

FESTIVITY OF FUNERALS AS A SPACE FOR KALASH IDENTITY

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Abstract:

This research paper entitled “Festivity of Funerals as a Space for Kalash Identity” concentrates on the traditional culture, social customs, beliefs, spiritualist encounters, and mythology of the Kalash individuals. The locals' idea of death, memorial service and entombment, crucial standard of immaculateness and polluting influence, and the utilization of religion as a wellspring of socio-political quality has additionally taken into the record. Kalash character is displayed as their consecrated ceremonies and celebrations which are even performed at the demise. Kalash people rejoice and celebrate the death as it is the union of the soul and the creator. Rituals are performed differently for men and women as they are pure and impure stock respectively. The economic disparity at funeral ritual for men, women and children has also been studied. Among the Kalash religion is the principle divine power of their social character. Religious character is developed both culturally and socially, and transmitted starting with one era then onto the next. The progressions acquired the religion are the result of declaring energy to make it a

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greater amount of social and gathering character as opposed to an unadulterated matter of the decision in light of individual's internal identity or fundamental truth of birth. The study was led in Bumburet valley of area Chitral, Pakistan. The subjective anthropological examination strategy was embraced for obtaining the ethnographic information for the exploration close by.

Keywords: *Sacrifice, Blood, Death, Funeral, Religion, Ritual, Traditions, Spiritual Beliefs, Social Practices, Purity and Impurity*

Introduction

Among the main scholars of religion, the individuals who focus mostly on myth or rituals are Emile Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Mary Douglas, and Claude Levi-Strauss. By differentiation, scholars like Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, Robert Bellah, Peter Berger, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, and Clifford Geertz don't single out myth or ritual; however; rather subsume both under their examinations of religion generally. What they say about religion general surely applies to myth and ritual. Durkheim says that myth emerges, taking after ritual so as to clarify it: "on a fundamental level, the cult [ritual] is gotten from the convictions, yet it responds upon them; the myth is as often as possible demonstrated after the ritual so as to record for it, particularly when its sense is no more clear" (1965). For him the heart of religion is not the faith in god but rather the experience of god, and that experience happens at whatever point the individuals from society gather to perform a ritual, which serves both to teach and to reestablish conviction: "truth be told, whoever has truly drilled a religion knows extremely well that it is the clique which offers ascend to these impressions of satisfaction, of inside peace, of quietness, of eagerness which are, for the adherent, an exploratory evidence of his convictions. " (1965).

Composing 10 years or more after Durkheim, Malinowski additionally rejects Tylor's intellectualist perspective of religion: "Tylor's perspective of primitive religion, essential as it might have been, depended on excessively contract a scope of certainties, and it made early man excessively thoughtful and normal" (1948). Where the capacity of religion for Harrison and Hooke is supernatural and for Durkheim social, for Malinowski it is both mental and social. Where Durkheim

considers myth less imperative than ritual, and where Harrison and Hooke consider it as vital as ritual, Malinowski thinks of it as more essential than ritual. It serves, he says, to legitimize wonders: "The myth becomes an integral factor when ritual, function, or a social or good control requests avocation, warrant of days of yore, reality, and sacredness" (1948). Myth legitimizes marvels of various sorts: common events and disasters, as well as, for instance, connection frameworks, convictions, ethical quality, enchantment, and ritual. The survival of society relies on upon the proceeding with acknowledgment or routine of these wonders. The justificatory capacity is in this manner at last a social one. Myth likewise legitimizes wonders which are essentially individual in nature and just unintentionally social: passing, illness, and lesser unpleasantnesses of life. "The capacity of myth, quickly, is to fortify custom and supply it with a more prominent quality and eminence by following it back to a higher, better, more powerful reality of starting occasions" (Malinowski, 1948).

Rituals work contrastingly in enchantment and religion, however in both they emerge fundamentally amid enthusiastic emergencies and serve to mitigate trouble: "Let us begin with the religious demonstration second to none, the stately of death.... Never does an individual need the solace of conviction and ritual to such an extent as in the holy observance of the viaticum.... These demonstrations are coordinated against the staggering trepidation, against the consuming uncertainty, from which the savage is not any more free than the humanized man. These demonstrations affirm his trust that there is a from now on, that it is not more terrible than present life; in fact, better. All the custom communicates that conviction, that passionate mentality which the withering man requires, which is the best solace he can have in his incomparable clash. Also, this insistence has behind it weight of numbers and the pageantry of serious custom" (1948). For Radcliffe-Brown it prompts emotions toward wonders which influence all general public. Myths, which Radcliffe-Brown uses conversely with "legends," to some degree maintain society by comparatively arousing emotions, positive or negative, toward wonders with a social esteem: "The legends give us in any case a basic and rough valuation of human actions.... The young fellows who neglected to watch the tenets set down for the individuals who have as of late been through one of the start services were swung to stone. The terrible temper of one of the progenitors brought about dimness covering the earth..." (1948). Like a burial

service custom, a myth about death incites sentiments of misfortune for the dead - not, with respect to Malinowski, keeping in mind the end goal to reduce individual uneasiness however, so as to dead - not, concerning Malinowski, so as to ease individual nervousness yet so as to urge the living the quality to society of each person.

Kalash identity is shown as their holy ceremonies and celebrations, which are performed at various events including religious, occasional/yearly, and the life cycle stages. Among the life cycle celebration, death ceremonies have an interesting significance. Kalash cheer and praises the passing as it is the union of the spirit and the maker. Diverse ceremonies are performed for men and ladies at their demise since they are dealt with as unadulterated and unclean stock separately.

Ceremonies are the method for correspondence to the Supreme Being; they are extremely impossible to miss, and exceptionally typical. There is a consecutive course of action of words, mood, rhyme, moving and give up of creature or individuals in the event of ancient social orders. Dialect and activities of ceremonies itself express character. For performing them, they like some other gathering, watch particular tenets preceding their accommodation to Allah or Dezahu. For the petition to God, both men and ladies clean themselves by washing up, spread their head and face towards west "suribihot`k gehen" which is trailed by a penance. The blood of the creature is sprinkled ablaze with the assistance of juniper leaves and crisply heated bread "au`" is presented with grape wine, and drain. Supplicating custom is standard before beginning any imperative or new thing connected with everyday matters. The supplication to God is expressed with "maula ta dewa" (Lord the Spirit). Every one of the requests to God are named agreeing the way of the occasion and are performed by the senior citizens without the pounding of the drums. These supplications to God are not trailed by their standard moves. The petitions to God are led when the goat achieves the high field "Ucal` k batya" since the high fields are viewed as unadulterated and hallowed grounds. The Qazi fabricates, "Saraz dyek" an extensive flame by putting saraz branches in the flame. The branches yield a sweet scent. The Qazi than pours milk or grape juice in the flame and supplicate. In sacrificial tables before the harvest, the wheat ears are smoldered together with saraz leaves as an appreciation to god for the great and sound product. At the

point when a unique corn ear is seen in the cornfield having two heads and more grains, it is considered extremely immaculate and is viewed as an image that their petitions to God have been addressed and they again tail it by a penance of a creature and sprinkle his blood on the corn as a demonstration of appreciation.

Research Methodology

The research was conducted in Bumburet Valley in Kalash, Chitral, Pakistan. The qualitative anthropological research methods were used for obtaining the ethnographic information for the present research. The researchers participated in their celebrations, banquets, offerings and supplications to God, while living in Bumburet Valley. Accordingly a complete drenching in the said society has been embraced for a decent affinity, acceptance and recognition by the natives. The essential information was gathered through the socioeconomic census. The census survey helped us in collecting data about the village regarding sex, education, family system, caste, population, ethnic groups, occupation, and number of households residing in the village. The said valley has 12 hamlets and through convenience sampling we selected few hamlets where both Kalasha and Muslims were living together and shared the geographical space. We went to every house of the village Anish, Brun, Batrik and Karakal and conducted in-depth interviews to collect detailed information about their religion. Sound recorders were used to record the interviews.

Results and Discussion

Kalash do not fear death, but they reject the concept of suicide as no such case has been reported or documented at the time the research was being conducted. However numbers of accidental deaths have been reported in the area. They believe that the life given to them is a gift of god so they have no right to end it (Robertson: 1996). Life and death is a continuous cycle and one should celebrate the departure of those who had lived life to their fullest. Death is transitioning from one form of life to another. Therefore, it is essential for every Kalash individual, whether man or a woman to depart this life in accordance with tradition. The traditional funeral services help to guide the deceased towards the realms of survival (Loude, 1988).

The concept of soul is relatively new to the Kalash. Loude states that in former times no one knew where a soul went. They believed that the soul escaped from

the body through the mouth and eyes after death; hence they are open when a man dies (Loude, 1988). In the pagan times of Swat and Kohistan, some six to ten generations ago, *“the priests taught that there was no heaven and hell” and such nonsense, the terms good and bad have little meaning for the Kalash, the idea of punishment, of God’s avenging action means nothing at all (Barth)*. The Kalash elders on the other hand, insisted that the Kalash theology revolves around the concept of heaven and hell. When a man dies, his soul or breath *“shon”* transform into a shadow and become *“partir”* and wander as the shades in heaven *“yurdesh”* and sinners will burn in *“zozuk”* hell. They owe this to Naga Dehar the religious shaman, who proclaims that the soul went to the other world of peaks, midway between the divine and human.” They regard it *“as a promotion, since it is at those altitudes that the fairies live”* (Loude, 1988).

They celebrate the funerals and spend on feast generously. People from all the three valleys are supposed to attend the funeral. They stay for three to four days at the house of the deceased. The family is supposed to supply food for the guests. They munificently spend on sacrifice and funeral services.

The Funeral and Burial

Historical accounts reveal that in Kalash funerals, ceremonies offer a chance for display of wealth which will show the importance of the deceased and his or her family. Death is mostly celebrated as a joyous occasion where it is believed that it is a union of soul with the creator and is now seeking favors and blessing for their living relatives. The tribe is assumed to be regarded as the remnants of Alexander the great. The religious observance of the mortuary rites in rural Greece is very orthodox but is very different from the rituals and methods practiced by the Kalash. Cohen explains the burial and exhumation in Potamia, a village in northern Thessaly with a population of six hundred prosperous farmers. The village has its own very small graveyard, which is not unusual for rural Greece the graves are the temporary resting place for the remains of the dead before they are moved finally to the ossuary. He quoted from the study of Danforth (1982) that beyond a small floor space, a ladder led down to a dark, musty- smelling area are filled with the bones of many generations of villagers. Near the top of the huge pile the remains of each person are bound up separately in a white cloth. Towards the bottom of the pile the bones- skulls, pelvis ribs, the long bones of countless arms and legs – lay tangled disarrays, having lost all trace of belonging

to distinct individuals with the disintegration of the cloth wrappings. Stacked in one corner of the building were metal boxes and small suitcases with names, dates and photographs identifying the people whose bones lay securely within (Cohen, 1985).

The mourning obligations and rituals are observed for the period of five years and the mourning females are considered responsible for the cleanliness of the graveyard as an extension to their domestic chores (ibid). Where as in Kalash the graveyard is considered as an impure area and due to the concept of *Bhut* people are discouraged to go there alone. The Kalash people are sharing their geographical space with both the Sunni and Ismaili Muslims who assume a strong hold in the region on the basis of either economical or religious superiority cast their strong influence on the non-Muslim Kalash. This influence is evident in the form of constant conversion to Islam along with the drastic changes in their traditions and customs especially the burials and the funerals. Traditions of indigenous funeral customs and beliefs in a proper way to proceed the afterlife in Bumburet valley Kalash depicts strong traditions that represent a phenomenon showing the importance of local and family traditions for keeping their ethno-cultural identity alive. There is a big difference between the rituals and burial methods practiced by others in the region. The funeral is special testimony of their pagan religious identity held by the previous generations about which unfortunately the evidences are lost in the imperial period. The tradition later has undergone various transitional changes due to the diffusion with the Muslim burial practice.

Conventionally the Muslim believes in burying their dead ones by wrapping them in plain white unstitched neat sheets after "*ghusal*". Christian on the other hand clean and dressed the dead in his best clothes in a wooden coffin with a lid and bury them in the churchyard in the presence of priest, family and friends. Hindus used crematorium grounds where they burn the bodies and later put the ashes in the Ganges River. The underlying idea of consigning the ashes to the waters of a sacred river seems that, after getting mixed in the water, the ashes reach the ocean, which, with its motion and violent rise and fall, is a visible sign of life (Rehman, 1996).

The Economic Disparity and Funeral Ritual

The basic reason behind the poverty and economic disparity of Kalash is that, they spend their entire savings, livestock for the feast and offerings just to cast an impression of their bounteousness and to seek gods favor and blessings for the deceased. The funeral ceremony is mysterious, curious and fascinating and is a blend of shrieks and thumping of drums and is attended by the family, friends and villagers. It is customary that the bereaved family announces the total expenditure of the feast to the villagers in order to establish their generosity and their unconditional love and respect for the dead.

A first estimate indicated the participation in the feast of 130 Rukmula, 150 birila, and distribution of 190 kg of butter, 240 kg of strong cheese, over a ton of wheat and 41 slaughtered goats. The feast had to be worthy of the great man (Loude, Lievre: 1988).

Ancestors are worshipped by their descendants after they have satisfactorily made the passage from the realm of the living to the dead. They are removed into the mythological world or time, and, belonging to the prior realm, they exercise an influence on the world of the living (Rehman, 1996).

The Child's Funeral

The funeral of the child in Kalash is considered as a very sad and unfortunate event. The dead body of the child is simply taken to the cemetery and no special prayer or rituals are followed. The family is advised to remain composed, cool, and calm and collected. The feasts are only reserved for the close family and relative. For them, it's a sad affair the child is quietly put in the coffin in the presence of few close relatives without any formalities.

The Woman's Funeral

The funeral ritual for the women is slightly different from the men. Since the female is regarded as impure "*paragata*" and her status is secondary and dependent on the man they belong to. The funeral of an old woman, wife of village elder *Torag Meri* (Robertson) an important figure in the village was a huge affair. The funeral was attended by all the important and close family members. The body is clad in clean clothes and decorated the juniper leaves, cedar leaves. The mourners dress in their usual traditional clothes. They dance

and chant around the deceased for long hours. The sadness of the death is generally manifested by weeping, always orchestrated and organized where women of the community have the task to exhibit sorrow (Harmer 1974). The same pattern is followed nowadays and the proceedings last for three days. In case of the death of a common woman the burial customs are slightly different. Their burials are not accompanied by a pump and show; the dead bodies are kept for two days. The first day is reserved for the villagers of the concerned valley. This time there is no dancing, it's just a simple arrangement without any dancing. The female is washed and cleaned, clad in new traditional clothes with accessories is presented before the villagers and the guest. Before the time of the burial the ornaments were taken off by the maternal uncles and handed over to relatives and close friends. Immediate family, including both daughters and daughter in law is forbidden from keeping the jewelry. It can be assumed that each and every ritual attempts to grant them a special space to exhibit their culture and claim a unique identity. After the feast the family is left alone to mourn till the arrival of any festival or religious feast.

The Man's Funeral

Contemporary Kalash bury their dead and overturn the bed "*sen*" on the grave which they use to carry the deceased to the graveyard. Religious particularities are the main part of the tradition which was allowed as an enrichment of Kalash oral traditions and which was held by those who anxiously tried to keep at least part of the old dignity, power and the traditional identity. A young man of village Burn died from a fall from the tree. This was rather a sudden and unexpected event for the villagers. The villagers of his clan send a message to the relatives of the deceased. The first day of the funeral is specified for the host valley. All the people belonging to Bumburet valley attend the feast and mourn. The deceased is washed and cleaned by the male family members in the absence of the women and place him on a *sen*. The left hand of the dead man is placed on his warrior's bow, and the right hand is dipped in the flour to sustain him during the voyage and in his new existence (Loude:1988).

In summer and pleasant climate they use open air verandah for the ceremony, but in case of winters "*jesti-khan*" the Holy place is utilized. The females of the family undo their hair and occupy the place around the bedpost of the deceased. This is done so that they can be identified. The rest of the females in the village

are in their traditional appearance. As for men folk in the past the immediate family removes their cap, but today men do not wear *chitralli* cap necessarily. It has been observed that only the orthodoxy compulsorily follows the tradition. The rest of the villagers dance and sing on the thumping of the drums.

In the past, a lavish feast was arranged and served by the grieved family to the villagers. Now they have changed this tradition and the feast is arranged through the collaboration of all the relatives. The rest of the village contributes in cooking and distribution of the food. The flour required is distributed amongst the villagers and every household prepared at least 10-12 chapattis. The meat is cooked by the men folk. The second day of the funeral is marked for the guests and visitors and the whole village acts as a host. People from Birrir and Rumbour valley come to pay their respect to the dead. Again a generous feast is prepared and served to the guests. The situation of the close family members remains the same. The people gathered dance and thumped on the beat of the drum and sang traditional songs all day long. In the meanwhile the carpenter prepares the coffin and the selection of wood is dependent on the economic status of the dead man. It was customary in the past that they leave the coffin on the high pastures by placing heavy stones on the top of the lid.



(Photograph:1) An Old Burial Site in Karakal Village, Bumburet.

Few have accused the Muslims of stealing the wood for fire. Now the Kalash bury their dead and the grave is prepared on voluntary basis even Muslims take part in

burial proceeding based on the personal association with the dead. They bury the dead body before noon in graveyard “*Mandoajoa*”. The male members, mostly young men carry the dead body on their shoulders to the burial site. In the graveyard they assemble for “*dua-e- azeem*” a grand prayer for the deceased. Then the maternal uncle places the dead body in the grave and all the villagers cover the grave. In the end they invert the bed “*sen*” “*charapi*” (bedstead) of the deceased in the grave. The bed is left for the dead man’s usage in the other world. The bed is the personal property of the deceased during his lifetime. If a man had not stamped a bed as his personal possession than the *charapi* can be brought back to the house and after purification can be utilized mainly in such instances it is the decision of the close family. This ritual of inverted *charapi* helps the viewers to distinguish the graveyard of the Muslims and the Kalash coexisting beside them.



(Photograph: 2) Kalash grave with an upturned *sen* and red flag in Burn Village Bumburet.

“Myth has it than in former times, a man went hunting in the mountains, but in his pursuit he fell into a pit and was unable to climb out. After several days, it was assumed in the village that he is dead, and the members of his lineage decided to celebrate his funeral. During the ceremonies, they saw crows taking away bits of bread. The crows were in fact stealing the 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 villagers, everyone was overjoyed. He then told them 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" (Loude, 1988).

The females are forbidden to attend or participate with the males in the burial proceedings. In the end they throw pieces of bread and cheese on both the fresh and ancestral graves this is equivalent to "*sadqa*" charity for the dead and is believed that the crows carry off the crumbs to the dead man's soul. There are a few other stories which recount the familiar facts where crows facilitate by supplying the bread crumbs to the people who were assumed dead and that confirmed the custom of putting bits of bread for the crows on a dead man's tomb.

A society's myth has two origins one, the transformation of other myths, endogenous or exogenous, the other, the transformation into myth of data of another kind, both are attested and are accepted by the masses (Goody, 79). The ritual and symbolism of the funeral ceremonies have long attracted the attention of the anthropologists, not because of any "inherently morbid tendencies" (Cohen 1985) in the discipline, but because the social definition of death casts an instructive light on a society's attitudes to the relationship between the individual and society as a whole. These funerary rites are generally an important "sociological index" of the deceased and the mourners. The fundamental basis of Kalash religious ideology is on the basis of mythical stories and oral praises which is transmitted to them by the older generation. There is no written document or testimonial present to claim the legitimation of their lords, customs and their past glory. Levi Strauss says that "the universe of primitives or those claimed to be such consists principally of message" (Cohen 1985). But still the Kalash are practicing their tradition with complete faith and sincerity without any shred of doubt.

Cohen believes that these funerary sites and ritual often tells us of the symbolic construction of the community, it often reveals the fundamental basis, contextual realities and prejudices of the society from which it is drawn from. In many cultures, death, the subsequent mourning and disposal rites have been purely nonprofit affairs undertaken by the members of the family, friends and tribal associates (Harmer, 1974). Finally the Kalash place a red flag on the grave. This

serves as a marker of identification of Kalash grave. The Muslim also buries their dead, but used calligraphic marble slab with the name of the dead as an identity marker to recognize the grave.

Conclusion

The general population of Kalash has figured out how to keep up their personality through their novel and peaceful lifestyle in view of their oral customs, rehearsed through hundreds of years. The study leads towards setting up the way that a society is a real, encompassing, genuine and adaptable space in which a little gathering of people can survive, keep up and propagate their remarkable lifestyle in well-disposed or unfriendly conditions.

Rituals, convictions and practices which depend on religions survive the longest. Rather than antiquated lost human progress, the general population of Kalash symbolizes as the model of congruity inside of their own tribe and with other social gatherings possessing the district. As a result of their selectiveness their neighbors dislike them, but rather they positively endure them, generally this little gathering might have gone to virtual eradication many years prior. Their survival and their distinction are a demonstration of the way that culture is really a cover in which gathering can survive and keep up its personality and propagate.

The real events when identity is insisted on the Kalash individuals are the religious celebrations and the funerals which unite the biggest number of individuals of the three valleys, and regularly from the removed spots. This is the primary setting in which a managed and lavishly textured articulation of Kalash character can be shown. These occasions are of a protracted grouping of exercises proceeding for a few days, including formal invites, dialogs and planning of sustenance, singing and moving. If there should arise an occurrence of funerals the insights with respect to the plan, formal welcome, and authority declaration, readiness of sustenance, the morgue rituals, shutting merriments and formal goodbye took after by internment and after that official grieving. Religion is the real space in setting up the gathering character. Be that as it may, in all actuality wherever there is ethnic purging has been depended on, the objective has been a religious gathering. Religion other than its philosophical ramifications is for the most part used to connote confidence, a specific arrangement of customs to show devotion with a particular personality which is not just identified with the

philosophical considerations and religious convictions yet has an inner voice control of political, social and financial ramifications.

The ethnic identity of the Kalash people has survived the twofold injury of fundamentalism and colonization and at present they are communicating with the modernization and innovative headway which is an immediate danger to their conventional society. This cooperation of nature and human social orders encourage in keeping up assorted qualities and personality at the same time for survival. The Kalash society does not have any social stratification in light of a statement of faith, cast, influence and riches. Learning and shrewdness are maybe the main criteria by which certain people charge more regard than the others. They are unmistakably not the same as individuals around them. They show up as a desert garden in a desert with their satisfying and bright style in the locale.

It is trusted that the idea of defining identity through the culture or religious convictions is a reactionary marvel and individuals adjust it to watch themselves from the abuse and barbarities practiced by the intense oppressor. They look for salvation in being faithful to their religious and social belief system. The Kalash individuals have kept up their hundreds of years old customary society, regardless of the actuality of current globalization, and modernization. Media is attacking their protection, regard and societal standards by presenting new thoughts, and motivations of the young. Though the general population have oppressed to the most recent patterns of globalization and modernization, but on the other hand, are endeavoring to keep pace with their socio-social and religious conventions transmitted to them by their ancestors. As of now the general public is going from the period of move and transculturation because of the effect of modernization, and change, yet at the same time the general population are making a decent attempt to save and keep up their hundreds of years old cultural identity.

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