gubernatis, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

54 Etymologically, *Pushao* may be derived from *push*, bud, and *marat* from *marik*, to slaughter, in Kalasha: the sacrifice for the return of the buds.

valley to the sanctuary of Sajigor.

The elders went off, addressing the ram without horns: "With goats, we are coming towards you. . ." Baraman had taken great care over his appearance; he was wearing a long green and gold tunic, wide woollen trousers, embroidered puttees and dance moccassins, and he had highlighted his eyes with khol. He headed the procession. A man ran in front holding a branch of flaming juniper, sweeping the air to cleanse the path which had been trodden by non-Kalash. The boys who carried the sacred galettes had been unable to take that path; they had as it were to tightrope walk along the high wall of the irrigation canal in order to reach the sanctuary by a roundabout but unsullied route.

The line of chanting men moved up the river bed, occasionally crossing tree trunks in places where the banks had collapsed or were too steep. A climb of over half an hour was needed to reach the altar of Sajigor over the broken terrain. A soloist would "name" a wish and the whole line would take it up in chorus, with gusto. There ensued a sort of competition between the orators. What counted was both the frequency of their interventions and their originality, contrasting with the conventional wishes for material blessings. Many were too timid to intone a verse or to take the lead, once a chorus had died down, by emitting the quavering guttural "Oh" sound.

In silence, the procession entered the precincts of the sanctuary, the *Sajigor ton*, the place of the permanence of the sacred. The fire before the stone table was rekindled, and the rebirth of the flames coincided with the arrival of the sun at its zenith. Thus, the hour of noon was to associate light, blood and prayer for the vitalisation of the universe. The sacks of galettes and the juniper branches were heaped up to the right of the altar (facing upstream). Baraman extracted the sacrificial knife from a sheath of rags. As the Kalash have no special class of priests-sacrificators, the men of influence choose from among the youths two who have both the strength and the nerves to slaughter fifteen goats each. Sherzada, the son of



The great he-goat sacrifice in honour of the god Balumain, in the sanctuary of Sajigor

Katarsing, was to be the "holder" for the thirty executions. The youths selected went off to the river to purify themselves. A branch of holm-oak lodged between the stones of the altar introduced the offering. The holm-oak symbolises the life cycle; it is a gift of the gods, it feeds the goats, which in turn feed humans, enabling them, in their turn, to feed the gods. The gods can count: thirty goats for this *Chaumos*, a fine proof of generosity.

The *gadeirak* took their places in the front line of prayer. The entreaties came from all the participants, hands turned heavenwards, with no intermediary, without the filter of a religious power erected between the human and the divine.

A circle of smoke closed off the sacred area from the profane. The herdsmen kept the animals back under the age-old oaks. The first male goat to be thrown forward belonged to the *Mutimire* stable of Buda and Katarsing; the order of prestige of the owners governed the order in which the victims were slaughtered. Sherzada threw the goat across his

knees, hooves in the air. It struggled with all its might. The sacrificator seized it by the beard, pulled its head back, and cut. The blood flowed, spread, spurted, sprayed the officiants, stained their clothes. The animal's convulsions were terrible; that was a favourable sign of acceptance. The tip of its ear was cut off and the bloody flesh thrown into the fire. Working fast, the slaughterer put down his knife, collected blood in his cupped hands, threw it into the fire, onto the holm-oak branch on the altar, and onto the stones of the sacred table. "Balumain is watching us at this moment, seated with Sajigor on his altar. . ."⁵⁵

The splashing of the blood was to establish the contact; the smoke transmitted the part reserved for the divine, and communion in eating was to complete the intimacy with the god. The head separated from the body and placed on the perimeter of the fire was proof of the ritual "murder", the head, the receptacle of being. The acrid odour of the burnt hair and flesh was pleasing to the divine spectators. The animal's body was still shuddering. It was pulled to the rear. The herdsmen pushed forward a second animal (belonging to Satjuan, a *Dramese*, the descendant of and heir to the glory of Mahamurat). All the while, the gathering prayed unceasingly, with effort and conviction, expending an energy well worthy of the notice of the Great Intercessor. The intensity of voices increased each time the knife penetrated a throat:

"Oh our master Balumain, our guest, come down to us, give us seeds of men and of wheat! Ward off the evil eye and all problems, bring us health. . . Place an iron bolt at the long valley of Gangawat and do not let our enemies through. Be happy and accept our offering, oh Balumain our guest. Bring to an end our problems with our Kati enemies. Bring health, bestow riches, remove our fears and worries. Render the Kalash people strong and your share will be all the greater! Expand all our lineages, give them success. Give strength to our clans."

55. See Mauss, *op. cit.*, p. 239: "Homer's poems show us the gods seated at official banquets."

To ensure that the god ushered in these ideal conditions for the future, the Kalash were thus taking the initiative by placing him in the position of a debtor. The interest on the debt was quite high. The men had come to honour the god collectively, but it was each stable that provided a gift of considerable value in defence of the owners' private interests. The Power could not shirk its obligations; it must repay its debt by granting the prayers; it must provide protection and growth in exchange for this display of generosity, albeit a self-interested generosity.

Baraman then proceeded to improvise alone as the goats were precipitated, one by one, from life to death:

“Oh our Master, great Sajigor, from Waigal the god comes down to us as our guest. Ward off the evil eye and all problems. Accept our prayer with both hands. Grant our prayer. All around us, our enemies are lying in wait, all those who have evil thoughts about our religion. It is for you to decide, great God, you know who has evil thoughts. As for us, we are very poor, but we have faith in you and we look towards you with words of devotion. Do not allow the other thoughts to enter your valley. Stop the wood or the stone that might cause injury. Give us plenty of riches, of food and of clothing. Bless all these things. Great Sajigor, fill the valley with gold and silver. We humans are nothing, we know nothing. We are nothing, and even if we are satisfied we are only weak, unable to resist anything. You, you are the only God, you know the bad people, you know the good people. You know all beings. Give more of us long lives, do not allow the evil eye to penetrate into the valley. . .”

This flood of words continued right up to the slaughter of the thirtieth animal, its object being to numb the divine power, whether personified by Balumain or by Sajigor. The men had kept their promise: thirty killings, from thirty stables, with thirty children brandishing three galettes and a branch of juniper each; thirty heads of goats placed in front of the altar; a great pool of blood steaming on the snow. These

excesses hark back to the Indo-Aryan belief that the divinity must be made drunk with blood if it were to be effective:

“The Aryans believed that the god did not act by his power alone; he was stronger than human heroes, but his strength was subject to weaknesses. If the god was to be sturdy, he must eat and drink; if he was to work with enthusiasm, he must be stirred by the lure of glory, by the spur of prayer for his help, by the praise that exalted him before the combat and magnified him after the victory. This food for soul and body was provided by sacrifice, which gorged the god with meat and drink and made him drunk with chants and intoxicating words. . .”⁵⁶

And man, in turn, in the hope of maximum fecundity, models his attitude upon that of the god. He gets ready to eat meat during the seven days of sexual abstinence, to drink wine, if possible in abundance, to eat food in quantities out of all proportion with his normal consumption. It is thus that the community looks towards its regeneration and continuation: by an orgy of insults and eating, combined with inflated solicitations and lavish offerings. The sun can then leave on its journey to the summer and the order of things will be restored.

“In Kafir times, the winter solstice coincided with a celebration in which the old people are said to have consumed great quantities of wine and then, when intoxicated, to have thrown the ashes of the fire at each other (an explanation of the term *asa nishini*, literally “ashes sitting”, referring to the solstice). We may speculate that the celebration or ceremony may have had some connection with getting the sun started on its return journey. . .”⁵⁷

At a signal, the children rushed towards the heads, pushing and shoving, in a scrum in which each sought to recuperate “his head”, the one from his stable. The knife was

56. Darmesteter, *Les cosmogonies aryennes*. Paris, 1881.

57. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

washed and replaced in its sheath of rags. Strong shoulders were loaded with the carcasses. The whole gathering set out on the road to Balanguru, walking quickly, without looking back. They left behind them the fire, blood and crows.

The women had been waiting nearly three hours, dancing and singing in the square at Balanguru.

As for the little girls, they had run off laughing to hide behind the houses, then came back, surrounding one of their number, who had dressed up as a man, her face covered with a scarf, a woollen cap on her head, her body draped in a heavy coat that was much too large for her. They tumbled helter-skelter about the square, spinning around, encouraged by the older girls surrounding them. "Who is it?" This was the "guest game": the mysterious personage must remain unknown or be unmasked. As for the young women, they were letting off steam in another way: they were holding an eloquent penis between their legs, erecting it by twisting their woollen shawls. They were having fun chasing one another, dancing a mimed penetration, swaying to and fro' in an outburst of laughter and smutty allusions: "Touch the coffin, touch, touch. . ."

Several of the men were now crossing the square, backs bent under the weight of the headless goats, whose bloody necks were rolling from side to side. A crowd began to move towards the house of Jestak for the rite of integration, the *goshnik*. The Kalash celebrate the entry of young children of both sexes into the community. At the age of four, the baby becomes a child, *suda*, and on that day both the little boy and the little girl receive a dress and the appropriate headgear. The future man is dressed in a white woven dress and a black cap, the little girl in a black woollen dress with a belt, and the first *kupas*. This is the only introductory ceremony for girls.

The Kalash recognise the early maturity of girls, maintaining that girls develop faster than boys. Hence, it is in a man's interest to marry a woman four years younger than he if his own development is not to be stunted: "He would stay little!" they say.

The children, wrenched out of the maternal cocoon, are transformed into adults by their clothing, which adequately expresses both their identity and their duality. There is no attempt to make a physical distinction between the sexes. What is more, this ceremony takes place many years before puberty, which does not serve as the threshold to initiation. In theory, the boys wear dresses until the age of seven, remaining in this informally androgynous situation until, with their first trousers, they accede to adolescence and to the fabulous world of pastoral responsibilities. At the same time, the domain of the sacred is opened up before them; they can become "purified", take part in the rituals, have access to tradition. And if they should die, they are deserving of a man's burial.

That day, in the upper part of the valley, ten children aged four were presented for the *tchelik sambiak* and three seven-year-olds for the *but sambiak*. They were a little frightened by this sudden attention and clung to the adults for protection.

The sanctuary was filled with trays of dried fruit brought by the family of each candidate out of its stores and intended for the relatives by marriage. The trays were covered, so as to excite curiosity and whet the appetite. It was the responsibility of the maternal uncles to conduct the rite and to provide the necessary garments. They undressed each child – another instance of regression by a return to nakedness – then lovingly clothed it in the insignia of its new status. Usually, a long shirt took the place of a dress for a boy, together with a wide belt with a little bell. The cap was sewn with bear claws, marmot bones, partridge beaks, beads and shells, topped with a dyed tuft of wild sheep wool "to help him become a hunter". The proud parents slipped rupees into the uncle's cap. Badchara Khan called: "Who has not been dressed yet?"

The bigger boys were attired in the "image of the ancestor", so as to resemble a funerary statue. They wore superb white woollen trousers adorned with embroidery and fringes, a shirt and a new pullover, with crossed woven bandoliers



The young seven-year-old initiate is integrated into the community through his clothing. He is dressed in the "image of the ancestor"

representing cartridge belts. On their heads they wore caps topped by white turbans reminiscent of the Phrygian cap of the effigies. The initiates entered into reality just as the ancestors were reborn into material existence through the carved features of the *gandao*. Here, then, were two rites of passage which brought in death so as to achieve a renewal of life.

The women standing in a circle jeered at them, putting these would-be males, with their insignificant penises, in their places: "And the fox saw your penis and he burst out laughing. . ." The theme of the fox constantly recurs in insults because of its reputation for cowardice and shamelessness. Mothers advise their children: "Don't take off your turban, it's better to hunt the fox. . ." (remember who you are and don't stoop to contemptible actions).

Once the initiates were dressed, a purified adolescent boy threw grapes and walnuts into the fire, in honour of the

goddess Jestak, and then through the chimney hole, for the development of the newly promoted, "like a gushing forth". Then the women placed multicoloured cotton bandoliers and necklaces of almonds round the necks of their guests, all of whom were relatives. To the maternal uncle, the "dresser", the family of the father presented dishes and utensils, a recognition of the bride's fecundity. The union had borne its fruit. This was a tribute to the maternal function, to the uncle's house. In exchange, the uncle would give his nephew or niece a kid or a lamb, a young animal which would grow alongside the child and which would later swell the father's herd and still further cement the alliance between the families.

The wicker lids of the baskets were lifted off, showing a harmonious arrangement of grapes, apples, peaches, pomegranates, melons, walnuts, mulberries, and even tangerines from the orchards of Peshawar. The assembly relished the delicious candied fruit. Above the hubbub of voices, one could hear the provocative shouts of the young people of marriageable age.

The same ceremony took place in the house of Jestak in Grum, to welcome the little Kalash of the downstream lineages. When a son has long been desired, when others have died before him, his mother lets his hair grow, from birth, in three plaits, one in front and one over each ear. The length of the plaits shows the child's age. Three days before the integration rites of the *goshnik*, Alimat, of the *Mutimire*, had thanked Khodai God for sparing his son, Koshi, by sacrificing a male goat on the roof of the family's house. After that, he had shaved off the plaits, because Koshi had succeeded in attaining to man's estate. At Birir, this custom is continued with a plait from the back of the head falling down the back, in the Kafir manner: "The Kafirs used to wear a plait from birth to adolescence. It ended up being very long. Having become sturdy young men, they announced one summer that they were leaving to kill a foreigner. Once they had committed the murder and brought back proof of a promise kept, they cut

off their plaits and threw them in the air. Everyone knew that they were now men.” (Kasi Khoshnawas).

Among the Kalash, murdering an enemy is no longer the password for attaining to manhood, but some traces of this rite of passage subsist in the practice of cutting off a boy’s hair.

The Kafirs, in former times, defended themselves by attacking, and force led to expansion. Today, among the Kalash, initiation serves as a power of self-creation, permitting the inclusion of new individuals and cultural reproduction; it is an act of enlargement and self-preservation. In order that the rite of integration of children may be as efficacious as possible, it takes place at the heart of the *Chaumos*, the ritual sequence marking the collective passage from the old year to the new. The community opens itself to these candidates for adulthood and thus safeguards its future.⁵⁸

This concern for the future is also apparent in the ornamentation of the caps worn by the four-year-old boys, the future men: cowries, glass beads and especially marmot bones and bear’s claws. These two animals belong to the lunar bestiary because they hibernate, disappearing and reappearing, dying and rising again. Aware of this cycle, the Kalash say that the first growl of the bear is a presage of spring. The claws are regarded as protective because of the concentrated power they contain, even though the Kalash no longer link them directly with the power of the moon. The following story associates the hibernation of bears and snakes with the secret of permanent regeneration:

“One day, a great hunter went off to track down a wild goat in the mountains, but was overtaken by nightfall near the

58. An exception, however, is made in the case of twins. Should a woman have twins, the husband will sacrifice a cow and a goat at their birth on the roof of his house. A purified boy throws some of the blood on the mother’s breast, inside the house. She is regarded as very pure, and for the rest of her life will eat from her own personal dishes.

Similarly, the initiation of these children cannot take place at the *Chaumos* with the others. What is rare is sacred. It takes place during the spring festival, and the father distributes cheese and wheaten galettes in place of fruit.

peaks. He took refuge in a cave. During the night, there was a heavy snow fall, and the entrance to the cave was covered. Then seven bears came in to hibernate, and the last, an enormous beast, blocked the entrance with a huge boulder. The terrified man rolled himself into a ball and huddled in a corner, keeping completely still. But without paying any attention to him, the bears flopped down in a corner and went to sleep. Hardly had the man begun to regain his assurance than snakes slithered in from all sides, also come to hibernate. The hunter crouched down again, terrified. But the snakes, too, fell asleep. The man observed that they slept for seven days, then woke up and licked a certain stone, and again fell asleep. This occurred every seven days. The captive hunter killed and ate the six smallest bears, one by one. But after watching the snakes, he said to himself that he too should try to lick the strange stone. This he did, and in fact for the next seven days he was not hungry. But one of the snakes, which had caught him out as he was sucking the stone, said to him: 'Here you have tasted the secret stone, but when you return home you must on no account reveal its existence, otherwise you're likely to die. . .'

"In the spring, when the thunder awakened nature, the enormous bear shook off its lethargy and freed the entrance to the cave, growling. The snakes fled and the man went home. Naturally, the first thing his wife asked him was how he had been able to do without bread the whole winter. The man gave an evasive answer: 'It didn't matter to me.' His wife insisted: 'But you couldn't have done without bread, it's impossible.' The hunter finally gave in and revealed the secret of the stone. Immediately, a snake emerged from the sacred area between the hearth and the wall and bit the man, who died.'

Once again, through stupidity, man betrays Learning, losing the benefits of communication with animals, particularly with the serpent, frequently the guardian of Knowledge, and wasting his chance to attain immortality here below. Immortality has to be conquered.

The men had gone back to the stables, where the herdsmen were cutting up the goats that had been sacrificed. The children were making the most of the kidneys grilled in the cinders. Once the fat had been extracted, the viscera were cooked in boiling water. The liver and the intestines were set aside to be prepared with spices the following evening. Buda, the grandfather, took the skin to make a water bag, rubbing a mixture of cinders and water on the outside to prevent the hair from falling out. Golemdam, his grandson, had gone into the house for a moment, but had forgotten the ban and sat down on a stool, so he had to wash again completely to remove the stain. The rite that was being prepared, *istongas*, required absolute purity. Only clean or new clothes must be worn before the gods, who were attentive to this profession of faith.

The fathers do not celebrate this rite in the presence of their sons; they go off to the stable of a lineage brother, who in turn leaves for another stable. In Rumbur, there is a story that one day a father and son received the *istongas* together, as was then the rule. But they must have committed some sin, for the son disappeared the same day and his body was not found until spring. Naga Dehar, in a trance, revealed the displeasure of the fairies. Since then, but only in Rumbur, no father celebrates the *istongas* together with his son for fear of reproducing what appeared to have been a curse.

The light was fading. In the centre of the stable, a fire was smoking abundantly for the pleasure of the gods. A branch of juniper lodged between two stones to the right of the stable door served as an altar. A purified boy washed the hands of each participant with the clear water of the river. The men rubbed their faces and hands, avoiding all contact with their clothing. They threw out their chests and held their arms face high, saying "*Sutch, sutch, sutch...* Pure, pure..." The officiant set light to a branch of juniper and passed it quickly over the fire, the altar-branch lodged in the wall, and the heads of the participants. Then he cut the throat of a male kid, threw the blood into the fire, towards the improvised altar, cut

off an ear, and finally sprinkled everyone's faces; these were drops that were to remain on the skin, recreating the mark of belonging, and should not be washed off. *Istongas*.⁵⁹

"We are far from our wives to pray to you, oh gods! This marked man is a new man. Give him a good life and health. Ward off the evil eye, oh Balumain! You await this *istongas*, bring us health and give us sons. Accept our prayer. Allow us health, give seeds of wheat, seeds of sons. . ."

Once the rite had been accomplished, the ban on sitting down in houses was lifted.⁶⁰ In Katarsing's stable, a heated discussion began on custom and its adaptation, and on the problems created by hitherto unknown consumer goods. During the period of abstinence, tradition demanded that only foodstuffs derived exclusively from domestic production be consumed, based on cheese, flour and fruit. There must be no imported vegetables, grown on Moslem land. However, the protagonists were evasive about the question of cigarettes and tea. If these goods had been purchased well in advance and were in the house before the period of purification, their use was permitted, but not their purchase at the bazaar during that pure period. As Katarsing had opened his own shop, he had purified it and cleaned it in the same way as a dwelling, spreading the sacred protection of the juniper over all the products on the shelves. But according to some of the faithful, the law was the law.

Chewing tobacco was passed round to relieve the desire for cigarettes. Its absorption calmed the discussion. Now and again, jets of greenish saliva were spat towards the fire, breaking the silence. The wad of powder held under the tongue made speech difficult. Nevertheless, Gada embarked on a long tirade, the gist of which was that young people did not know

59. *Istongas*: according to Turner (*op. cit.*), the Kalasha word *istongem*, "I splash", comes from the Sanscrit *stankati*: "produces coagulation by the throwing of one liquid into another".

60. "Blood is conceived of as a principle of strength and life, and plays the same role as water in rites of purification. It has a regenerative property, and the impure man may hope to renew his being through contact with pure blood." (L. Lévy-Bruhl, *Le surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive*, 1931.)

the origin of *tamaku*, and then treated the gathering to a story – punctuated by splutterings – on the discovery of the tobacco plant.

“A long time ago, there was a man who was unable to have a son. He went to find a ‘prophet’ – in the hope of obtaining one, and to ask him how to pray. On the way, he met an ascetic named Atamtai. He brought him home, gave him food and asked him to pray that he might have a son. Atamtai prayed and then left. The man had two sons. On his way, Atamtai came upon a leopard that was preparing to attack a wild goat. The wild goat came to seek refuge with the pious man by placing its head against his legs. The leopard, stopped in mid-charge, was indignant: ‘I was hungry, why do you deprive me of my prey?’ Atamtai replied: ‘To satisfy you, would you perhaps do with something else that I could give you?’ ‘Alright’, said the leopard, ‘if you can give me something in its place to fill my empty stomach.’

“Atamtai took his knife and cut off all the flesh of his own body out of pity for the animal he had wanted to save, and which he was determined to protect to the end.

“The leopard, its hunger appeased, continued on its road. But Atamtai realised that his infected wounds would soon begin to stink. He withdrew into the forest, far from men, lay down on the ground and spat. A plant shot up forthwith, which served him as a litter and which healed his wounds. This plant, known as *tamaku*, spread throughout the world.”

Twilight could be seen through the open door. A boy and an adult went off to throw walnuts and grapes to Jatch, accompanied by prayers. The bread prepared the previous night, the dosser of 100 galettes, was carried into the storehouse on the stable roof, where the carcasses of the slaughtered goats were hanging, for the sacred period of seven days. The men prayed again before and after eating their meal of fat and bread.

At nightfall, they brought a goat and a sheep to the waiting women, and purified the house. The slaughtered

animals were cut up on the terrace. Wine flowed in abundance. The women again prepared bread and some tiny galettes "for the souls", three with walnuts and cheese and three without. The following day one of the women would carry this meal to the dead in the cemetery. The little girls could scarcely keep their hands off the food. The goat was a big, six-year-old animal. But the women of the poorer families would not necessarily eat meat that evening. Katarsing, however, was a wealthy man.

Expenditure that year was affected by another circumstance; there was an outbreak of chicken-pox among the children of Balanguru, and most families were too worried about the disease to eat large meals.

Golemdam's mother said: "Tonight, a man and a child will go to Jatch, to the sanctuary above the village, and make seven offerings while everyone else is sleeping."

At four o'clock in the morning, Golemdam threw stones at the figurines of the wild goat still standing on the shelf. In every stable, a little boy was similarly trying to take good aim and to hit the bread beast at the first throw, for success in the hunt.

The men no longer washed their faces; the brown marks of blood on their faces bore witness to their belonging.

The day of blessings

Today (18 December), was the day of the blessing of the community, *Tchatai adu*. The day after the sacrifice and the rites of integration, the god Balumain had before him a community of renewed men, enriched by newly promoted members emerged from childhood. Before leaving, Balumain wanted to count them, to number his faithful in order to bless them. So the men returned to Sajigor to present themselves before him. In former times, Naga Dehar had advised the Kalash to carry willow wands representing each of them in order to facilitate the census conducted by the god. It was as

though, by placing the wands on the altar, they were offering themselves to Balumain.

From early morning, too, there had been a continual exchange of kids and lambs between one stable and another. The maternal uncles were delivering the gifts they had promised their nephews or nieces at the integration ceremonies. Yasin, the son of Saifullah, Katarsing's son-in-law, was to receive a dozen kids from his uncles.

In slow procession, the community was again assembling in the square of Balanguru. The walls of the irrigation canals were covered with icicles near the mills, for Balanguru was the village of shadow. The men of influence headed the march. They had changed the *tchapan* they had been wearing the previous day, their richly embroidered robes. The women were splendidly dressed in shawls that fell below their hips, and had stuck woven stems of wheat into their coiffes, topped by a peacock feather, the symbol of the great feast, even if the peacock had long ago fallen from divine grace as humans had:

“In olden times, the wild peacock was common in the pasture lands. It was considered as the king of the birds until one day when Khodai the Creator saw it scratch the ground instead of staying on its throne. So he cast it out.”

Nevertheless, despite this symbolic disgrace, the display of a peacock feather during a festival celebrating the passage of the year attests to the concern for regeneration, in conformity with Vedic thought:

“Indra, the god of the thousand eyes, is regarded as a peacock. The peacock, which every year loses and renews the brilliance of its varied colours, and which has a numerous progeny, served like the phoenix as a symbol of immortality and as a personification of the phenomena in accordance with which the sky darkens and becomes serene again, the sun dies and rises again, the moon rises and darkens, sets, hides and is reborn”.⁶¹

61. De Gubernatis, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

The men's chests were decorated with good-luck bandoliers with gaudily coloured designs: lines like caterpillars, alternating "V"s like goat horns, zigzags like snakes.



An elder, Baraman, exhorts the young, overawed, initiates the dance

The seven-year-old heroes of yesterday's integration ceremonies were dancing, throwing themselves about, feet thrust forward, left then right, brandishing sticks like sceptres. In former times, Mamat Salan from Bras had advised that children should dance like warriors, but with stiff legs, since they were not yet skilled enough, and that they should be dressed as "statues of the ancestors" so as to capture the warlike strength and courage inherent in those representations. By dancing, dressed in the emblems of the ancestor, their imitator is transformed, since he acquires the spirit of the prestigious dead. Proudly, the little boys marched in the van of the men, who once again left their wives to their waiting

game and proceeded to the sanctuary of Sajigor. For the first time, the little fellows were wearing wide herdsmen's trousers, cut to their size, with tight puttees. They leaned ostentatiously on canes, like the elders, Across their white shirts they wore two wide bandoliers with red beads, simulating cartridge belts, and they had white turbans on their heads. They were to carry out their first ritual act.

All along the way, the procession cried out joyous entreaties, hopeful requests, hands uplifted to the heavens.

Before the altar of Sajigor, the future herdsmen huddled close to the fire, still intimidated by the ceremonies. Each held a willow wand and a galette in his hands as proof of his nascent individuality and of his share in the offerings to the gods. The little boys were surrounded by adolescents, each of whom held a number of galettes and willow wands corresponding to the number of male members of his family's stable. In this way, those who could not be present, the herdsmen and the sick, were not left out of the census and could share in the blessings. At a shouted signal, all the willow branches were thrown on the altar. Everything now began to move faster. In a confusion of shouts, instructions to the neophytes and harangues, the little boys and the purified adolescents broke up the galettes, hurried towards the fire, trying not to jostle each other, and threw the pieces into the flames, as well as a branch of juniper each. Calm was restored when the assembly fell on their knees in prayer. Then they shared the rest of the bread.

The four-year-old boys who had received their adult clothing the day before entered the sacred area for the first time, but without carrying willow wands. They watched, but they were not regarded as existing sufficiently to be counted.

Before leaving the sanctuary, the *gadeirak* Badchara Khan, dressed in a red and gold robe, addressed the crowd, which nodded in approval. The first part of his speech was directly addressed to us:

"The strangers who have come here from France will transmit what they have seen and heard. The power of

Balumain will be known throughout the world, for we are too few to make it known ourselves. Thanks be to God a million times, thanks be to the souls of the ancestors, thanks for the good luck of the people of Rumbur. Through the grace of God, may these people too have their wishes granted, these people who have come to our land and have prayed. The grace of God must give them greater power: greater strength must touch them.

“The second thing I have to say is this: may the Kalash community increase. There is another community which is growing [the Kalash of Birir and Bumburet] into a very powerful group. Let the Rumbur people get along together, love each other, and the others will be embarrassed.⁶² Let this be so in all your relations with each other. Try. Do not rise up against each other. In order to develop and increase, try to do this. After this feast, do not get into arguments with each other. Here you will be able to sense more sweetness, more love, you will see. The ancestors too were made by God. We come from a single ancestor. We, the *gadeirak*, your representatives, are here before you. Say thank you and call us your parents. The holy God will make you better and still better. Love continues. Stop saying bad things. Pray for health.”

Baraman signalled his agreement and added, in a voice distorted by the wad of tobacco in his mouth: “Duri the Gujur begs from house to house; give him something to eat, for the love of God, give him something, why not give him something?”

The men were approaching Balanguru. From afar, they could see the women still dancing, chasing each other to the music of laughter. Little girls disguised as men were spinning round, their bodies concealed in coats of chitrالي wool

62. This is a clear example of the cohesive mechanism. The Kalash society has no chief; it rejects the idea of a central power. However, the rules of union must be observed and discord avoided at all costs. Discord weakens and brings discredit upon the group. Any conflicts must be resolved or smothered at birth in order to “save face” vis-a-vis other clans.

that were much too large for them, the empty ends of the sleeves flapping like ghosts, the scarves masking their faces adding to their spectral appearance. They were wearing men's caps and brandishing sticks, like men. Well before reaching the houses, the men branched off, taking the path which overhung the village, and crowded onto the roofs and terraces so that they could look down upon the women and cheerfully assail them with shouts and whistles, arms pointing as if in challenge.

"So come down then, oh my new boy friend," cried the women, "you are looking with desire like a grandson watching his grandmother!"

As if in reply to the injunction, the men lined up, hands on each other's shoulders, in a procession headed by the elders in order of prestige and brought up by the seven-year-old herdsmen. They came down from the rooves like grotesque horsemen, surrounding the squatting women, shouting the famous "wahahaha..." and spiralling around them from left to right. The gravity of the moment was reflected in their faces. They all now sang the chant of the "ram without horns". Here were the two mysteries: the women huddled in the enclosure of men's shoulders. Satjuan, the leader of the parade, swung the sleeves of his coat to dispense the blessings of the god. Balumain was riding at his side at that precise moment. If a sick person came up to him, the "leader" would slap his face to imprint upon it the promise of health. The four-year-olds who had just been promoted, and who were wearing dresses, also came up to him to receive any blessings that might come their way. Slowly the group moved towards the lower part of the village, the women caught as in a vice. No man might exclude himself from this communal event.

The sudden alternation between transgression and return to normal in fact contributes to the consolidation of society, which everyone realises to be indispensable after an upheaval bordering upon chaos. The verbal jousting, in addition to being a playful confrontation, is aimed at bringing about



The community of men encircles the group of women on the dance area of Balanguru

sexual union by the scaling down of opposites. As Eliade maintains, all decency is deliberately forgotten: "Because what we have here is something much more serious than respect for norms and customs; it is a matter of ensuring the continuity of life".⁶³ But continuity implies above all "the continuation of sacred periods", of the successive "spaces" which return and which are linked together to form real time, which alone reflects the permanence of life. To achieve this welding of pure and cyclical periods, the stains of the previous year must be eliminated, and the order of things must be destroyed so that it may be reconstructed. The community thus constantly finds itself on the threshold of the Beginning. The upheaval simulates an annihilation of the past, a regression into darkness. The scenario of the *Chaumos* is effectively concerned to plunge the community into chaos and to recreate creation

63. M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, p. 301.

through the ensuing regeneration. The world of the Kalash tends to find itself each new year at the beginning of an era resembling that which preceded it. Constantly renewed, the community is in perpetual existence.

Where the area widened, the momentary restraint broke down. The girls jumped up and down. The elders shook their sticks or their axes in imitation of a frenzied phallus; the young men danced in groups of three, leaning forward, heads down, then standing erect to howl out their everlastingly crude remarks aimed at playing havoc with the girls' modesty.

Around the fire, imperturbably, the oldest women chanted pious verses, their voices drowned by waves of screams:

"I went into the fortress of Indra, he gave me health; when it is mine, I shall give it to you. . ."

"I went into the fortress of Indra, he granted all my wishes. . ."

"I went into the fortress of Indra, he promised to increase my family. . ."

At the hour of the return of the herds, the men went back to the stables to eat the offal before starting on the lean meat. Fatty meat is associated with virility.

The women baked seven galettes for Indra's daughter, the fairy adopted by Balumain, who was to return with him at dawn of the following day.⁶⁴

The night of lights

In front of the house, Nurayat was preparing gigantic torches, *shanja*, 3 metres high, out of poles of resinous wood. He assembled long splinters of wood cut down with an axe and tied them with strips of willow that had been heated to soften them and make them easier to knot. He made about ten of them for his close relatives. Balumain was returning to Tsyam, to the country of origin. The darkness must be lit up to guide his return and to urge the sun on its way towards the summer,

64. In Kafiristan, Imra, the god of creation, also fathered seven daughters and placed agricultural work under their authority. See G. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

and therefore an abundance of the precious "light-wood", that priceless gift of the gods, must be burned. Khodai revealed the power of this wood to men at the moment of Creation. He said: "I am giving you two legs, but you will need a third." And he gave a stick to the old men. "I am giving you two eyes, but you will need a third, and I give you light-wood."

The silence of the icy night had settled over the countryside. Then a single voice intoned "Oh ram without horns", the signal for assembly, filling the darkness with fervour. A first fire burst into life below the stables of Kalashagrum, then another on the opposite slope, on top of the rocky outcrop of Grum. From the sanctuary of Jatch came the order: "The fumigation is finished, you can light up!" Only the women carried the torches (perhaps, as in the case of the willow wands, for the purposes of a census, this time of women?). They set their heavy poles into the fire. Faces took on the colour of flames. The light flowed down the cliffs, flooded the valley. The great men set dry bushes alight as they descended in order to light the way for the faithful. It was an extraordinary sight – as though firebrands were burning holes in the black cloth of the sky. Voices sailed on the river of fire. Light flowed down from Grum, weaving in and out of the flights of the stairway-village. Chants echoed through the empty darkness over the valley:

"Oh Balumain, you who have descended, before you leave, multiply the households like people in the bazaar. . . Multiply the people like the stars in the sky. . . Found a large population with no disharmony. . . Increase my Kafiristan. . . Make my three Kalash valleys strong. . . Dispense your blessing and health, and you may leave again."

Faces shone with laughter. The waves of light merged, tangled in confrontations. Maleidesh had joined Kalashagrum, and the antagonism between upper and lower valleys surfaced before unity was again restored.

There was a bubbling of laughter, a frenzy of dancing. The procession crossed the river, wound its way through the

flames of Grum and moved up towards the gigantic bonfire of Balanguru, which hurled red stars into the sky under the force of the wind. It was freezing. The bonfire was the powerful fire of the males, their expression; it had been built up of tree trunks piled high for a whole night of whirling and turning. The Kalash call it *kotik*, the little fort impregnated with purity, and they do not set it alight until after it has been fumigated. The women arrived and circled round, sparks streaming behind them like flags, turning like some incandescent wheel. It was a frenzy of voices, fire, wind, exuberance, loosening the vice-like grip of the cold and the darkness. This was the night of the paroxysm; the Kalash call it *shanja rat*, the night of the torches, or *nanghairo*, "the demons hunt", a term that clearly explains the objective sought. The riot of light completes the rout of the evil spirits. Balumain is credited with the repeated victories of Indra, that tireless adversary of the monsters of darkness, the solstitial liberator of the diurnal star.⁶⁵ Humans repudiate the longest night of the year by pushing back the frontiers of darkness until dawn, thus taking their part in the action of the god, whose results would be manifest in the lengthening of the days.

The festival was about to degenerate into sheer madness when the shaman suddenly began to stride up and down the area where the women were gathered, his eyes starting out of his head. He made threatening gestures at them, and seemed about to strike them. They drew back. The atmosphere became very tense. The *dehar* stumbled against the wall of onlookers, crying "Hey! Hey!", then broke through the lines and pulled two men towards him. He shouted: "The women are impure! One of them came back from the menstruation

65. "It is sufficient to recall that the winter solstice was certainly one of the beginnings of the year in use in those far-off centuries [Vedic times] . . . Indra was the god and founder-president of the feast of the changing of the year." (Dumezil, *op. cit.*, p. 110.)

"It is possible that in ancient times the combat between Indra and Vrta constituted the mythico-ritual scenario of the festivities of the new year which ensured the regeneration of the world." (M. Eliade, *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, p. 220.)

house without changing into clean clothes, and the gathering is contaminated at a time when the god surrounds us. Without purification, he will not grant our wishes!" The man to whom he had just pointed purified himself, set light to a branch of juniper and ran round the assembled people, enclosing them in a circle of atoning smoke.

The men made off in a stampede, taking up their positions beyond the circle of women. The fault must be repaired, the rites renewed, so as not to lose the benefit of the god's presence, of his favours. Satjuan, the leader, again swept the air with his wide sleeves. Children were brought to him; they were suffering from worms "which cause a big belly". He slapped them. The faithful moved around the fire, fervently glorifying the name of Indra:

"I went into the fortress of Indra, the memory of Balu-main is there. I went into the fortress of Indra, he granted me an increase in population. When I went into the fortress of Indra, the fire of my ancestor was there [metaphor for Balu-main], I went into the fortress of Indra, he supplied me with seeds of wheat and maize. . ."

The chorus repeated over and over again, to the vigorous clapping of hands:

"When my share is mine, I shall give you yours."

Only then could the assembly break up. Rings of dancers formed satellites round the fire, circles of girls spied upon by the twenty-year-old males. These were lolloping from one foot to the other, clapping their hands and straightening up as soon as the refrain allowed them to catch their breath. They held each other by the shoulders, swinging back and forth across the square, reeling with the fun of it all, hurling abuse at the women while promising them unparalleled sexual exploits.

The edge of darkness lent itself to the fecundating excitement, and the shadows offered opportunities for other

liberties,⁶⁶ such as attempts to touch a girl's body as she passed by, or surreptitious wine-drinking among intimates. N. looked downcast. He was mumbling: "*A ne labeam, mai tabiat karap, bong kul, da ne pim, a prush nat karik ne bam.*" ("I'm not enjoying myself, my pleasure is spoiled, I have no more haschisch, no wine to drink, I'm unable to dance well!") He wandered about like a lost soul, whereas his brother R. seemed to be totally caught up by the tension; the excitement of the festival had gone to his head and this normally shy young man was dancing wildly.

Near to the fire, prayers were conveying the last requests to the departing god. Those who were staying to the bitter end of the festivities would keep watch with the god until daybreak, singing the customary chant of admiration and devotion, the *shiarakandali*:

"With the skin of an ibex, I shall make shoes for you."

"With the skin of a goat, I shall make shoes for you."

The farewell chants continued until the logs crumbled into ashes.

The fear of the fox/Carnival day

The meat was cut up on a block of wood with an adze, the good pieces being boiled, then roasted over the cinders, and eaten with galettes warmed up over the cinders or against the sides of the hearth. That was the morning meal in the stables.

The day began quietly. The night had exhausted the dancers. Balumain had left. The atmosphere was relaxed. The day was called *lawak biik*, "the foxes are frightened", a name originating in a real fox hunt organised in Bumburet. Shouts from the villages had made as if the animal had been unearthed, frightened, and the men had then tracked down this carrier of all baseness in the mountains. After which there

66. "All the ceremonies of the Dionysiac type lead to the chaos from which all things emerge. The night becomes the privileged time for such a ritual." (M. Maffesoli, *L'ombre de Dionysos*, Paris, 1983, p. 153.)

had been dancing round its dead body. It is possible that the rarity of the species and the risk of failure, regarded as a bad omen, had led to the discontinuation of this custom in Rumbur.

The Kalash heap scorn upon the fox.⁶⁷ But in conformity with the dualist approach, they have created a positive replica of this much despised animal, an invisible spirit whose grandeur is proportionate to the baseness of that prowler of the holm-oak woods. This spirit is the *onjesta-lawak*, the pure fox of another kind, the fecundating envoy who makes love with the women during the period of sexual abstinence. It is this fox that the women invoke in order to ridicule the men during the period of their forced impotence: "The pure fox saw your dirty penis and went away with a sound of disgust."

In Rumbur, on that day, only the dance of "the guest" was danced, the men dressing up as women and the women as men. According to the Kalash, it is simply a joke, a carnivalesque episode in the unfolding of the festivities. Transgressions are still allowed, but the limits are drawing closer. The little girls had already enjoyed this masquerade; now it was the turn of the adults.

The "guest", the unknown person, turned about the square of Kalashagrum. He was a slightly built man in a voluminous woollen coat, his face covered by a brightly coloured scarf, a cap that was far too large for him on his head. He was hopping up and down and waving a stick as though to show his importance. There were also two other "guests", tall women wearing dresses far too short for them, with broad shoulders such as existed nowhere in the valley of Rumbur. Were they perhaps natives of Birir, who were reputed for their abnormally imposing stature by Kalash standards? Bashgali Bap and Sherzada felt thoroughly exhilarated by this

67. De Gubernatis, *op. cit.*, p. 130: "The russet-coated fox represents the evening. It has the reddish colour of the sky in the period between the brightness of day and the darkness of night. It is an animal of a demonic nature if it is considered as devouring or betraying the sun."



Carnavalesque sequence: a man disguises himself as a woman

change of identity. Their sisters-in-law wrapped the belts round their waists, adjusted their coiffes and placed heavy necklaces round their necks. The onlookers were delighted. The actors smoked behind their masks.

Dumézil cites similar scenes during the new year festivities among the Indo-Europeans: "The sexes, the opposition and the union of the sexes, play an important role [in these festivities] in various forms, one of the most common being the exchange of clothing in masquerades."⁶⁸ Beyond the game as such, may this exchange of clothing not point to the persistence of the vision of a primordial androgyny? One may recall in this connection the Vedic references to the bisexual ancestor, *Purusha* (Kalasha: *purush*, man, male; Sanscrit: *purusha*, man, male). In the Rig Veda, *Purusha*, the primordial Giant, is represented as a cosmic totality and as the androgynous Being. To quote Eliade: "Indeed, *Purusha* engenders the

68. Dumézil, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

female creative energy, Viraj, and is in turn engendered by her.”⁶⁹ Through the merging of opposites, the disguise leads to the Being who is One, the Totality which precedes the universe “and creates the world through the emanation of its own being. . . The first seed was later divided into ‘high’ and ‘low’, into a principle that was ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ (Rig Veda X, 72, 4)”.⁷⁰

Although the maintenance of the carnival in the sequence of festivities attests to the archaic origins of the *Chaumos*, the Kalash today do not evoke the memory of the Giant Purusha; they say that they are simply having fun.

A procession formed again behind the tall masked women and descended the slope, dancing the *bazum*, a dance consisting of sudden dashes with arms raised over the head, hands alternately opening and closing. The dust rose. The meeting place of the “guests” was at Maleidesh, in an untilled maize field. A circle of women surrounded the disguised “women”, who were turning round and round and teasing the spectators to guess their identity. Was the guest perhaps a god or a returning soul? At this time of the new year, everything was possible. The presence of masks set the scene for such returns.

The men sat down on a low stone wall a short way off; they were clearly quite tired. The guests, whose identity had been revealed, disappeared and others secretly prepared themselves.

The crowd broke up after “the hour of the creeping shadow”. The women who had been singing seated now got up for the final dance of the *bazum*, dances in which one could admire the elegance of their figures, made still more slender by their outstretched arms, the nobility of their movements, the charm of their circling steps, to the accompaniment of their tinkling bells, and the graceful smiling gestures with which they would replace a dislodged *kupas*.

That evening in the stables, the men’s meal consisted of

69. Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 237–239.

70. *Idem.*

meat (tripe and fat) and wine, and *shorba*, a broth made of meat stock and flour. Juniper was set alight as after each return of the herds before nightfall. The women saved their reserves of goat meat and baked bread, which they ate with cheese. The talk died early. A Momola guest told of the *bozkashi*, the violent game of the Afghan horsemen which the Tajik horsemen had introduced in his valley. But eyes were closing, attention waning.

The day without a name. Visits and rest. 20 December

In Balanguru, most of the babies and young children were suffering from the outbreak of chicken-pox. According to Saifullah Jan, this *Chaumos* had been less joyful than usual because the villagers of the upper valley were so worried; in other circumstances, they were usually the life and soul of the festivities, and were reputed to be *bons vivants*. The mothers burned juniper and let the smoke surround the heads of the sick children. The Moslem doctor had visited the houses affected by the outbreak, but only Khodai had power over destinies; such expressions of confidence were accompanied by wan smiles.

Today, the men had the right to wash their faces, but not to shave. As for the women, they might wash neither themselves nor their clothing. The talk dwelled lightly upon the day following the period of abstinence.

Always at the same time towards evening, a boy and an adult would go up to the sanctuary of Jatch to kindle a fire of juniper and offer up prayers. The purified boy would throw walnuts into the fire and towards the wooden representation of the divinity: this he would do three times.

Anyone can erect a sanctuary to Jatch. Jatch is a spirit and is present everywhere. However, the herdsmen place the sanctuary near to the stables in order to be able to honour her easily and ask for her protection of the herds and crops. The sanctuary is a unity of stone and plant, the most archaic form

of sacred place. The stone symbolises duration and indestructibility; the tree symbolises the hope of perpetual regeneration. In Rumbur, nine places of worship are dedicated to Jatch. A simple round stone placed in a hole of an old holm-oak serves as a sanctuary — a fertilising stone.⁷¹ The only exception is the sanctuary at Kalashagrum, where there is a departure from the lithic principle. According to the legend, Naga Dehar placed a lozenge of wood over the stables and commanded that Jatch should be revered in that place. It is also said that the goats stolen from an ancestor by a Kafir tribe had followed the *dehar* and his carving safe and sound. The Kalash explain the shape by reference to the door of the former sanctuary of Sajigor at Mamat Diwana, in Bashgal. The small opening cut into the wooden lozenge may be regarded as serving as the house of the divinity. It may also be seen as the stylisation of an ear of wheat, but one should bear in mind that the lozenge has a connection with the female genitalia. One of the sanctuaries to Jatch, in Kotdesh, has a very specific function. It is situated downstream and marks the frontier between Kalash territory and the Moslem world. Its function is to guard the territory and to ward off epidemics. A kid is sacrificed there every autumn to obtain the divinity's goodwill: "Oh Jatch, keep sickness from the valley."

In the empty stable, Nurayat was treading the skin of a slaughtered goat on a slate; then, rolling up his trousers, he stepped inside to stretch and widen it, so that it should take the form of a waterskin.

Before the end of the men's meal of meat, bread and wine, grandfather Buda went into the house to supervise the sharing of the pieces of goat meat that had been cooking all afternoon. The little girls were jumping up and down with impatience. The "elder" mother added flour to the fatty

71. According to Eliade, the Pali texts frequently mention a stone placed next to a sacred tree, "and which constituted the framework of the popular cults of the divinities of fertility [the *Yaksha*]" (*op. cit.*, p. 233.)

Jatch may be derived from the Sanscrit *yaksha*, a supernatural being in the Rig Veda.

broth and served out the fortifying *kaye*. The men returned from the stables with bottles of wine.

The day of "meat bread"
A break with the usual food

The cold had set in for the duration. It was the beginning of the "great ice" period. The eagles circled over the villages, emigrating southward. At the sight of the eagles, the women chanted:

"Oh red eagle, oh red eagle,
Don't alight on my back,
Rather alight on the white cow's back. . ."

Everyone was speaking only of the "meat bread". This was a preparation vastly different from the hastily cooked food served at ordinary times. And being so unusual, it was looked forward to all the more. The men in the stables and the women in the houses where a sufficiently large quantity of meat was available followed the traditional recipe: crushed walnuts, pomegranate seeds, which grandfather Buda split with a stick to extract all the alveoli, down to the very last, *danu*, an aromatic herb planted in spring, salt, fat and lean meat cut up in very small pieces. These ingredients were kneaded together to form a smooth stuffing. After which the same rules applied as for walnut galettes: balls of thick dough were hollowed out and filled with the mixture of fat, meat and herbs. On the pure slate, the pies browned and expanded, breaking open with what sounded like a sigh, the fat oozing out in a cloud of steam. The appetising smell filled the place. Formerly, heavy eaters apparently managed to down nine of these pies; today, they do not go beyond three or five. But in fact, after two, the guests had had enough.

Ending of the period of purity/Ending of suspended time

The period of abstinence was coming to an end. A last juniper fire was to allow humans to confront the new year with no trace of impurity, and couples would be able to come together once more to create new lives. This rite coincided, in theory, with the last day of the reserves. For the last of the meat meals, the feet and the heads were used. The heads were stuck on poles and thrust into the fire. The smell of burning hair filled the air just as the herds were leaving the stables. The blackened heads were scraped clean and polished. Buda, the grandfather, maintained that they were a source of strength and that, once the period of abstinence was over, the men would go home and take their wives, and that from their amorous struggles there would be born the sons for which they had beseeched Balumain. The mischievous look in his eyes was suggestive of the pleasures of love. The sexual fast accompanied by a stimulating diet had helped to create an optimal physical condition, while the eroticism of the professed obscenities had completed the preparation at the psychological level.⁷²

The women for their part had also begun to boil the feet and the head of a slaughtered goat at the beginning of the afternoon.

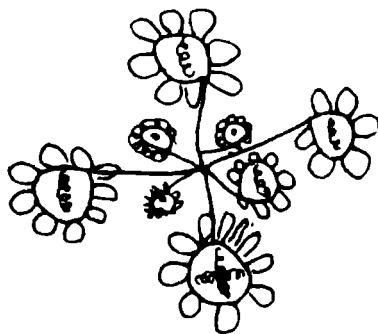
In the deserted enclosure, Nurayat continued making his waterskin. He stretched the skin of the sacrificed goat over two side branches of a young pine tree; it looked like an enormous catapult. He leaned the device obliquely against the wall, gripped the edge of the roof, and swung forward with bent legs in order to strike the skin with his bare feet. He struck so hard that he bounced back, then struck again, but with such force that the frame broke. He looked very unhappy, for it did not belong to him.

72. See J. Cazeneuve, *Sociologie du rite*, Paris, 1971. "When the undertaking that he contemplates suggests a strengthening of taboos, but clearly requires the use of physical force, primitive man may consider that chastity is more useful than fasting."

After the return of the herds and the daily offering to Jatch, grandfather Buda recited the prayer of *amatak saras*: “Oh great master Surisan, the day has come to share the heads and the feet. We have celebrated the *Chaumos*, now it is *amatak saras*, we offer you the scent of juniper to bring abstinence to an end. Be happy, eat the bread and drink. The period of purity is ending, the pure bread is finished. We make this prayer to you in the stable: allow everything to increase, to each man who approaches a vagina, give seeds of sons. Oh great god, let there be no more women in the menstruation house, let them all be pregnant! Accept my prayer. I bring you bread. Eat it. We have made our prayer, afterwards we shall eat openly. Oh great master, here is *amatak saras*. . .”

After the purified boy had thrown walnuts against the rear of the stable, the feet and heads were removed from the boiling water, and the “eagle bread”, which had been prepared the night of the coming of Balumain, was warmed up and shared out. It was a sort of communion through the eating of the symbol charged with the presence of the departed god, a gathering of vital forces before the return to secular life.

Actually, it was only on the following day that the lifting of the period of abstinence would take effect. And that meant cleaning the houses again, washing and sweeping the floors. The couples must await the seventh night after their parting to come together again in the excitement of the erotic revels so long imagined. From that day, the Kalash territory would be reopened, the Moslems of the villages would be able to return to their homes, and foodstuffs from outside the valleys would once more be allowed into the houses.



THE RETURN TO SECULAR LIFE

Forward march for the beans!

The collection rite

On this day (24 December), after a night of amorous assaults, the women were again permitted to wash their faces and their hair. No particular reference was made to the assumed sexual exploits. Calm set in once more, with a life centred upon the needs of the herds.

A piece of news was spreading through the valley: 17 sheep had perished in Batet after eating too much bread. The explanation sounded vague: either they had stupidly been given what remained of the galettes made for the *Chaumos*, or the sack of left-overs had tipped over in the sheep-fold, with unfortunate consequences for the greedy sheep. 17 out of 24 – the flock was decimated.

Everyone was talking about the arrival of the *kakboy*, the snow leopards that ventured close to the villages at the approach of severe cold. All night the dogs had been howling, warning each other. Golemdam's mother said that ageing leopards sought to devour young dogs, whose blood would give them strength and long life.

Four days earlier, three leopards, a mother and two cubs, had attacked a herd of goats minded by a young herdsman who had no rifle, alone on the heights of Kotdesh, far downstream. The number of goats killed varied according to the

person reporting the incident: 22 according to a first account, but in fact 8 or 10 bloodless carcasses had been found. Bashgali Bap made a final count: 12 goats had died and 15 had been attacked. But at Bumburet, a few days later, the story had taken on the dimensions of a legend: 60 goats lost. This was nevertheless accompanied by a prudent caveat: "There is no proof!"

The Kalash try to laugh off their fear of these disturbing felines. They brag about their exploits, although in former times they were often the victims of dramatic incursions:

"One spring day, a leopard went into a stable. The roof of the stable was no longer watertight and the rain caused veritable flooding. So the goats said to themselves that, if they had to choose, they might as well let themselves be devoured by the leopard as have to suffer the terrible "*tip-top*" of the water dripping. But the leopard was frightened, because he did not know this *tip-top*. Straightaway, he thought that the noise was stronger than he was, and in his fright he hid in a dark corner for fear of being swallowed by the *tip-top*. At that point a thief came into the stable to steal a goat. He felt all the animals in order to choose the fattest, and in the darkness he also felt the leopard. He exclaimed with pleasure when he felt the promising plumpness under his fingers, and at once loaded the beast on his back. But the leopard was so scared that he farted. Once outside, the thief realised his mistake because of the stench, and he proceeded to insult the leopard: 'Oh the farter!' The shamefaced leopard replied: 'Don't tell people I'm a farter, and I'll kill a wild sheep for you every day. You have only to come to this place in the mountains to collect it.'

"So every day the thief ate the meat of a wild sheep. But some time later, the leopard wanted to test the thief to see what kind of man he really was. And he replaced the meat by some wood. But the thief cried out in front of everybody: 'Oh the farter, why have you replaced the wild sheep by some wood?' At those defamatory words, the leopard sprang forward and devoured the thief."

The men love these salty stories, especially when they involve ridiculing an enemy and belittling the potential threat he poses. It is the kind of story that can be found throughout the mountains of the Hindu Kush and Karakoram, where the same dangers threaten:

“A woman was going to the spring near the jujube tree. Her husband was having a piss. A tiger [in fact, a big wild cat] appeared, famished. She called to her husband: ‘Hey my husband, a tiger wants to eat me!’ The husband replied: ‘What do you want me to do about it, beat him with my penis?’ At those words, the tiger was so scared that he fled as fast as his legs could carry him. As he went, he came upon an old woman. When she saw him, she tried to run away. But the tiger called to her: ‘I just want to ask you something!’ And he continued: ‘There was a man and a woman at the jujube tree spring. When the woman saw me, she cried for help, and the man said: ‘What do you want me to do? Beat him with my penis?’ So I fled all the way here.’ The old woman explained: ‘When I was young and my vagina was tight, the penis beat me here, now it is split and is no more than running water.’ She showed him her ‘injury’, and at the sight the tiger fled, crossed the river and disappeared”.⁷³

The sun was rising over the mountain tops. Motionless, either squatting on roof edges as on perches or erect with crossed arms, the men were watching the departure of the herds, searching the clouds over the upper slopes for signs of snow.

Grandfather Buda was stretching a goat-skin, inserting small forked sticks into the openings of the feet to enlarge them. Young men of the *Baloe* and *Mutimire* lineages went off to check on the irrigation canal which sliced through the steep mountain slope and brought water from a branch upstream to the high village of Kalashagrum. In winter, it was

73. A very similar version of this story is to be found among the Hunza, a people of the neighbouring district of Gilgit. But there the danger comes from a bear, a sex maniac and rapist. (See D.L.R. Lorimer, *Folk tales from Hunza*, p. 121).

often obstructed by ice and rock falls, depriving the village of running water near to the dwellings and stables. Although the households concerned always sent off teams of young men to keep the channels free, it was not before spring that unimpeded supplies of water could be counted on. On fine days, a "guard" was on duty; he had to cover daily the whole course of the canal, which in some places meant climbing to dizzy heights. In exchange, he received 20 kg of wheat from each household concerned (there were 22 of them) for the entire season.

Collection day, *dau tatu*, was to take place the following day (26 December) exactly four days after *amatak saras*. *Dau tatu* means "forward march for the beans", as in the song, repeated from house to house by a procession of little girls, expressing hope in the renewal of nature.

At the hour when the sun lit up the square of Kalashagrung, the little girls scrambled down the cliff to join their friends from Batet and to climb up the rocky outcrop of Grung as fast as they could to the house of Jestak. There, the two eldest took off their numerous strings of necklaces and gave them to the two "pretty" seven-year-olds – candidates for marriage – who were now weighed down not only by these cascades of red and white beads but also by the silver jewellery that they had been lent by their lineage sisters. They symbolised all that was new, and the beads the seeds that would produce the hoped-for crops. That was why they were also loaded with heavy necklaces, *gadula*, consisting of several strings of beads attached by brooches of bone or wood. Once they had been so adorned, the others chanted:

"Stand up with your little body, you shine like the moon, covered with brooches, necklaces and beads. . ."

They clapped their hands. The two chosen ones danced the *bazum* with all the clumsiness of beginners, handicapped moreover by their heavy adornments. They took their role very seriously and were quite proud of their sudden importance. The older girls teased them in order to nip their vanity in the bud:



Day of wishes: the two chosen little girls are bedecked with heavy necklaces, each bead representing future fecundity

“Stand up and dance, oh little monkeys, when you roll in the meadow you can’t dance any more. . .”

They made believe that they wanted to get them married at any price, and that they were beseeching a prospective husband who was clearly indifferent:

“My daughter, I am going to give you in marriage to Gak Shin, ‘Cow horns’. What will you give me, hey Shingoryiak, if you don’t want my daughter, take this bracelet as well, hey Shingoryiak, ‘little horned one’, say, what will you give me? Take this necklace too, please, marry my daughter, take these beads too, oh Shingoryiak. . .”

Then the song changed, and all the girls sang the refrain of the day in chorus: “*Dau dau tatu, dau, dau, tatu. . .*”⁷⁴

“Forward march for beans to many houses, give a good year for the *dandyas* [large beans], give a good year for the *badarakas* [a smaller variety].”

74. A more exact translation of *dau tatu* would be “little shortlegged bean”, in other words, “seed of woman ready to germinate”.

They had prayed for a good year for all types of beans, as well as for grapes and walnuts.

The procession then followed the two queens of the day to the nearest house at the top of the rocky outcrop of Grum, that of Baktawar Shah. This was the first of a long series of visits to be paid to all the dwellings of the lineages of the lower valley, the *Baloe*, the *Mutimire*, the *Shash* and the *Dzoe*. The three married women supervising the group remained in front of the door and each time performed a rite in honour of the goddess Jestak. They crowded against the door post, their bodies bent, their faces almost touching. The one in the middle held a bowl filled with beans and a few walnuts. She took three walnuts which she held tight in her fist, put her hand into the bowl again to take out some beans, and knocked on the right side of the door; at the same time the three voices were uplifted in a long prayer to Jestak, the protector of the family. The beans dropped back into the bowl or onto the threshold.



House prosperity rites the women strike the door post with walnuts and beans while calling upon the goddess of the family

In olden times, Mugush, a *Baloe* ancestor, had a dream in which Jestak was performing this rite with a little girl on either side of her. He asked the *dehar* to interpret this vision. In a trance, Bushuti, the *dehar* of Birir, explained that henceforward the Kalash must perform the same rite. It was he who revealed that the two "pretty" little girls represented hope for renewal. Jestak told him: "I am the one who increases the family, pray to me and I shall grant your prayer. . ." The goddess ordered that three walnuts should be used for this rite.

The mistress of the house offered the little girls and the women accompanying them dried fruit, mulberries, walnuts and jujubes, the quality and quantity of which varied according to the family's circumstances.⁷⁵ The two little guests of honour danced around, but always on the verge of tripping over themselves. The others laughed at them:

"As they turn, the little dancers will bump into the piles of wood and go 'pash', as they look at their beads, they'll go 'pish', and then as they look longingly at the necklaces, 'pash', and as they look at their bracelets, bump again and go 'pish'."

The adults watched with amusement as the excited little girls gobbled up the fruit or crammed it into their breast pockets, letting it slide down their wide sleeves and doubling the size of their breasts. Laughing, they moved off to the next house, where the three women took up their litany in front of the door, reciting a veritable chronicle of the family in which each boy, mentioned by name, even if he was only two years old, was promised a progeny of at least 30 sons. They rapped out between 30 and 50 calls for luck per household. The beans rained down into the bowl and were gathered up again and again:

"Fill the house with lineage sisters, oh Jestak of the house, bring millet and lucerne, maize and red beans.

75. The collection visits and songs constitute a popular dramatisation of a change in the calendar period. A good-luck gift will usher in plenty. The good wishes offered by children can bring good luck. (See Van Gennepe, *op. cit.*, p. 2874.)

I pray to you

Pour out honey and butter.

Bring bulls and male goats, kids and lambs, fresh strong cheese, all kinds of food, grapes and walnuts. . .

Each year, let joy burst forth.

Bring health and more health.

Give sixty sons to Baktawar Shah and as many to Dazu Khan.

Grant fortune to Baktawar Shah – may he have a wife – may his hearth be surrounded by children.”

The procession wound its way down the staircase village of Grum. Below, on the path, appeared the girls from the upper part of the valley who were going from house to house in their area. The two groups again began to yell at each other at the tops of their voices. The “sheep’s” insults rained down from the roof edges onto the “calves”, whose voices mounted an assault upon the cliff-hanging hamlet. The boys jeered: “Hey calves of Balanguru, I don’t eat your wet and mouldy mulberries, you should bring us better ones.” Then their ways parted. The “sheep” left for Maleidesh, where there were still two *Dzoe* households, including that of Kitiwi, which accommodated the Jestak Han of the lineage. The door casings on which the women knocked with walnuts were covered with recent ink drawings of splendid male goats with zigzagging horns and of pine trees.

The group moved on towards the roofs of Batet, braving the boys of the “calves” faction who were watching them somewhat foolishly from among the rocks. But the female belligerents of the upper valley took up the battle all over again, as if by automatic reflex, and the insults flew from one roof top to another, barely separated by a narrow alley. With hands cupped round their mouths, the girls hurled the words right into their adversaries’ faces. The movements of their arms expressed their wish to drive them even farther off than the clouds of dust kicked up by their feet and blowing away:

“Hey calves of Balanguru, you have ulcers on your tongues, I’ll pull them all off with tweezers.”

The calves:

“You can’t jump, oh sister of S., you’re no more than a mill sweeper. . .”

The sheep:

“Maybe you’ve been given too much millet, that’s why you have ulcers, oh calves of Balanguru. . .”

The calves:

“You are a mill pool. . .”

The snarling confrontation went on and on and the mothers began to get angry, as at that rate the visiting might have to go on until nightfall. They tried to get their children to see reason, but the tension had built up so much that they had to resort to throwing stones and lumps of earth at them to stop their frenzied circling, which was shaking the roof tops. The “sheep” resigned themselves to climbing up to the heights of Kalashagrum. The two pretty little girls, despite their weariness and the weight they were carrying, went on performing their dances in each household, arms outstretched, hands opening and shutting. But they were no longer laughing. The others accompanied them with songs of hope:

“Oh wives and husbands, dance the way you should, do not be jealous, do not blame one another. My brother will dance with a spear, he will bring me a large pot with seven handles, a white goat, a ram with seven horns, a shield made from the enemies’ backbones. . . I look at the top of the white mountain, the black clouds race by. In the valley of the springs the *babareush* flowers, the top of the mountain is covered with snow, do not be shy, the snow will come like beads of ice.”

The changeable winter weather had not really spoiled the festivities, but the cold was certain to become more severe.

In Katarsing's house, little Mayram had also caught chicken-pox; she was feverish, but resting. Her worried mother gently persuaded the girls who had come in dancing and laughing not to disturb the sick child. To make up for it, she made them generous gifts of apricots, loquats and dried peaches. A lump of cow dung was burning on the threshold so that the smoke should impregnate the room. "Since cows eat all kinds of grasses, the smoke will do Mayram good," explained her mother. The group moved on to the last house at the top of the village, near the holm-oak forest, that of Kashkari and of his father, the policeman.

Daylight was fading. The adolescent boys and girls of the lower valley gathered in a house in Batet to cook a great cauldron of beans, thus concluding this day centred on beans. The little girls had run off to Kalashagrum with full bowls of goodies: they were carrying their families' contributions.

In his stable, grandfather Buda had gathered his relatives together for a feast of rice and meat. There was still a male goat left, which it was considered a privilege to share.⁷⁶ Buda served the rice, to which butter had been added.

Katarsing was away; he was discussing business with a Kalash carpenter of Bumburet concerning the completion of his "hotel", comprising seven rooms and an upper floor. He was calmly watching how things were shaping up. He had learned the lesson of Bumburet, where his fellow Kalash had seen the fruits of the nascent tourism wrenched from their hands by outside opportunists, eager to establish "rest houses" along the track and thus to monopolise the overnight lodging trade. It was a paradoxical situation: the Kalash were the centre of interest of the region, and the Chitralli, while despising their culture, were profiting by the attraction they presented in foreigners' eyes. There was a danger that the Kalash territory would become a reserve, and Katarsing was well

76. Because of our presence at and participation in the great sacrifice, two animals had been slaughtered and offered to the god. As a result, the stable had a great deal of extra meat.

aware of it. He realised that his community had reached an inexorable turning point, where it must face up to developments in the outside world. The Kalash might as well benefit from them themselves, and who better than he, who had the means to invest? In Rumbur, the provision of lodging would remain in the hands of the Kalash.

As night gathered, the house where the cooking was in progress echoed to the laughter of the young people who were impatiently waiting to eat the beans and meanwhile passing the time with all sorts of games. First of all, they launched into old songs where each person broke into another's words with his own ironical verse:

"We are going to drink milk at Roli Shai, Roli Malio. . . [chorus]".

"These boys make cheese to throw into the river!"

"The women send rotten mulberries to the pastures."

"Your cheese will become mouldy. . ."

Another subject that gave rise to great hilarity was the invention of marriages, whether absurd or not, rather like the game of "*dônage*".⁷⁷ It involved "marrying" such and such a boy to such and such a girl either in order to reveal a genuine inclination or to take revenge on parents whose decisions did not take account of their children's wishes:

"We are going to drink milk at Roli Shai, Roli Malio. . ."

"Sherzada will take a beautiful woman!"

"Give Wai Bibi to Ingenir."

"Give Saima to Ayat, and Shariwa to Gulpishani. . ."

In the darkness behind the four columns where the beds were aligned, eyes were shining, hands clasping, shoulders touching. The girls were simpering. There was a general racket in the absence of any adult authority. Then a whole series of games began. The girls held out their clenched fist, in one of which a ring was concealed. One by one, the boys must

77. The expression "*dônage*" originated in Eastern France, where this game of fictitious unions was widespread, "*Je dône! Je dône!*". (See C. Mechin, *Saint Nicholas*, Paris, 1978, p. 51, and N. Belmont, *Mythes et croyances dans l'ancienne France*, Paris, 1973.)

choose a fist, leaving that one to the last. Then boys and girls changed sides. The losers had to pay by a sheep, a nanny goat or even a male goat if they had been unable to make good their losses in later games.

There were a few minutes more to wait, and the atmosphere became even more hectic. Taking advantage of the half-light, agile hands rubbed soot from the sides of the cauldron and then rubbed it on the cheeks of an unsuspecting neighbour. The plump Wai Bibi soon found her face all smeared.⁷⁸ The bedlam around the cauldron was suddenly halted by the announcement that the beans were ready. The boys hastily carried out a purification rite, which was more a travesty than an act of religion, plunging a branch of juniper into the fire and hurling walnuts and beans against the back of the room. Bowls were held out. An adult intervened, trying to maintain some order by shouting "Hey! Kids!" in a voice that was supposed to be stern. He shared out the walnuts that always accompanied beans. They were to be consumed the following day in the houses.

The coming of the white crow The final wishes. The closing rite

The final act of the festival was *kagayak*, the night of the white crow. The white crow that had been seen by an ancestor would come and would carry off the wishes of the households. "The crow is not as white as all that," explained grandfather Buda, "it is perhaps marked or mottled, like a kid." This night corresponded to the night between 1 and 2 January.

A child had died in Balanguru. A delegation of villagers filled the stricken family's house to offer condolences. All the relatives were wearing sprigs of juniper in their caps or coiffes. Juniper was regarded as the winter flower, and the elders offered it to the family to deliver them immediately from their

78. This rumpus recalls the Kafir practice of throwing ashes into each other's faces on the occasion of the winter solstice, the *asa nishini* (see Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 275.)

sorrow. As the baby had not reached the age of a herdsman, it had not been a member of the traditional community; hence mourning could not continue until the next festival, as required by custom in the case of a full member of the community. A baby's death must be forgotten as quickly as possible. The child was buried the same morning.

The atmosphere in the house that had been struck by fate was grave and calm, discreet and restrained. Conversation had to be kept up simply to avoid a dead silence. An important man embarked on a long monologue of encouragement. The family offered tea and bread to guests who had come from some way away.

At Batet there were other tears. A crowd had gathered at the bridge. Filim, the daughter of the local *kasi*, was hiding her face in her scarf. She was leaving to join her husband, an Anish boy in Bumburet. She was mourning the end of her adolescence, weeping because the moment had come to leave her parents. Her mother accompanied her to the river bank. Her father was pleased about the union and had wheaten galettes prepared which the father-in-law was carrying in a sack on his back. He walked off, followed by a bowed figure. Filim was leaving for another valley as for another planet; her husband had never spoken to her, not even once.

Today, the well-off families again prepared bread and fat in the stables and houses which still had goat meat. It was the grandfather who shared it out.

The house where the vigil of the *kagayak* was to be held had still not been decided upon. There was always one per hamlet. The women would decide, bearing in mind the situation of families with young or sick children, and the houses that had been selected in previous years. "It is easier to think when it is dark," declared grandfather Buda. In the stable, he soaked the bread left over from the period of abstinence in water, and mixed it with beans, flour and salt. This mixture, heated, was fed to the cows and helped lactation. He stopped to tell of the origin of the *kagayak*, smoothing his beard the while:

“In olden times, the Creator decided to divide luck equally among all human beings. He sent the spirits who served him throughout the world to check, in the course of a single night, that no one had dozed off, as he had demanded. But everywhere people were sleeping, with the exception of one Kalash, who was fashioning a figurine which kept him up until dawn. The spirits reported to God that only a Kalash had not slept all night. So God decreed that each year he would send an assistant to gather up the desires of the Kalash.

“The following year, on the appointed night, the Kalash did not go to bed, and waited. But no one knew in what guise the spirit would come. They made their wishes, which were granted, but they were unable to discover the identity of the messenger.

“It was only much later, in the time of Naga Dehar, that Faizi of Birir was filled with the overwhelming desire to see the messenger. The shaman advised him to attain a state of purity five nights before the long vigil. “Then you must kill a bull for the people of Birir who will be praying during this night, and share out the meat. After that, you must go to the top of the very high mountain of Baliar and sacrifice a kid for the fairies.’ Faizi carried out this advice to the letter and perceived a white crow descending from the heavens. At sight of this apparition, he fell unconscious and remained so until sunrise. In the stable, his son Pane was praying for his return before going off to find him. After they had met, they went home and sacrificed a goat. As they were fumigating the stable with juniper, Naga Dehar appeared. He fell into a trance and declared: ‘Every year, you must sacrifice one kid for the fairies in the mountains and another the first-born of a goat, at Shula Kui. If you do that, Faizi – who at the time was the only man of his lineage – your kin will prosper, otherwise they will perish. You must remain at Shula Kui for three days, praying that your family may spread as the dew falls from the stars. You must eat nothing but seven grains of wheat and seven grapes.’

“Today, his lineage carries on this tradition.”

The crow holds an important place in Indo-European mythology. The position of the Kalash in regard to this bird is as ambiguous as their position in regard to the fox. They conceive of a double, which is as white and as pure as the first is black and repulsive. The ambivalence is very appropriate: the crow is the messenger that carries the sun in the night, it is the peacock of the cold season. But from the darkness, light emerges, from the dark night, the brightness of day and from the black crow, the white crow.

“In Hellenic mythology, during the war of the giants, it is Apollo who turns into a crow, but probably a white crow, for white crows, the Greeks believed, were dedicated to the sun. Formerly, so it was said, the crow was white, but Apollo had made it black, because he was angry that this bird should have brought him the disagreeable report of his mistress’s adultery. . . .”⁷⁹

Among the Kalash too, the coming of the white crow may be interpreted as the final mission, carried out by a substitute for the sun, aimed at the renewal of religious life.

In the Mahabharata of the Indian tradition, too, there is a reference to a symbolic war between the owl and the crow, a war between the moon and the carrier of the sun during the darkness of the night. By chance, in connection with “crow stories”, grandfather Buda revealed the existence of the same antagonism between the two birds in Kalash tradition:

“Once upon a time, very long ago, when the spirits, the gods and men were living together, the crow had very beautiful eyes. The owl asked the crow to lend them to him so that he could go to Bumburet, promising to give them back on his return. But he did not give them back. And the crow, who now had a very ordinary pair of eyes, flew about everywhere begging: ‘Give me, lend me some eyes!’ Then the crow proposed the following deal to the owl: ‘Since you go out only at

79. De Gubernatis, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

night, lend me your eyes during the day, and I shall return them to you at night when I go to sleep.' ”

In another version of this story, the owl never returns. So the crow becomes its enemy, and whenever it sees an owl, it tries to kill it.

Dusk was nearing. After performing a fumigation in honour of Jatch, the men cooked “meat bread” and another thick round galette, the “ibex kidney”, for success in the hunt. They also made a cow and calves out of dough, *dagari gak*, for the increase of the livestock. The crow would carry off this representation of a wish. The wine was passed round. As for the women, they either ate meat or did without according to the state of their reserves. The topic of discussion was still the choice of the “house of waiting until dawn”. Finally, it was decided that in Kalashagrum it should be that of Tius Tani, one of the *Baloe*.

The villagers who wished to take part gradually arrived. This vigil was to start at the time a vigil usually ended. The old women launched the singing, encouraging the others, weaving the slow chants which were to be the media of the people’s wishes. The young people played about on the beds hidden in the shadows. More and more women crowded round the fire, singing the verses of the *kagayak*, the sleepless night of the crow. One of them, covering her face with her hand, droned an invocation in interminable tremolos, “oh *kagayak* oh. . . The “O” sound was echoed by all the others. The voices at the back joined in at the end of the improvisation, repeating it, fervently adding their contributions to the requests. Twice the chanted supplication was repeated. Then another wish was expressed in chant, this time for the fields, for an abundance of maize, for good earnings, for the coming of guests, for an increase in the number of goats – so many needs that filled an entire night without respite, almost without a break:

“Oh crow, oh, from the far region, transform the stones and wood into gold. Bring a bull with pointed horns, handfuls

of silver necklaces. Bring lots of riches and treasures.

Bring seed to the female goats.

Multiply the people like stars. Make life sweet, life like the light of the eyes. Ward off troubles and worries. Give more power to the Kafirs.

Build up the population like a dense forest.

Awaken sleeping fortune. Awaken the fortune of relatives.

Allow wealth even on a stone [even if someone has nothing].

Lead those who are without hope to the fulfilment of their desires. Make the people as numerous as the "Bolsheviks" in Russia [a reference to the reports the Kalash had heard about the great number of *Urus*]. Fill the world with thoughts of love. Multiply the numbers of young girls. Make milk flow. Bring very prolific young girls. Produce as many people as their are banknotes, rupees, in pockets. Let us have good times all together. Protect my narrow valley. Place each person upon his way. . .

To the man who has no wife, open the lock to fortune. Lengthen life like Naren's, the immortal. Grant luck, as to Naren. . ."

The story of Naren is one of those stories, found in all parts of the world, of a man's quest for immortality through the trials and barriers set up to protect the garden of Knowledge.

"There was once a poor man who was desperately in love with a woman for nine whole years. Finally, after nine years, he managed to marry her. As he was bringing her home, he met an 'ascetic', one of those wandering visionaries dressed in rags of glaring colours.⁸⁰ The wandering visionary begged him: 'Give me something for the love of God.' The poor man was very embarrassed: 'I have to give everything to God, but I have nothing except this girl. I have suffered nine years to be

⁸⁰. This detail, supplied by Saifullah Jan, betrays the foreign origin of the story.

able to marry her, but you may nevertheless take her (if God so wishes).’

“Ten years went by. One night, he had a dream. He saw an apple tree in an unknown place. The next morning, he went to consult a wise man to ask him the meaning of his dream and to try to find out where the apple tree stood, for he greatly desired to see it. The wise man told him: ‘You must provide yourself with fried beans and walnuts for the road, and walk to the frontiers of darkness. Then eat your provisions, and you will be able to go through the darkness. On the other side, you will find a garden, in the middle of which stands the apple tree that you are seeking. When you see the apples, look very carefully: if you see an apple at the top of the tree, throw one stone, but only one. If you succeed in hitting it, that is fine, but if not, do not try again. On the other hand, if the apples are on the lower branches, you can simply take one.’

“All this the man did, and found the place indicated. He saw that the apple was on an upper branch. He threw a stone, but with no result. He tried again twice, three times. Suddenly an apparition in human form seized his hands, storming at him: ‘It is forbidden to throw more than one stone into the apple tree!’ The man replied, in his defence: ‘I am poor and I gave my wife to God after suffering so much. In my case, it is perhaps not a sin.’ The apparition then carried the poor man to a golden fortress. In the fortress, his wife was waiting for him. The spirit said to him: ‘Here is your wife whom you gave out of love of God. From now on, you will live here with her. There will be no death for you, but also no progeny. You will be known by the name of Naren. . .’ And ever since, the Kalash invoke the name of Naren in order to obtain a long life like his.” (Kasi Khoshnawas.)

Like a fire on the point of going out, the voices must be revived, new wishes must be suggested. The deep sound of a prolonged “O” issued from the shadows. It was the master of the house singing as he lay on his bed. But no one must fall

asleep. Those who had chosen to come and do battle with the night were struggling to stay awake lest their prayers be carried away by the wind and dispersed into the distance. But only a few men had come. As for the boys, they were going the rounds of the villages to make sure that in their own home, back in the village, the ambiance was really best of all, yet another occasion to denigrate other parts of the valley and to cast an eye at the girls. Upon their return, they reported: "In Balanguru, the meeting is taking place in the house of Kandahar, the bachelor. The old women are monopolising the singing. They have been drinking tea from the very beginning. In Maleidesh, the vigil has not really started because the women have too many sick children. In Batet, Yasin is cooking rice. . ."

Here, salted tea was being served. Sherzada had returned from Grum, where the adolescents had been playing the ring game, ten girls against ten boys. The boys had lost twice and had had to promise the girls a four-horned ram worth 200 rupees. The chants rose up again. Mayun Bibi, her eyes closed and her cheek against her hand, injected a note of vibrant intensity into the succession of pleading words:

"Oh crow, oh. . . From Waigal, bring seeds of sons, bring a seven-horned ram, bring a pair of gourds for honey. From Waigal, bring us the fulfilment of our desires. Accept the prayer that I make to you.

Make springs of milk flow into pots of clay, let the verandah be shaded by leaves [be full of children]. Seat the people on chairs of gold.

[The following words referred to us:] A prayer written down in pen and ink cannot be voided."

Walnuts and mulberries kept up the strength of the gathering. Everyone was wondering how long it would be before dawn. The little girls were asleep, curled up on the beds. Overexcited the previous day, Gombas and Sailun had sworn that they would not close their eyes and boasted that they would hold out until dawn. But some of the men too

had dozed off, concealed on beds behind the columns. The women faithfully repeated the appeal to the crow, over and over again. Adinasher's father, a stickler for observance of the customs, settled down for the last hour behind the hearth, on a stool in the pure corner reserved for men. With firmness he led the final onslaught of prayers, concluding: "The right words make love grow."

The dénouement was approaching. Bands of light were streaking the darkness beyond the open door. Mayun Bibi went out to search the sky, as though to make sure that dawn was really breaking. The others joined her on the uncovered terrace. A fire was lit at each end of the terrace, over the cliff drop. The mistress of the house, Tius Tani, gave everyone two handfuls of beans and walnuts for the right hand and shells for the left hand. And everyone watched for the coming of the black crows, those vile birds whose appearance would confirm the departure of the spirit who was to carry off all their prayers. The girls began to sing to disguise the general impatience and vague apprehension; if the crows did not come, or if one had to wait for them too long after daybreak, that would be a bad omen for the new year. Loud voices sought to awaken the crows, to force them out of their sleeping places. The prayer was addressed to the white spirit:

"Oh this night your cawing, *tchoc-tchoc*, was interrupted, you had to stay awake, oh crow. Bring the seven-horned ram, the bull with pointed horns, numerous Tajik cooking plates, armfuls of silver necklaces and many treasures.

Ward off troubles and problems, bring health and blessings and innumerable riches. But if you become heavy, you will not be able to go. Weighed down with all these desires, you will not be able to go. . ."

Rajimen was the first to cry out. High up, a crow was winging its way across the sky. Immediately, the participants threw the contents of their left hands towards the crow, throwing as far as they could. At the same time, they stuffed the contents of their right hands into their mouths. Just as

with Naren, a meal of walnuts and beans had enabled them to pass through and vanquish the darkness. Happy laughter broke out: it would be a good year. Seven crows were circling overhead. The women, led by the indefatigable Mayun Bibi, hurled insults at them, brandishing their fists:

“You go *clac jo clac*, you shitty crow, you churn shit just as I churn butter!”

And they began to dance, as one lets off steam after a long period of tension, at the same time launching their best invectives against that filthy black bird. The white crow of the ancestor was now flying far away, laden with hopes for the future. The festival of the *Chaumos* had come to an end with the dawn.

The sun had left its winter house and its progress over the western mountains would serve as a guide until spring. By watching its progress, the elders could gauge the passage of time, which would lead only to the next festival.

The witch hunt

There was no time the next morning for resting after a tiring night. Life must go on. After two days of thaw, the wind was bringing heavy clouds from Afghanistan. The men went off to cut wood in anticipation of the coming bad weather and the long days of idleness around the fire ahead of them. During those days, boredom would leave its traces upon every face. One would doze off, only to be awakened by the visit of a neighbour or a relative who hoped that a chat would help to kill time. Silence shared was a help in putting up with the thick curtain of snow. Even the children quickly tired of sliding in the snow and became fractious indoors. The older ones made rough wooden balls; if the powder snow packed down sufficiently, the *kirik gal*, “snow golf” tournaments would soon begin between teams from the upper and lower parts of the valley. The game was played by two columns of twenty players each who tried to hit the ball with sticks from one end to the other of the village. The supporters would

scream, get excited, jump up and down, watch where the ball landed, help their team to find it. A lost ball meant that the team had lost that leg of the game. The match was played in three sets. The Bumburet players were the champions, for their valley was colder and retained the snow for a longer time. They often practised. They were almost always victorious when they played against a Moslem team, but the old rule of the victor fêting the vanquished was here simply reversed: a triumph for economic realism.

That was what was going through people's minds at the sight of the dark skies over the glaciers. Everything must be got ready. Some of the young men hurried off to continue floating wood downstream, a task which they had interrupted during the festival. The tree trunks caught between rocks and covered with thick layers of ice formed log-jams, damming the flow. In winter, the low water level made such work very difficult; in spring, on the other hand, the rapid flow made it possible to float the fir trees very quickly to the saw mill at Ayun. But the men engaged in this work were fully aware of the danger, and of the tribute that must be paid in human lives nearly every year as the river in spate sent the logs crashing into each other. Now, in winter, the men had to work all day with their feet in icy water, the wet skin rubbing painfully against the edges of their plastic shoes.

Several final acts prolonged the festival, even after the closing rite, like so many suspension marks softening the passage between two phases. As soon as the clamour of insults addressed to the vile crows had died down, a clamour which at the same time announced the beginning of a future carefully prepared by the people's prayers, the little girls joyfully proclaimed the arrival of the "dolls". This was the traditional day of the *gambahutiak*, the day when mothers fashioned rag dolls for their daughters. The dolls were tiny, made from a sliver of wood and dressed in scraps of coloured cloth, with a headdress topped by a small chain – resembling a *kupas*. The dolls were given winter names such as "Valley of the rain", or

“Sister of the snow”. For three days they would be mothered by the little girls, who pretended to nurse them or to feed them miniature galettes cooked on tiny slates in the open.

On the third day, after a *shishao sutchek*, the rite of “pure bread over heads” for the benefit of the dolls, the figurines would be walled up or tossed headlong into a rock cavity outside the village, in the place where men in mourning threw the hair they had cut off. This was the dolls’ cemetery.

It was a rite of expulsion of negative influences. “If the *gambahutiak* were not walled up, the little girls would not grow up.” “If tradition were not observed, the spirit of the dolls would return to torment the children in their dreams, asking them why they had ‘lost’ the dolls.”

This practice concerned little girls up to the pre-puberty stage of *murayak* (eleven or twelve years of age), when the arrangement of the hair in five plaits would give them an adult appearance. The idea was to stifle all potential for evil in these future mothers, to drive out any malefic tendency to become a devouring mother, to destroy the “witch”, to prevent the development of such a propensity, of such a distortion of real motherhood, as had affected many of the women of Birir at the time of the settlement of the Kalash in that valley:

“Lalahes of Birir had seven sons, each of whom had a wife. Six of them were witches. In the house of menstruation and childbirth, they ate their respective babies and returned to their father-in-law’s house with dolls, made of stones covered with rags. When the daughters-in-law returned, Lalahes touched the babies gently with a stick. Only one began to cry, the six others did not utter a sound. So he asked the child’s mother what had happened, and she told him.

“In those days, the number of witches was constantly increasing. Lalahes went to Kafiristan, found a newborn child and killed it. With the child’s intestines, he manufactured a drum. Then he went to Gairet where there was an island in the very middle of the river. There, surrounded by the waters, he beat the drum. This attracted the witches, who came

intending to kill him. But he drove them off one by one and they all drowned. There were so many of them that the fairies intervened, saying that he would make an end of all humanity if he continued.

“He answered: ‘No, I have tied my six witch daughters-in-law to trees and stones, and they have not yet come.’”

“He went on drumming until they arrived. They drowned, and thus he rid the world of witches.”

The *gambahutiak* recall this substitution of dolls for babies. The dolls are thrown away in order to discourage little girls from ever taking up such a practice when they grow up.

“In those days,” Kasi Khoshnawas related, “the number of witches was increasing. . .” And we know from other sources that, at the time when the Kalash fell back upon Birir, infant mortality was so high that it led to a serious demographic crisis. In order to restore purity, the inhabitants introduced a one-year period of sexual abstinence, which was concluded during an orgiastic festival at which there emerged the mythical figure of the *budalac*.⁸¹ Obviously, those responsible for impurity could only be women, marginalised and discredited by their sterility or loss of male offspring. “Instead of nursing, procreating and bringing prosperity,” concludes Véronique Bouiller in connection with the feminine festivals among the Indo-Nepalese upper castes,⁸² the witches “enter into their victims, eating them away from within, causing them to die of consumption. And this death-dealing activity is exercised more especially within the conjugal family, which the woman is supposed to enrich through the children whom she brings into the world. Of course, no woman calls herself a witch, but the women project an image of rebellion, of possible refusal, at the opposite pole to that of order.” Kalash tradition confirms this analysis. To explain

81. See the role of the *budalac*, “Return of the goat-man”, in chapter II, “November, lavishness for immortality”.

82. V. Bouiller, “Si les femmes faisaient la fête”, in *L’Homme*, July–September 1982, XXII, p. 114.

the calamity, it makes the unfortunate mothers responsible for their children's deaths, accusing them of wielding evil powers:

"Gaha's wife was a witch in the days of Lalahes' daughters-in-law. They were in the habit of gathering together, all of them, under a mulberry tree, and there each in turn changed her son into a male goat, or rather, into an "image of a male goat", which she devoured. The next day, the child would die for one reason or another.

"One day it was the turn of Gaha's wife. But as she was telling of her plan to transform her only son into a male goat, she was overheard by her son-in-law, who was hiding at the top of the mulberry tree. The witches nevertheless carried out their plan and celebrated the occasion. The next day, the boy who had been 'transformed' and 'eaten in the image of a male goat' was killed on the horns of a bull. As the weeping mother was lamenting the death of her only son, her son-in-law seized her and beat her, accusing her of responsibility for the death of her child, and crying that she should be ashamed of her tears."

The Kalasha word for "witch" is *ruji*, "who can eat human flesh". In the Dard region of Gilgit, the word *rui* has the same connotation: "When the *rui* assemble in secret, taking a human 'soul' with them (in the shape of a goat), the *mitu* (a kind of priest) is used as a sort of human anvil on which the victim is dismembered, or else he himself chops him up".⁸³

"In Rumbur, only one woman was known to be a witch. Her father belonged to the *Mutimire*, and she was married to a man of Balanguru. When no one was looking, she would blow on her two daughters, who would fly off, propelled through the air towards the mountains, as far away as from Balanguru to Tchatguru. Without telling anyone about it, the little girls would return to the village. The elder one kept the secret, but the younger one denounced her mother's practices, and her mother was therefore regarded as a witch."

83. Jettmar, *Bolor and Dardistan*, p. 60.

During the celebration of the *Chaumos* in Birir, a "night of witches" recalls the days when witches decimated the population:

"The wife of Nadui [a descendant of *Pane*] was a witch. She was in the habit of eating human beings. One day, she wanted to devour her own husband. But Nadui had hidden in a holm-oak and watched what his wife was doing. His wife held her powers from Warin, and she beseeched the god: 'Allow me to eat my husband!' But Warin refused her request: 'Nadui is a fine man, he has always offered me milch-goats; no, I shall not give him to you.' Immediately after those words, the witch found herself transported into her house and stretched on her bed. Nadui arrived and nailed her to the four wooden bed posts. And so she died."

It is in expiation of this crime that the members of the *Pane* lineage carry out a sacrifice on the "night of the witches" on the roof of the house of a descendant of Nadui. On that night, too, all the other lineages of Birir drive out devils and witches by firing rifles.⁸⁴

"In Birir," the Rukmula say, "people never do anything like anyone else!" But as soon as the "day of the fear of the fox" is over, some of the Rukmula hasten to travel to the neighbouring valley to attend the festival there, which takes place at a later date, and which astonishes them by the presence of drums and many other practices vastly different from their own.

The celebration of the *Chaumos* at Birir, which is markedly independent of the revelations of Balumain, tends to be more closely related to the solstitial festivals of the ancient Kafirs.

84. J. Biddulph writes as follows concerning a festival celebrating the completion of the harvests among the Dards of Gilgit: "When the last crop of the autumn has been gathered, it is necessary to drive away evil spirits from the granaries. The head of the household takes his matchlock and fires it into the floor. Then, going outside, he sets to work loading and firing till his powder horn is exhausted, all his neighbours being similarly employed." (*Tribes of the Hindu Kush*, p. 103.)



In Birir, during Chaumos, a woman of great knowledge joins the men to chant the traditional songs

THE FESTIVAL OF THE SOLSTICE: A WIDESPREAD CUSTOM

“In ancient times, Balumain came to Birir. He ordered the Birila to give grain to his horse. They refused. Naga Dehar answered them: ‘If you do not agree, celebrate the *Chaumos* the way you will, but Balumain will not come here.’ But before leaving, the god saw to it that his horse should ‘shit’ into the river. The Birila drank the water and started to speak the rustic language so characteristic of them and to mispronounce words with their harsh accent.”

It is thus that the Rukmula justify their own practice of tradition and belittle that of others in order to avoid having to rationalise the differences. “The Birila know Balumain but do not want to admit it. They call him ‘the divinity of the *Chaumos*’ so as not to name him.” Actually, everyone in Rumbur knows that some of the Birila descend from a Kafir who took refuge there long ago, and that his beliefs combined with those of the Kalash already settled there to form an almost autonomous tradition. According to the legend, Suhin Shah (“the golden king”) was the only survivor of an earthquake that had ravaged his village of Majam in Kafiristan. He alone still honoured Praba with worthy sacrifices, whereas his co-religionists substituted dogs for goats. On account of his fervour, the god Praba – another name for Indra, lord of earthquakes⁸⁵ – saved him and supplied him with the gold he needed to buy fields at Birir.⁸⁶ His lineage prospered, branched out and influenced the customs.

In Birir, the *Chaumos* consists of a different succession of rites similar to those in Rumbur (see annexes). The meagre information that it has been possible to collect on the celebration of the winter solstice among the Dards and the Kafirs (see

85. It should be recalled that *Praba* may be compared with *Pravabhra*, one of the names of Indra in the “Maitrayani Samhita”, (See Turner, *op. cit.*)

86. The legend adds that he defecated in the fields in order to appropriate them. The indignant natives wanted to drive him out, but he placated them with the gold that Praba had given him.

annexes) attests to the permanence of the feasts of light and of the inauguration of the future up to the times of conversion to Islam. Such feasts were widely celebrated throughout the regions to which these descendants of non-brahmanised Indo-Aryans had retreated. The history and economic circumstances of the different groups gave rise to local distinctions, which modified what had certainly begun by being a common ceremonial scenario developed to meet a common need to celebrate the renewal of time.

In India, in the Vedic era, this need was expressed in the mythico-ritual repetition of the triumph of Indra over the power of darkness, the gigantic dragon, cold, inert – Vrta. The Aryan god of hosts initially reigned over the festivals of the winter solstice, intended “among other things to place the new time, the new year, on the right road”.⁸⁷ But according to Dumézil, the *Vayapeja*, as this Vedic festival was called, already betrayed the efforts of the Brahmans to stamp out the popular elements which impinged on their authority in matters of worship. Nevertheless, they were as yet unable, in those far-off times, to eliminate the numerous rites “conducted in a different direction”:

“Since the festival of the passage of the year everywhere comprised sexual and even conjugal rites, the participation (probably reduced by the Brahmans) of the wife of the sacrificator in the enactment of a celestial ascension also had its place, as well as invocations to the Heaven-Earth pair. One can understand why the animal victims offered to Prajapati must be male and ‘whole’. One can also explain the grotesque ritual of the purchase of the Soma: the *parisut* is purchased against some lead from a man with long hair (who is neither man nor woman); without going into detail, one may suspect that these prescriptions originated in ‘scenes for laughs’. Even the dead, those habitual guests at festivals for the passage of the year, had a part in the ceremony, since at the top of the pole serving

87. Dumézil, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

for the celestial ascension a hole had been pierced for the *Pitr*, the Fathers. Finally, the length of the period of preliminary purification, the repetition during fifteen days of the same phrases which 'purge the soul', are natural before the liquidation of the year. Thus, in the *Vayapeja*, we are definitely dealing with a Brahmanic elaboration of a popular festival marking the passage of time".⁸⁸

Analogies may certainly be perceived between the *Chaumos* as celebrated in Rumbur and this description of the Vedic ritual: sexual incitement, grotesque scenes "for laughs", participation of the dead, male animal victims, length of preliminary purification, the Kalash pole of the ancestors, "pierced like a flute". However, although the assertion may be imprudent, it would seem that the Kalash *Chaumos* today, by its direct dialogue with the gods, without the intervention of an intermediary, is closer to the spirit of the popular festivals of pre-Vedic times (after three millenia) than the Vedic festival itself, which had been distorted by the Brahmans after only a few centuries. We find ourselves, at the close of this study, on the threshold of a type of research the scope of which requires the involvement of specialists on ancient India. We have sought, however, in the course of this account, to draw attention to each point of concordance between present Kalash practice and Vedic antiquity in order to reinforce the hypothesis that the former may lead to a better understanding of the latter. This hypothesis is confirmed by the number and quality of the similarities.

The Kalash festival of the solstice is a confirmation of the reign of Balumain-Indra. The undisputed evocation of the name of the god of the Aryans is surprising enough in view of the fact that it has been obliterated from the Indian religious scene for so many centuries. As in Vedic times, a contest between the gods designates the victor of the year, *prajapati*. Balumain battles with Mahandeo. Although at first defeated,

88. *Idem*, p. 114.

he returns in triumph, like Indra, to impose his authority on the annual cycle.

Moreover, given the still traceable concept of a creator god, Dezau, at the summit of the Kalash pantheon, and the considerably later appearance of a celestial solar and fecundating god, Indra-Balumain, what we find among the Kalash today may perhaps be the final phase of the very ancient passage of divine powers, accomplished thousands of years earlier everywhere else in the Indo-European world.

The etymology of the names of the Kalash gods reinforces the theory of a relationship between the Kalash and Vedic pantheons. In addition, the Kalash have preserved the spirit of sacrifice characteristic of the primitive Indo-Aryans; roofless sanctuaries, rites of expulsion and purification, familiar presence of vaguely defined gods, dismembering of victims, role of fire, prayers for material blessings with little concern for the metaphysical.

The same animal symbolism is apparent in the Kalash myths and in the Vedic hymns, although the Kalash, in their sacrifices, tend to replace bovines by goats.

The autumn prestige festivals show us the perpetuation of the obligations of the individual towards maintaining and increasing the glory of his lineage, in complete conformity with the ideology of the Indo-Aryans (and even of the Indo-Europeans). The absence (or disappearance) of a priestly class among the Kalash is the only element of dissimilarity with the social structure of the Vedic era, whereas the warlike ideal and the low status of artisans is common to both cultures.

But over and beyond these considerations of especial relevance to a knowledge of ancient India, an understanding of the Kalash winter festival is also relevant to a perception of our own scenarios. It helps to distinguish between the pagan and Christian aspects of the Christmas rites, to reinterpret the scattered archaic gestures that are repeated every year even though their real meaning has been forgotten. Is it not possible that December in the West resembles a rite of passage and

renewal of cyclical time, with references and symbols that hark back to times immemorial?

The light bursts forth immediately after the end of Advent: it floods cities and towns in a riot of electricity and is not extinguished until January, after the turn of the year and the return to the secular. In some rural areas of France, it was customary, only recently, to simulate the return of the dead by means of hollowed-out pumpkins or sugar-beet with candles inside – terrifying images at night for the women as they left their evening gatherings at the spinning wheel (a symbol of the wheel of destiny, of the sun and of time). We all have vivid memories of children going the round of houses singing good wishes and receiving in return gifts of dried fruit and sweets. The Twelfth Night charms – a china moon or bean – recall the same concern for fecundity during the coming year, associated with the power of the king of the day. Innumerable demons, strange spirits and grotesque animals pervade the whole of Europe during this month of masquerades; their whips attack women's legs in the absence of other, more definite sexual symbols, the objective being once again fecundity. The evergreen fir tree set up in every house is a reassuring symbol of perpetual life, constantly renewed. Mistletoe is resistant to winter and presides over the exchange of good wishes at the midnight hour of that long vigil during which people await the dawn in a superfluity of wine, singing, dancing and food. The expulsion of the old year is well adapted to a reversal of the order of things, to excess in all things. There is also, in this desire to spend money, to make presents, to provide an abundance of food, an attitude of confident prodigality inherited from the days when winter was a disquieting time and required that one should make a special effort. Again, there is the same concern for strengthening family ties and unity. The meals served have the same object. Finally, Christmas celebrates the birth of God the Son, and the date is therefore close to that of the solstitial night, the very night that was the setting for the death and resurrection of the

primitive saviours from the precarity of life. These “godsons”, as Amable Audin calls them,⁸⁹ gods of the “second generation”, by suffering death immediately followed by renewal, in contrast with the immutable Father Créator, gave back hope to man, subject to the unacceptable fatality of death. Indra remains a typical example of these champions of vitality.

Since time immemorial in the Indo-European area, the ceremonies of the solstice have awakened hope. In our so-called modern world, the myths and phrases expressing this hope have changed, but the rites cut across all stages of religious evolution, faithfully reproducing the spirit of the ancient cults, even if this annual renewal does not suffice to make us believe in our salvation.

In the three valleys of north-west Pakistan, a handful of “infidels” have for endless ages been re-enacting the victory of life over death, and rejoicing in the immediacy of that victory, and it has never entered their heads that the hope of eternity might be rejected at the end of Time.

The festival of the *Chaumos* is considered essential by the community. This long sequence of sacred gestures, prayers, rites, carried out in accordance with strict rules, has survived to this day, in all its complexity, because it has turned out to be indispensable. Salvation, for the Kalash, depends upon an assured provision of food for the coming year. The primordial concern is thus for subsistence and the preservation and increase of economic factors. The festival provides a global solution to the innumerable problems weighing upon a pastoral and agrarian type of society, a response to problems of material and collective equilibrium. There is no doubt of its necessity for a group that looks to the immediate realisation of its hopes, particularly at the present time, in an extremely unfavourable context; for since the collapse of Kafiristan under the assaults of Islam, the Kalash have become a last and isolated bastion of paganism. It is in the festival that the

89. A. Audin, *Les fêtes solaires*, Paris, 1945, p. 21.

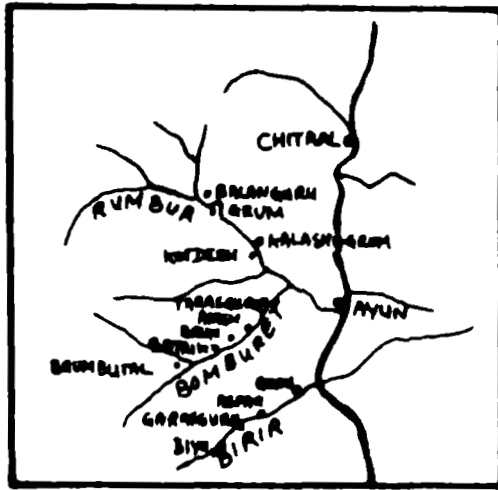


Rumbur, Balanguru: a village in the Hindu Kush with the children playing, simply happy to be alive

community has found its active means of defence. The defence is against itself too, for the recent irruption of the modern world, with its trading and its tourism, has rapidly created division within the community, which suddenly finds itself split between those who want to move with the times and the champions of tradition. The former demand an adaptation, or rather a recasting of customs whose requirements conflict with the new conditions of life and of trade, with the prospects afforded by money, by wealth. The latter react by pointing to a harmonious way of life that has proved itself.

This attitude of resistance should not be seen as merely backward-looking, but rather as an aptitude that the Kalash

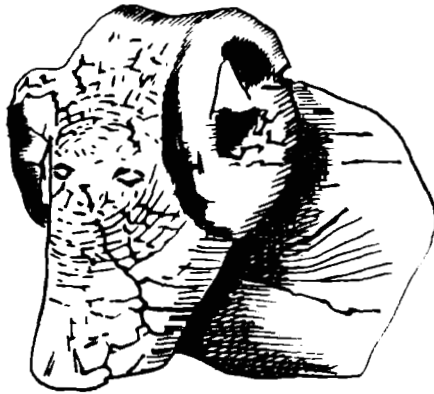
seem always to have possessed for absorbing influences instead of letting themselves be absorbed. The recent return to the celebration of the autumn festivals, which had long been in abeyance, is evidence of a sudden revival of customs, of the will to cement the unity of the community through festivities. A majority of the Kalash have shown themselves in favour of the active maintenance of the fundamental principles of their identity. That is their last resort. The champions of tradition know that acceptance of the modern world would mean not only abandoning their customary prodigality and replacing it by the accumulation of wealth without sharing; it would also mean calling in question, disrupting or even condemning a whole philosophy of life based on a perception of time that



would henceforward be inadequate. The Kalash stand at the brink of History, faced with the alternative of all or nothing. With the breach made in its ranks by so-called progress, the community is entering into a different sphere of time which

negates its equilibrium. But the *Chaumos* represents the point of equilibrium, the moment of the convergence of the values of Kalash identity, the instant of their redefinition.

For how long will the Kalash still be able, through the *Chaumos*, to express their primordial desire to persevere in their Being?



ANNEXES

PANTHEON OF THE KALASH OF RUMBUR AND THEIR SACRED UNIVERSE

Names and probable etymological transcription	Functions	Sanctuaries	Worship: Circumstances and Rites
kal = kalasha skt = sanskrit			sacrifice = bloody, animal offering = vegetal
DEZAU/KHODAI			
kal/di : heaven, light dev : divine being dewadur : sanctuary skt/div : to shine, diva : heaven Dyaus : celestial god, creator Khodai persian/Khoda : god	Creator, primordial celestial divinity, see Dyaus, Jupiter, Zeus among the Indo-Aryans. Has not intervened since the creation of the world; P. Morgenstierne in 1929, places him at the summit of the Kalash pantheon, idem R.C.F. Schomberg in 1938. Continued existence of an inaccessible heavenly god. A recent change in name, Dezau becomes Khodai, borrowed from the ex-Kafir converts. "Kalash monotheism" is an illusion, Islamic influence	No particular place of worship is dedicated to the Creator, Dezau.	No fixed date for worship. Called upon principally for health: sacrifice on the house roof of the sick person.

DEZALIK

Could the similarity between Deza/Dezalik point to the possible existence of a primordial creating couple, brother/sister?

Power of life, but above all, death over the souls of unborn children.
Female divinity presiding over births.

Present in the house of menstruation and births, the *bashali* (impure).
Represented by a vertical, roughly-hewn plank in the form of a woman, with lozenge designs symbolising the vulva.

Revered exclusively by the women.
Difficult birth, sterility. . .
Prayers and offerings.

BALUMAIN

kal/balush : riches, main : sharer, divider of riches
skt/bala : force, strength
mayin : magician
may : to change
called *INDRA* in some Kalash chants

Principal intercessor between the Creator and men, collects and grants the wishes of the faithful.
Laid down the rites of *Chaumos*, celebrated in his honour at the time of the winter solstice.
Divinity with solar attributions, fecundating.

No sanctuary in Kalash territory, he resides in the home country, Tsyam, and visits the valley at the winter solstice.
In Rumbur, he is worshipped in the sanctuary of Sajigor.
A fiery face, the luminous appearance of the fecundating gods. Rides a mount with hooves of flaming embers, the horse is his symbol.

Worshipped only during the winter solstice feast.
Prayers, chants, wishes (forbidden outside the festive period).
Great sacrifice: massive slaughter of he-goats offered to the great god, the day of the winter solstice, the *pushao-marat*.

SURISAN

kal/suri : sun

han : house

skt/dhisana : milk,
fecundity**GOSHDOI**kal/gosht : stable, or
gosh : time; dui : to
milkProtection and fecundity
of the herds (goats).Retains power from the
winter solstice to the
spring equinox.Goshdoi comes to power when
the goats are milked again
outside the stables after
winter (March)

In Birir, two gods with the
attributes of Indra replace
him, with fixed sanctuaries:
PRABA skt/Pravabhra: the
name of Indra
WARIN skt/Aparendra: apar-
indra

No physical representation:
the same attributes as
Balumain.
Surisan and Goshdoi are
called upon in the stables,
where the goats gather.

At the time of the arrival
and departure of the two
divinities, one succeeding
the other: prayers and
offerings in the stables.

SAJIGOR

skt/sajji-kr : to equip,
to arm

Formerly a warrior god,
the most important sed-
entary god of Rumbur.
Now the guardian and
protector of the territory
and the herds. Brings
riches and fecundity. Has
the power to intervene
over the spring rains.

Introduced into Rumbur by
the king Rajawai (approx.
1500 AD): resided at Bashgal.
Place of worship only at
Rumbur: circular area – a
sort of mandala (solar
circle), oak wood, surrounded
by carved poles. An altar
of stones under which is
buried the king's trophy, a
knife, a warrior symbol.

Venerated by the men on many
occasions: at each festival
(three), at the time of
prestige feasts (*Biramor*).
Agrarian rites, at the depar-
ture and the return of the
herd. . . .
Prayers, sacrifices, offerings.

MAHANDEO

skt/Mahadeva : great god

Privileged messenger
between men and the Creator.
The god of contracts (of
kept promises)
Concerned by transgressions,
soiling, of purity.
Protector of the population.

Present in the three
valleys, transplanted from
Waigal to Kalash territory.
In Rumbur: open air place
of worship, under a large
rock, surrounded by carved
poles. An altar of stones
plus four horse-heads in
wood.

In former times, honoured
by heroes who had killed
enemies during a war.
Today: during prestige
feasts, at the spring
festival (*Joshi*), sowing.
Offerings, sacrifices.

JESTAK

kal/jest : principal
 skt/Jyestha : first,
 principal and the
 oldest woman (in the
 Rig-Veda)

Female divinity, protector
 of the family, children,
 lineage, the home.
 Presides over births, mar-
 riages, integration rites
 (vitality of the community),
 Promotes health, fecundity
 prosperity.
 Social role, gathering in
 her house.

Present in the three
 valleys, first revealed
 sanctuary in Waigal.
 Square house with four
 carved pillars, an altar:
 a shelf with holm-oak
 branches and a small wooden
 plank with two horse-heads,
 representing the divinity.
 Place of worship for the
 grouped lineages, in a
 village or a house
 (immediate lineage).
 In each house, the far shelf,
 pure, is dedicated to
 JESTAK: a domestic altar.

Revered by men and women,
 the only sanctuary to which
 women are admitted.
 Private worship: rite of
 birth, rite of passage of
 the children, rite of consol-
 idation of a marriage. . .
 Public worship: ceremonial
 house, spring: prayer of the
 fathers for prosperity;
 winter: gathering of the
 living and the dead. . .
 Prayers, sacrifices, offerings.

JATCH

skt/yaksa : supernatural
being (in the Rig-Veda)

Spirit of nature made
divine. Prosperity and
fertility of the fields
(land, crops).
Protector of the herds (finds
lost animals).
Keeps diseases away.

In Rumbur, many places
scattered on the heights,
near to the stables. The
altar: a stone at the base of
a holm-oak. Represented by a
wooden carving in the form of
a lozenge, drawings of horns
and a hole.

Numerous rites during the
winter solstice. In autumn,
a sacrifice at the entrance
to the territory, against
epidemics. Agricultural
and pastoral rites.
Prayers, offerings.

KUSHUMĀĪ

skt/kusumāī
dardic/Krumāī

Combines nature and
femininity, functions
similar to those of *JATCH*.
Protects fruit and crops.
Ordered women to wear a
coiffe with cowries, shells
for fecundity. Divinity
linked with the cult of
goats (Dardistan).

Resident in Basghal,
Kushumāī refused to emi-
grate. In Rumbur, placed in a
fault in the mountain.
Represented by a naturally
“carved” stone.

Honoured by the men individ-
ually for the protection
of their spouse (difficult
birth) or to have a child.
Prayers, offerings.

SUCHI : Fairies

kal/sutch : pure

skt/suvatsika : goddess

Nature spirits, supernatural beings with lesser powers than the divinities. The fairies are the guardians of the wild sheep and ibex. Can assist hunters by allowing them to kill their charges. Grant access to the pasture lands in summer. May secretly give their support to a mortal and give him special powers, clairvoyance. . .

The fairies reside in inaccessible natural sites: summits, high pastures, glaciers, mountain lakes. . . In Rumbur, two places are linked with the SUCHI:

- * *Katsavir*, skt/kasaka: watching. Altar of stones for the hunt, near to the sanctuary of Sajigor;
- * *Shingmu*, kal/shing: horns. Altar of wild sheep horns with linked poles, below the sanctuary of Mahandeo.

The fairies are propitiated in spring (*JOSHI*) for the hunt and the livestock; offerings of milk and prayers. For successful hunts : the previous day, offerings of bread and juniper. When returning from war or the hunt, the heroes used to plant a carved stake or hand the horns of their trophies on a stake.

BHUT: Demons

Demons, nature spirits, evil, male. Spirits of the night, vague shadows. Some take the form of snakes, *nhong*, *skt/naga*.

Terrify humans, can kill them.

Gave the Kalash the mill and sheep, linked with Islam.

The demons dwell in the water, the springs, the underworld. In Rumbur, a place called *nhongadesh*, place of the demon-snakes, is situated near to a down-valley spring. Up-valley, the spring of Nokton is said to be peopled by demons.

In the event of illness, or fear caused by a meeting with a demon: Curative or propitiatory rite, sacrifice of a sheep, and/or an offering of juniper: *bhut saras*.

WAWA : Ancestors

kal/wawa : elders

harwa : souls

The deceased ancestors of each lineage protect their living descendants. A presence which assures the living of the soul's survival. Can provoke trouble if customs are not respected.

Cemetery: peopled by the dead, grouped in sectors, by lineage.

Buried coffins.

Representation of the glorious ancestors:

- * effigy of the deceased in wood, life-size, erected on the tomb (*gandao*)
- * statuette of the deceased planted in his field near to the village (*gundurik*)

Cult of the dead: vegetal offerings. At the winter solstice: dishes offered to the souls, for cohesion between the living and the dead.

Illnesses due to a deceased: rite of reconciliation. offering of bread.

Glorious ancestors: feast for the erection of funerary statue, one year after death. Honour to the lineage.

DEHAR : Shaman, medium
kal/di : heaven, war:
language''

Enters into ecstatic trances, an intermediary between that which is sacred and men. Functions linked with the sacred, productive activities (non-exclusive), seer, healer, countering spells. . .
In former times, unlimited magical powers.

The *dehar*, shamans reside in their village of origin.

The trance is always brought on by fumigation of juniper, often by the blood of a sacrifice:

- * in public: in the places of worship during ceremonies, feasts;
 - * at home: for personal illness misfortune.
-

Chaumos in Birir

The beginning of *Chaumos* in Birir coincides with the return of the sun to its “winter house” and the new moon.¹ As the moon grows larger, three old baskets are burned in front of the house of Jestak. The people from downstream begin to beat the drums and chant the winter songs in front of the sanctuary of the goddess and then assemble upon the dancing area of Aspar under the sacred tree planted by the Ancestor, Suhin Shah. It is from this commemorative square that the elders watch the movement of the sun above the mountain tops. That evening, a fire is lit so as to counter the darkness until such time as the “night splits in two”. Those upstream do the same at Bio.

Three or four nights later, the first fumigation with juniper takes place. The wine is drawn. The souls of the ancestors are nourished with bread placed on the shelf of each house. This is the night of the witches – *rujias*. The descendants of Pane – “They can be recognised by their fine features and their blue eyes. All of them.” – slaughter a he-goat upon the place where they first took up residence at Waridon, and thus exorcise the crime of the woman-witch.²

1. In 1982, the *Chaumos* ceremonies took place simultaneously in Rumbur and in Birir. We were unable to follow them in Birir. These details are taken from descriptions given to us by our Birila hosts during the course of conversations around the fire.

2. See the details of this crime in the chapter on “The witch hunt”.

Everywhere rifles are fired off to frighten away the demons. More dances follow.

The "Divinity of *Chaumos*" arrives the third night – *gosht saras*. He is honoured by the smoke from juniper leaves and an offering of pure bread. The parents of the initiates slaughter three he-goats per child. Wine accompanies the bread. The dances and chants are enhanced by the joyful light of torches. The praises speak of the ancestors.

The following day, purified boys grind grain. The men bake the bread of the offerings in the stables, the women, rice in the houses.

The day of the initiates, *goshnik*, follows the same pattern as that in Rumbur, the same rules. The parents of the young graduates again slaughter three he-goats in the stables and the community of men, that night, sacrifice a he-goat to the god Praba.

The most intense moment of the festival is known as *kot shatik*, "the fire of the fortress", and is the equivalent of the "night of the torches" in Rumbur. The dances take up the whole day, men moving upon the roof tops in a dominant position above the women. During that time, pure children leave for the forest to pick mistletoe which grows upon the evergreen oaks. Praba likes this plant and placed it under the protection of the Ancestor when he settled there.³

During the evening the famous race between two boys, one from upstream, the other from downstream, takes place. At stake is the good fortune which the winner will attract to his territory for the rest of the year. Both of them brandish a flaming torch. From the village of Gri, they rush towards the sanctuary of Praba. Raised near to the altar, are two groups of three slender poles. They have been decorated with reeds, leaves from the evergreen oak and vine shoots. The first competitor to set light to these dried leaves and send the

3. In Rumbur the mistletoe is rare and eaten by the goats. It happens to be found in the wood which surrounds the house of menstruation and because of this is absolutely untouchable.

flames shooting into the sky is declared the winner: this is a heavy responsibility for the young runners, known as the "children of Praba". The flames climb the sacred poles, reproducing the ascension of the gods from the earth up to heaven. This ceremony is in the spirit of the passing of the year which Indra looked upon in Vedic times, when the priests accomplished this symbolic climb towards the heavens so as to bring about favourable omens.⁴ Praba-Indra still presides over this rite in the narrow valley of Birir.

A final day of dancing brings the community together under the maple tree of the Ancestor – *bagan mut*. The speakers contrast the glorious past with the sad recital of the conversions of today. Prayers ask for such failings to cease. Eyes sparkle with the wine and trays of walnuts and grapes are passed around between glasses of the intoxicating "rosé". The men wear a sprig of mistletoe in their caps. Beans cook in the houses, a call for an increase in the population.

Late, in the night which precedes the full moon, the white crow comes. While reciting the litanies of wishes, the Birila fashion beasts out of bread, bake a large round galette and another in the form of a half-moon.

The following night sees the changeover from one year to the next. The moon is full, wine is drunk and bread is eaten. The juniper is burned in the stables and music breaks out again. Prayers are said for the return of spring.

The following day, repeated rites of integration confirm the membership of the young initiates into society. Girls and boys. This ceremony is common to the three valleys and is expressed through the "initiation of the buds". It brings the festive period to its final conclusion.

Festival of the New Year among the Shina

Colonel Biddulph⁵ bears witness to a winter solstice festival among the Shina of Gilgit, "to celebrate the beginning

4. See the celestial ascension of the Brahman and his wife in the Vedic Vajapeya.

5. Biddulph, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

of the new year which, according to an ancient computation, began at this precise moment". The festival was called *nos*: "gorging", because of the slaughtered animals which characterised it. The night following the slaughter gave way before the light cast by joyous flames. Two hours before dawn, the people assembled, with torches in their hands. The drums scolded the late-comers. As the first light of dawn appeared, the torches were scattered. The celebrations were repeated intermittently, with chants and dances, for a month. This festival, known throughout the province of Gilgit, was the scene for hostile demonstrations against hereditary enemies (notably the Kho-Chitrali). The outbursts were as a warning to eventual aggressors: "Today, let our enemies from the upper regions stay well upstream and those from below, well downstream. Let all those who wear shoes of skin (the Kho) perish and all those who wrap their legs with bands of leather (like the Shina) grow and prosper. . ."

Festival of the new year among the Kafirs: the Giche

The following is an extract from a unique manuscript, the only book ever written by a Kati, an ex-Kafir, Sardar Azar, who decided after his conversion to Islam to write the story of his life and note down the mores and customs of his society. This exceptional document was gathered together by G. Morgenstierne and presented by Knut Kristiansen at the congress of Moesgard (1974) on the cultures of the Hindu-Kush.

"This festival takes place 100 days after the *ishtrichal* dance (at the end of summer) and lasts for twelve days. During the first seven days the people dance by night. Then on the eighth, they all go and look for wood, far away. The poles are of pine or cedar. The following day, they break off and bring back branches of juniper. When the branches are in the houses, they begin the fumigation.

“On the fourth day, during the night, they bake loaves of bread, each one weighing 10 kg, in the name of the god *Mon*. After midnight, in each house, they pour fat upon the bread. Then they throw a little of this fat, sprigs of juniper, and a few pieces of the bread into the fire and render homage to the god. They also repeat the names of the other divinities invoked during the baking of the bread and do reverence to them in the same way.

“When they have eaten the bread, they make figurines representing their livestock (cows, goats, sheep. . .) from thin twigs of willow, as well as two shepherds. The meaning of these images is as follows: ‘This is our livestock and these are the shepherds’. Then they take the shepherds and the livestock and put them in a place which has been made ready for this purpose. The figurines are placed on a shelf facing the door. The idea is to make a sort of request to the “highest god”. They also pray to the idols, saying: ‘We should possess livestock which resembles that which belongs to the idols’. Then each man paints upon the walls of his house pictures of horses, cows, goats. . . with black colouring which they have collected during the course of the twelve days. And each man does them according to his rank as has been the custom since ancient times.

“The fifth day, they cut the branches which they have collected. They make a torch for each man, 15 to 20 feet in height. For the women and the children: from 6 to 10 feet in height. A torch of branches is made in the name of each individual, male, female and child. And a pregnant woman makes one for the child which is to be born. As many torches as there are people in each house. When the torches are finished, they tie up that which is left over with thin twigs of willow and fix, at the upper extremity, branches of juniper to be burned. That night, first of all they give a feast. Then they make a bread in the name of each divinity with the aim of honouring him. At midnight an offering is made in the names of the gods for whom the breads have been made. But let us

remember that for this offering no bread is made in honour of the god *Mon*. Afterwards everyone goes to sleep.

“At three o’clock in the morning, everyone awakes. First of all they dress themselves in their finest clothes. And before all the others the *deblol* – the religious singer – sets light to the torch in his own house and goes out. Then in a high voice, they cry: *such, such!* This a word of blessing in their religion. After which, they remain in the village for quite some time. Then they go to the altar of the idol *Disain*. The *deblol* and the *pshu* (the equivalent of the Kalash *dehar*) first of all, and following them all the men. When all are assembled in this place, they pray to *Disain*. Then the *pshu* falls unconscious and the divinity speaks through him in an occult way. He reveals the name of he who carries the longest torch, the veneration of whom pleases the goddess. He takes this torch and raises it before the gate of the sanctuary. He then takes two or four others, no more.

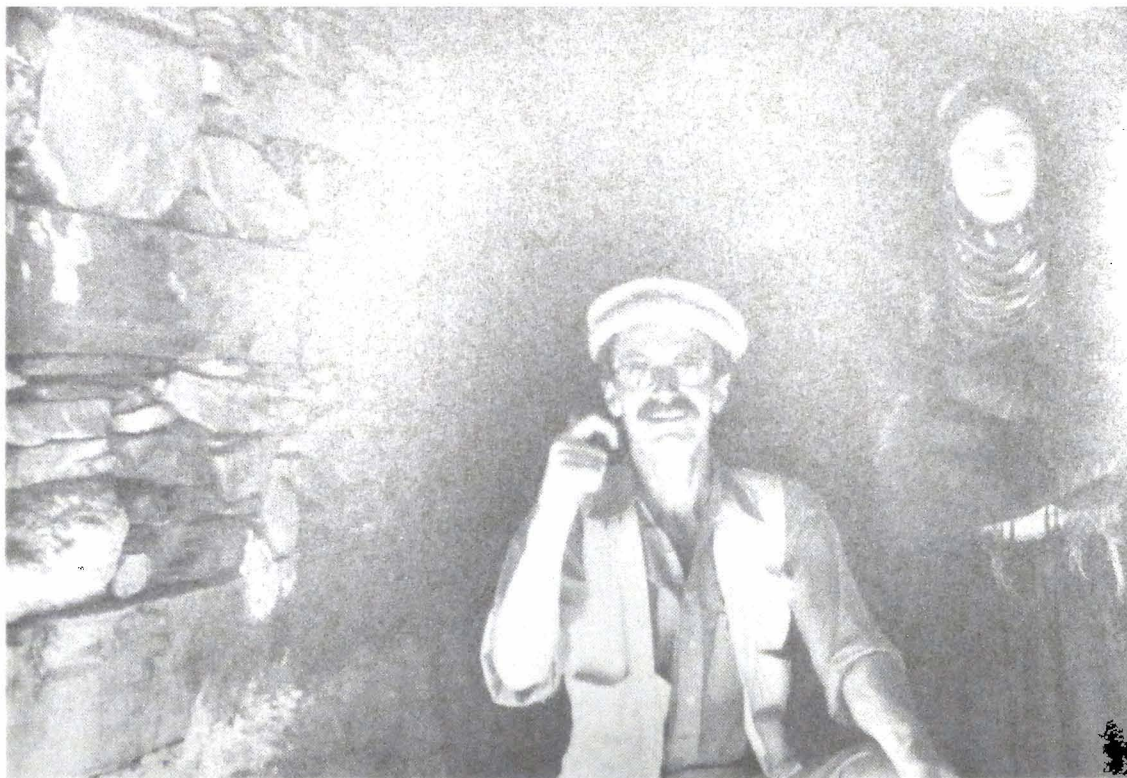
“The *pshu* reveals which type of offerings are suitable for the divinity and explains this to the people. Upon this occasion, the *deblol* and all the people, standing, their hands clasped together, implore the *pshu* who in turn beseeches the divinity. In front of the divinity, each one voices his needs and receives the reply to his prayers through the intermediary of the *pshu*. He then regains consciousness and the offerings destined for the idol are made. And the people free themselves of their obligations by presenting the required offerings. During this time, they all continue to sing and to play without a musical instrument. At dusk, they return home. Until such time as the men return, all the women continue to sing upon the dancing area. The women do not return to their homes before the men have gone there. And the men assemble on the dancing area and dance. For quite a long time, music is played to accompany them. And each one moves around, eats and drinks. Having eaten and put on fine clothing, they dance all day accompanied by music. When night comes, they all return home and the festival is completed. Seven days after this



Jean-Yves Loude works with Kasi Khoshnawas.



Viviane Lièvre, dressed in the traditional kalash way, receives the pure bread of shishao, the integration rite of the women into the community.



Hervé Negrè, the photographer

event, each one makes figurines of the livestock and the shepherds from splinters of willow. And having done reverence to the gods, each one in his own house, they make a fire and throw the figurines into it.

“This festival takes place in winter like the *Divali* of the Hindus.”

GLOSSARY

<i>adjona</i>	guest
<i>adu</i>	day
<i>alashing parik</i>	leave her husband, divorce
<i>amatak saras</i>	raising of sexual abstinence (rite)
<i>amein</i>	sheep
<i>anashau</i>	dead (adjective)
<i>angar</i>	fire
<i>anguti</i>	guest room
<i>anyak</i>	stool
<i>ao</i>	bread
<i>aram mos</i>	meat from an animal killed by a pagan (forbidden to Moslems)
<i>arman</i>	forewarned
<i>arman shah</i>	all-powerful being
<i>asa nichini</i>	“to seat the cinders” (Kafir rite)
<i>Aspai</i>	lineage of Bumburet
<i>at</i>	flour
<i>aya</i>	mother, exclusively she who has brought the children into the world
<i>baba</i>	sister
<i>babareush</i>	mountain flowers
<i>badarakas</i>	medium-sized broad beans
<i>badel karik</i>	to exchange
<i>Bagalie</i>	lineage of Rumbur

<i>bahira</i>	person who has transgressed exogamic rules
<i>Baladesh</i>	village of Rumbur
<i>Balalik</i>	autochthonous residents before the arrival of the Kalash
<i>Balanguru</i>	village of Rumbur
<i>Baloe</i>	lineage of Rumbur
<i>Balumain</i>	divinity of the solstice festival
<i>bareik</i>	calf
<i>bari</i>	slaves, inferior artisanal class
<i>bas</i>	day
<i>bashali</i>	house of menstruation and child-birth
<i>bashik</i>	rain
<i>bashikek</i>	chants of lamentation for a deceased
<i>basun</i>	spring
<i>basun marat</i>	spring sacrifice (rite in February)
<i>batcha</i>	king
<i>Batet</i>	village of Rumbur
<i>baya</i>	brother
<i>baza</i>	arm, hand
<i>bazum</i>	dance, with arms raised to the height of the shoulders
<i>bech</i>	more, excess
<i>besharum</i>	ribald
<i>besharum dewa</i>	unscrupulous divinity
<i>Bidra Kalein</i>	sacred chant of the solstice festival
<i>biik</i>	to be frightened
<i>birar</i>	he-goat
<i>Biramor</i>	merit feast of the "slaughtered he-goats"
<i>bizu</i>	a foul-smelling shrub
<i>bhut</i>	demon
<i>bong</i>	hashish
<i>bozkashi</i>	game played by the horsemen of Afghanistan
<i>bribo</i>	walnut
<i>Budalac</i>	procreating herdsman (festival of Birir)
<i>but</i>	trousers

<i>but sambiak</i>	to put on the trousers of a shepherd (rite of passage of young boys)
<i>Chaumos</i>	winter solstice festival
<i>Chitral</i>	small town in the region of the same name upon which the Kalash depend, administratively
<i>dada</i>	father
<i>daem</i>	pomegranate
<i>daem utala</i>	“The high pomegranate tree”, reference point of the sun’s progression
<i>dagari gak</i>	model of a cow in pastry (rite)
<i>dandyas</i>	large broad beans
<i>danu</i>	aromatic plant
<i>dashak but</i>	woollen herdsman’s trousers
<i>dastur</i>	custom
<i>dau</i>	cylindrical drum
<i>dau</i>	beans
<i>dau patchen</i>	“cooking the beans” (rite)
<i>dau tatu</i>	“forward march for the beans” (rite of collection)
<i>dehar</i>	shaman
<i>dewa</i>	divinity
<i>dewaka marat</i>	January sacrifice (rite)
<i>Dezalik</i>	divinity of births
<i>di</i>	heaven
<i>ditch</i>	sexual abstinence (during solstice festival)
<i>diuna</i>	in the heavens, towards the heavens
<i>Dzilawat</i>	“the stones of creation”, mythical place
<i>djotr</i>	mill
<i>done</i>	bull
<i>drai</i>	wicker dossier
<i>Dramese</i>	lineage of Rumbur
<i>Dramui</i>	lineage of Rumbur
<i>dratch</i>	grape
<i>dur</i>	house
<i>dusi</i>	men’s dance, in line, in spring
<i>dust</i>	friend, lover

<i>dust karik</i>	adultery, to have a friend (male or female)
<i>Dzoe</i>	lineage of Rumbur
<i>Englesi</i>	(the) English
<i>Franci</i>	(the) French
<i>gadeirak</i>	man of prestige, of influence, "an ancient"
<i>gadula</i>	large necklace of beads with many strands
<i>gajum marat</i>	sacrifice when a married woman first returns to the house of her father (rite)
<i>gak</i>	cow
<i>gal</i>	game
<i>gambahutiak</i>	small rag doll for the winter festival (rite)
<i>gandao</i>	funerary statue of an ancestor, in wood
<i>Giche</i>	new year's festival at Kamdesh (Kafiristan)
<i>gora</i>	white
<i>gorabat</i>	white slate for baking pure bread in the stables
<i>goruelik</i>	white eagle
<i>Goshaweng</i>	great merit feast
<i>Goshedoi</i>	protecting divinity of the herd
<i>goshnik</i>	rite of passage for children, integration into society
<i>gosht</i>	stable
<i>gosht saras</i>	"fumigation with juniper in the stables" (rite)
<i>Grum</i>	village of Rumbur, the oldest
<i>grun</i>	chant
<i>gundurik</i>	small funerary statue, seated ancestor
<i>gwinda</i>	goat cheese, very strong
<i>Hadji</i>	title: one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>harwa</i>	soul, soul of the ancestors
<i>heman</i>	winter
<i>hunza</i>	griddle (domestic utensil)

<i>Indrakun</i>	“the garden of Indra”, in Kafiristan
<i>Indras shishao</i>	“pure bread of the daughters of Indra” (rite)
<i>Indre'in</i>	place dedicated to the worship of Indra's horse at Bumburet
<i>ishkyiane bas</i>	“day of nothing”, break between feast days
<i>isting</i>	bracelet
<i>isting garao</i>	female healer using a bracelet
<i>istongas</i>	purification of men by blood (rite)
<i>istor</i>	horse (Khowar word)
<i>istor gandao</i>	equestrian funerary statue
<i>istrija</i>	woman
<i>jamili</i>	sisters of the same lineage
<i>jangali mutch</i>	“jungle people”, from the forest, rural
<i>Jatch</i>	divinity of herds and crops
<i>Jestak</i>	divinity of the family and prosperity
<i>Jestak han</i>	sanctuary of Jestak, house of the lineage
<i>jian</i>	mixture of crushed walnuts and cheese
<i>Joshi</i>	great spring feast (in May)
<i>kaga</i>	crow
<i>kagayak</i>	“night of the white crow” (rite of wishes)
<i>kakboy</i>	leopard
<i>kal</i>	taste
<i>kalasha</i>	language of the Kalash
<i>Kalashagrum</i>	village of Rumbur
<i>Kalashe</i>	“those from down-valley”, Rumbur
<i>kaltabar</i>	relatives by marriage
<i>kaltabari</i>	marriage, gift of presents to the family of the bride
<i>kam</i>	lineage
<i>kao</i>	year
<i>kao badel karik</i>	change of year
<i>kasi</i>	guardian of knowledge, of tradition (title)
<i>Kati</i>	ethnic group of Kafiristan
<i>Katsavir</i>	sanctuary for hunts
<i>kaye</i>	fatty bouillon, with flour

<i>ket</i>	plant of the pastures, a type of artemesia
<i>Ket tek</i>	therapeutic stimulation through heat
<i>Khodai</i>	celestial god, the Creator
<i>Khowar</i>	language of the Kho, of the Chitrali (Dardic tongue)
<i>kila</i>	large round cheese from Kafiristan
<i>kilawatch</i>	“bread of the pen”, prosperity of the herds (rite)
<i>kirik</i>	snow
<i>kirik gal</i>	game of “snow golf”, in teams
<i>Komunist</i>	communist
<i>kot</i>	fort
<i>Kotdesh</i>	village of Rumbur, entrance to the valley
<i>kotik</i>	fort, “little fortress of sticks” (rite)
<i>kuak</i>	child: son or daughter
<i>Kuak Kuak</i>	“child price” – “bride price”
<i>kupas</i>	large coiffe for women, covered with cowries
<i>Kushumai</i>	divinity
<i>kushurik</i>	“break bread on the tomb, in the ceme- tery” (rite)
<i>kuta mru</i>	“lame wild sheep”, model in bread (rite)
<i>kuturuli</i>	bread in the shape of a half-moon, women’s purification rite
<i>Lataruk</i>	lineage of Birir
<i>lawak</i>	fox
<i>lawak biik</i>	“the foxes are frightened”, carnival (rite)
<i>lui</i>	blood
<i>lutch</i>	light
<i>lutch mut</i>	light-wood, a resinous wood
<i>Mahandeo</i>	divinity
<i>mai</i>	possessive : my
<i>main mutch</i>	“the sharer” of food, at the feasts
<i>mal</i>	goods, the “bride price”
<i>malbat</i>	dance stone, commemorating a warrior- hunter
<i>Maleidesh</i>	village of Rumbur

<i>maleri</i>	carved post in the sanctuary
<i>mandaik</i>	“to come from the coffin”, the day of the coming of the dead (rite)
<i>mandau</i>	coffer, coffin
<i>mandau jao</i>	cemetery
<i>mandawar</i>	golden eagle
<i>mandawar watch</i>	“eagle bread” (rite)
<i>marat</i>	ritual sacrifice
<i>marik</i>	to kill
<i>mashushtyak</i>	dried mulberry
<i>mastruk</i>	moon, month
<i>Mehtar</i>	king of Chitral
<i>mesh</i>	ram
<i>Mimbar</i>	elected representative
<i>minj</i>	cloud
<i>mon</i>	unit of measure = 42 kg
<i>motor</i>	jeep, car
<i>murayak</i>	adolescent girl, a girl of marriageable age
<i>mut</i>	tree
<i>mutch</i>	people, community
<i>Mutimire</i>	lineage of Rumbur
<i>naga</i>	rare
<i>Naga Dehar</i>	the most prestigious of the Kalash shamans
<i>nana</i>	aunt
<i>nanghairo</i>	“the demon hunt” (rite)
<i>nat</i>	dance
<i>nela</i>	summer
<i>nigik</i>	to wash, to wash oneself
<i>nigilao rat</i>	“the night the men wash” (rite)
<i>onjesta</i>	purified, pure
<i>onjesta lawak</i>	“the pure fox”
<i>onjesta mosh</i>	purified officiant, for an offering, a sacrifice
<i>ostat</i>	carpenter, builder, craftsman.
<i>Palar</i>	summit of the Rumbur valley

<i>pan</i>	underground storehouse
<i>Pane</i>	lineage of Birir
<i>papaik adu</i>	“put off by a day”, feast interval
<i>Pareloy tum</i>	mythical metal pole, <i>axis mundi</i>
<i>paretch</i>	sieve
<i>pasti</i>	wooden storehouse
<i>pata</i>	proof
<i>patichin</i>	cooked (adjective)
<i>paye</i>	goat
<i>paye ishmarik</i>	“the goat count”, rite of a merit feast
<i>Pimasa</i>	rite, simulating the return of the deceased the apotheosis of the merit feasts
<i>pragata</i>	impure
<i>prejesh</i>	sacrifice
<i>Presun</i>	an ethnic group of Kafiristan
<i>pretchawat</i>	slate
<i>pretchiona</i>	butter
<i>Prun</i>	harvest festival at Birir (in September)
<i>purush</i>	man
<i>Pushao marat</i>	“great sacrifice to Pushao”, Balumain’s servant
<i>putr</i>	son
<i>raja</i>	king
<i>rat</i>	night
<i>roy</i>	guard of the fields, watcher over the valley
<i>ruji</i>	witch
<i>Sajigor</i>	divinity, honoured exclusively in Rumbur
<i>Sajigor ton</i>	open-air sanctuary to Sajigor
<i>salom shatik</i>	wrestling
<i>sambiak</i>	to dress, to put on
<i>Sanowkun</i>	ceremony to attain the rank of an ancestor during one’s lifetime (in Kafiristan)
<i>saras</i>	juniper and offerings of juniper (rite)
<i>sarasari</i>	“day of the first offerings” (rite)

<i>sariek</i>	marriage ceremony, an exceptional gathering
<i>saweu</i>	wicker tray, basket
<i>Shaedar</i>	“congratulations” on the birth of a daughter
<i>Shagenshai</i>	lineage of Birir
<i>shalwar kemiz</i>	long tunic over baggy trousers, men’s clothing
<i>shanja</i>	great torch
<i>Shashake</i>	lineage of Rumbur (also called <i>Shash</i>)
<i>shiara</i>	wild goat
<i>shiarabirayak</i>	small models of animals in bread (rite)
<i>shiarakandali</i>	chant of devotion to Balumain
<i>shiaru</i>	autumn
<i>shiaru prejesh</i>	autumn sacrifice (rite)
<i>Shiaruga</i>	“autumn cows”, ceremony of great prestige
<i>Shigala</i>	the place where school and mosque are settled in Rumbur
<i>shil</i>	stone throwing
<i>shing</i>	horn
<i>Shingmu</i>	sanctuary of the fairies, of the hunts, at Rumbur
<i>shish</i>	head
<i>shisha istongas</i>	purification of the . . . couple, marriage . . . rite
<i>shishao</i>	purification of women by pure bread (rite)
<i>shorba</i>	meat stock, bouillon
<i>shtaluk</i>	carpenter, wood-worker
<i>shula</i>	wood
<i>shuman</i>	bandolier of honour, of protection, in woven cotton
<i>shushut</i>	small support band for the coiffe, decorated with cowries, worn by women
<i>sohola</i>	basket

<i>Suchi</i>	fairies, nature spirits
<i>suda</i>	child
<i>suda ushtel</i>	to lift up the child at birth
<i>suri</i>	sun
<i>Surisan</i>	divinity of the herds
<i>tamaku</i>	tobacco, tobacco plant
<i>tambuk</i>	a target for a shooting competition
<i>taprikot</i>	cassette tape-recorder
<i>tatori</i>	thick galette
<i>tchapan</i>	ceremonial robe, embroidered, worn by men of prestige
<i>tchat</i>	shadow
<i>tchatai adu</i>	“day of blessings” (rite)
<i>Tchatguru</i>	village of Rumbur
<i>Tchatrumagrum</i>	village of ex-Kafir converts at the end of the valley
<i>tchelik sambiak</i>	“to put on the robe”, children’s rite of passage
<i>tchijin</i>	pine
<i>tchu</i>	girl
<i>tchu tchu</i>	breast
<i>tchu tchu mal</i>	“breast price”, marriage transaction
<i>Tchuin ari</i>	“drawings using ink and reeds” (rite)
<i>tchuruk</i>	to begin, to fall
<i>tim</i>	unit of measure = 20 kg
<i>tim</i>	wood-burning stove
<i>tsir nat</i>	dance for the funeral of great warrior/hunters
<i>tum</i>	bow
<i>tum' kutchawao</i>	healer, medium, using a bow to divine illness
<i>uk</i>	water
<i>umbulu</i>	shamanic trance
<i>Urus</i>	The Russian
<i>ushtik</i>	to lift
<i>Utchao</i>	summer feast (end of August)

<i>Waigali</i>	an ethnic group of Kafiristan
<i>Wakoke</i>	lineage of Rumbur
<i>watch</i>	small drum, shaped like an hour-glass
<i>weho</i>	unit of measure = one quintal
<i>wishaten</i>	riding dance (winter festival)
<i>Yuropistan</i>	Europe
<i>zatiao</i>	bread of the first period (rite)
<i>zindabad!</i>	“long life to. . .!”

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Kalash

Winter Festivals in Northern Pakistan

By this day, the Kalash remain the last 'Kafirs of the Hindukush'. Their territory is restricted to three narrow valleys in the district of Chitral at the extreme Northwest of Pakistan. Essentially herdsmen, they also practise agriculture. The Kalash have succeeded in perpetuating their identity despite a tumultuous history and deep religious changes among their neighbours. They still maintain close communication with their gods, whom they worship during sumptuous feasts at the winter solstice: they pray and dance, lavishly slaughter male goats; they light bonfires and guide the coming of their gods with torches. Before performing the rites of purification, they exchange songs, food and jokes between different clans. The society repeats all these ceremonies every year in December to welcome gods, spirits and ancestors among the living community and so favour the regeneration of Nature.

Jean-Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, both anthropologists and Herve Negre, a photographer, have shared the life of the Kalash during many sojourns since 1976 and speak their language. This book translated from the French approaches the Kalash way of thinking through a graphic description of the autumn and winter ceremonies. These very moments allow a deeper comprehension of social organization, rules of alliance, economic and political structures, together with the system of prestige incorporated in their feasts of merit.