

“No people are an island -”
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My name is Birgitte Glavind Sperber. I am a Danish Geographer and Biologist with a recent supplementary education in Anthropology. My family and I have been so privileged that the Kalash_ have allowed us to live with them during many stays - my own stays in total almost two years. These stays have enabled me closely to study and follow the development of the Kalasha community and culture during the last twelve years.

In this paper I will try in brief to analyze how the Kalash through history socially as well as culturally actively have responded to different situations and to the impact from outside.

I will discuss whether globalization is only a recent phenomenon or whether the actual term also can be applied to the past?

Emphasizing on the modern situation I will attempt an analysis of the surrounding world's interests in the Kalash.

In this context I will discuss how conflicting views of what "Kalasha culture" actually means lead to different views on development.

Part of the discussion will be based on the following case from among the Kalash:

At our first stay in the Kalasha valleys we easily learned to distinguish Muslim houses from Kalasha houses - the women's dresses of course were striking, It was also obvious, though, that if there were chickens around a house it was not a Kalasha house.

We soon learned the myth explaining, why the Kalasha religion objects to chicken_.

We learned about the Bashali system - a basic element of the religion: Women in the state of menstruation and delivery are most impure and so have to be confined to protect the community from defilement. During Chaomos in 1983 the Bashali women complained to me that they could not take part in the festivities - it was obvious that everybody obeyed the rules.

During the later years I saw chickens gradually being taken into some of the Kalasha households.

I also heard that some of the women began taking the Bashali rules less seriously. During the latest years people worried very much because of a serious disease among the goats which causes problems for the production of milk and cheese.

When I came back this summer there were no chicken in the village.

Washlim Gul said to me:

- In May all the 15 quasis_ from all three valleys gathered. First they went to Birir, then they went to Bomburet, and then they came here to Rumbour. They told the people, that if we didn't stop keeping chickens, it would be the end of the Kalash.

The very same night the fox came and ate all my eight chickens. The men killed it with sticks - you can see the skin hanging there in the veranda.

I blame the Quasis - I could have sold my chickens for 800 Rupees.

Quasi Khrosh Nawaz said to me:

- All we quasis gathered because of the problems with the goats: We realized why, and then we explained to the people:

- The goats are dying because you don't observe the customs: Some families keep chickens. Some women do not go to the Bashali when they have to, and some men pray without wearing a hat!

Now again everybody are following the custom, and soon the goats will be better!

Goats are essential in the Kalasha religion and life and the condition of the goats therefore perceived as a symptom of the state of the community. Were the goats dying due to what Peter Parkes has called "cultural slackness" in his description of a similar incident in 1975? Those days a shaman told the people why and what to do.

Were the religious heads in other words once again stabilizing the customs from the inside?

Can the classical anthropological tradition of analyzing the so called "other" like "islands" in this case be applied to the Kalash, or should the case rather be seen as an active response to the fact that the Kalash are part of a local, a national as well as a global world and have been so through history?

In anthropology tribal societies have been analyzed as isolated units and their entity as a "mosaic of cultures".

Even though systemic views came in with Barth's classical analysis of ecological interactions between groups in Swat - "traditional" societies like the Kalash have also often been ascribed a static culture and static time i.e. being "without history".

Has the Kalasha culture ever been static?

Historic-economic factors were taken into consideration, when the world system analysts incorporated individual communities into a global entity, but there were still problems when accounting for "culture".

Most recently the consequences of the present global flux of information, values, people and cultural elements of all kinds have been included into the world system analysis.

The possible consequences of the so-called "Globalization" are subject to a current debate in anthropology:

- Will globalization lead to uniformization: In other words will in due time everybody in "The Global Village" be wearing blue jeans, while watching global TV on their Sony and drinking Coke?

- Is something new created when people living in "The global ecumene" are exposed to the elements of the global flux, making choices and incorporating elements - often in a new way, giving them new significance - "Creolization"?

- Or - using the nationalism-ethnicity-discourse - does exposition to globalization, contact with other values, lead to a greater awareness of one's own values leading to establishment of cultural or ethnic boundaries?

These questions, I think, can never be answered categorically in any area. They can just serve as analytical tools.

History is positional - i.e. the past is often reshaped into a version which fits the needs of the present_ - also sometimes the needs of outsiders.

This is possible in particular when the past is scarcely documented.

Where the Kalash initially came from will probably forever be veiled in mists_.

Did the Kalash, as their oral tradition tells, come from "Tsiam" - their mythical ancestral country said to be near Yarkhan, where people nowadays look and speak so totally differently, since the area came under Chinese domination?

Does this fit into the linguistic theories_ about Aryan migrations from Central Asia with the Dardic speakers as an ancient side branch?

Did the Kalash, as their oral tradition also tells_, descend from Alexander the Great's brave general Shalak Shah from Tsiam, whom Alexander gave the Chitral valley as a reward?

This myth at least is essential for the romantic image promoted by the tourist industry: The fair skinned often blond and blue eyed people living a pagan Dionysian life in a country flowing with wine and honey.

Promotion of this myth may be responsible for the strong attraction the valleys exerts on tourists from other parts of the country.

This version of the past might also be the reason why Greek scholars and developers are attracted to the valleys - it seems to be part of the "search for roots" that for many people is a response to modernity.

Do the Kalash have linguistic ties to the old Palestine as suggested by a linguist at the former conference in Chitral? Or is this just another "search for roots" theory - maybe meant to legitimize the conversion Christian missionaries want so badly?

The origin of the Kalash may be discussed forever.

Far less a matter of discussion seems to be that once (probably around year 1500_) the Kalash were dominant in the entire region: The Kalasha oral tradition mentions eight great Kalasha kings - the last one was Rajawai in Bomburet who even fought victoriously in Nuristan. Local people often find remnants of buildings revealing the past way of life. Scientific studies of languages and other cultural traits give the evidence_.

After this period of domination, the Kalash gradually became subject to what might be termed a first wave of "globalization" in terms of a "global" flux of information, values, people and cultural elements: Islam spread from its center of origin gaining a foothold over most of the old world prior to the age of European renaissance and discoveries_.

Unlike the globalization processes of today, though, this spread lasted for centuries, as the speed of spread those days was determined by feet and not by electrons.

According to the Kalasha oral tradition Islam in the Chitral region at first seems to have been annexed by kings who then converted their subordinates more or less forcibly. The most persistent of the Kalash took refuge from conversion in the less accessible side valleys like for example Rumbour.

As a result, Muslims became dominant in Chitral and the formerly dominant Kalash became marginalized - subjugated people bound to pay tributes and corvée labour_ to the Mehtars, economically exploited by the tricks of their eastern neighbours _ and subject to frequent robbery raids from their western neighbours on the other side of the snowy peaks.

I have often wondered how this little group of people was able to survive culturally under such strong pressure from outside.

I have wondered why the social structure of the Kalash changed from what the Cacopardos_ termed a "Father society" (hierarchy during the kingdom period) into a "Brother society" (egalitarian, or rather with several competing leaders).

I have also been wondering why purification rites are so crucial in the Kalasha religious system and practices.

Mary Douglas gives a kind of explanation in her analysis of "Enclave cultures"_ which Peter Parkes was the first to use in a Kalasha context_ :

Small groups surrounded by strong enemies tend to make strategies which aim towards preventing defection and keeping the group as a unity. It is done through religious systems preoccupied with inner purity in regards to the surroundings and maintaining the world order by means of purification and comprehensive rites. A social demarcation vis ^ vis the surroundings, that are strong due to hierarchical social systems, makes the enclave egalitarian, which also means a constant preoccupation with rivalry and factionalism.

This summer the Kalasha historical and cultural expert Khrosh Nawaz explained to me that the basic onjesta/pragata-dualism in the religion has been there from the very beginning. This seems plausible, as it is a very ancient way of structuralizing the world in pure/impure-, we/them- and Cosmos/Chaos-dualities.

Khrosh Nawaz also said that after the Kalash settled in Rumbour (and thus became an enclave due to marginalization), the purification rites increased mainly ordered by the great shaman Naga Dehar - a confirmation of parts of Douglas' theory.

Consequently the religious and social systems of the Kalash seem to be their active strategic responses to change due to impact from outside.

The next exposure to "globalization" came in the last centuries when the British expanded their territories, people, ideologies and systems which had an enduring impact everywhere. In this region a visual remnant from the colonial period is the bagpipes and tartans of the Chitrali Scouts (an example of Creolization).

To the Kalash and other people in the region the daily contact with the administrative, educational and legal systems of British origin is a result of this process.

Crucial to the existence of the Kalash became the British Durand Line which made the Kalasha valleys part of the Raj and so part of today's Pakistan. This prevented the Kalash from being forcibly converted like the Afghan parts of Kafirstan. It was in the British period, though, the Kalash had to accept that land in the upper parts of the Kalash valleys was given to refugees from Nuristan.

From about 1800 Nationalism emerged as an ideology in Europe and spread with the colonial powers and the local educated elites like a global wave which still has a deep impact on the world of today_.

After the formation of Pakistan in 1947 this new state entered a stage of nationbuilding: Since then it has been a goal for the national government to forge into a unit the multitude of ethnic and religious groups as well as the multitude of environments in the country.

The Father of the Nation Qaid-i-Azam, the National Constitution_, the flag and the national anthem are examples of national symbols of unity.

The tools for linking the territories are roads, domestic flights, the administrative and legal systems, the police and the army.

The tool for joining the people is the creation of a national identity - directly through the educational system and the national mass media - both promoting Urdu as a common language.

The Kalash respond differently to education:

Carriers of the religious and oral tradition worry that education may lead to loss of the spiritual purity which is needed for keeping contact with the divine. Thus Quasi Pali Azam explained to me: "If people fill up their brains with books they loose their capacity for dream-seeing!" Other people have told me that they want to keep some of the sons out of school as shepherds. This might be interpreted pragmatically, but also as a perceived need of pure minds for guarding the pure goats that are so essential in the Kalasha religion.

Most people, though, appreciate that education has come.

They consider it an expansion of possibilities - for income and in particular for influencing the community and its relations with the surrounding world by means of new insight and language skills.

Education means contact - not only with knowledge but also with values.

Deeply rooted in the Kalasha tradition is that honour first of all is acquired through giving and sharing. Education may lead to change of values from communal concern into a preoccupation with personal gain - which leads to less respect inside the community.

A few individuals even use "traditional attitudes" as a pretext above their changed values while charming contracts from donors from the outside.

In 1947 the Kalash became citizens in a nation state. Nationbuilding has facilitated the intrusion of influence and change from outside.

The most direct impact on the Kalash has been the road construction.

In general roads have been accepted positively along with the acceptance of hospitals and other services outside the valleys.

Among the Kalash, though, there is a great awareness and concern about the fact that the state also has big economic interests in the valleys which are facilitated by the roads:

First of all the extraction of resources - timber for the less forested areas, but also mineral prospecting is going on. The Kalash want their legal share of the incomes from the resources and first of all direct influence on what and how much should be extracted from

the valleys. The Kalash perceive this as a pressure from outside and have responded strategically with unity - even with the Muslim inhabitants in the valleys.

Roads also facilitate tourism, which can be considered part of the modern globalization processes: Tourism is a result of globalization when "globalized" people search for "originality" and want to see, what the global mass media tell about.

At the same time tourism is a major globalizing force, as it means contact and exchange between people.

Tourism on a big scale has to be controlled as it has the potential to destroy its objects.

The Kalash are a major tourist object and so of great economic interest for the public and private tourist industry. This is mainly outside Kalasha ownership and control, which of course leads to concern and frustration among the Kalash - not unanimously, but dependent on how much individuals are feeling harassed by or are living from the tourists.

Tourism may be destructive but on the other hand it may also be a culture saving factor in encouraging cultural pride. This is obviously growing among the Kalash - however mainly due to activities of their own leaders.

The Kalasha culture has always responded to and evolved along with the surrounding world. To some tourist interests saving the culture means freezing it into a museum of the living past:

I have heard influential people complaining that the Kalasha no longer wear hide straps around their feet but have got shoes. Twelve years ago actually most of the women walked bare-footed in the snow - - I have also heard people complaining that stoves and electricity are replacing the romantic open fireplaces in the houses.

For the Kalasha women these innovations actually mean less eye diseases due to smoke and for example a greater possibility of keeping the houses clean.

When outsiders complain and the Kalash do not, even though they are very concerned about keeping their own culture alive, it is because of different perceptions of what "Kalasha culture" actually is.

When asked what "Kalasha culture" is, a Kalash may reply "Homa Dastur!" - "our tradition"- in brief mainly words and ways, determined by the Kalasha religion.

This is not what matters to tourists:

Most tourists come to see the "culture" and catch it with their camera - an extra "eye". Thus tourist interests emphasize the spectacular - the big communal rites and the material culture - dresses, houses and technology - therefore the complaints about material changes.

The communal rites are religious manifestations sustaining the world and the unity of the community.

If some day these rites become reified as tourist objects (like now the dancing has been taken out of the religious context and is done for money) the basic functions of the rites might vanish along with the unity and the world they maintain - -

An increasing dependence on tourist incomes influences the material culture - the women's dresses in particular: Once the women become extra picturesque, the incomes increase, and once the incomes increase, money is used for extra decorations of the women - -

The Kalasha women are very aware of their role as cultural symbols. This fact increases their pride but may also keep them "traditional", which later on might become an undesired strait-jacket - -

Tourism means increased contact - also with other values, sometimes causing frustrations. Contact with western women for example may mean contact with feminist ideas, which may cause the Kalasha women to change their frame of reference:

In 1990 a woman proudly said: "We Kalasha women are very free: We can go to Birir and Bomburet, whereas the Muslim women have to wear the veil and stay in their houses." - This summer she was very frustrated that her husband would not allow her to travel outside the valleys with foreign friends. Now she feels trapped between modernity and tradition, whereas her husband due to his outside contacts needs to take into consideration the norms of the surrounding world, where a local woman travelling freely around will be subject to a great disrespect - -

It is no longer tourists alone who perceive capacity for travel as a symbol of freedom.

Democracy as an ideology can be considered part of globalization and has become a symbol of modernity. Sometimes democracy emerges due to pressures from below, sometimes from above - frequently even from outside as a precondition for aid or political support on the global arena.

Part of democracy is parties and debate. To the Kalash this has become synonymous with politicians and conflicts: The quest for seats done by outside politicians means an often aggressive quest for votes which again has caused a deep disruption of the unity of the Kalasha community.

As the national elites and decisionmakers to a very high degree are turned outwards, they also use the global "Development ideology" as a tool in the nationbuilding process - this is often done uncritically:

Development introduced from outside always means change.

"The developed", though, do not always perceive development defined by outsiders as improved conditions of life - : People may lose influence on their own situation and perhaps also their "roots"during the development process and are at risk of reaching a "point of no return" - -

Above I have given examples of globalizing elements and forces - all apparently homogenizing the cultures of the world, some of them disrupting the unity of small communities.

Are the Kalash heading towards a point of no return - is the Kalasha culture and community maybe at the edge of an abyss?

That of course depends on factors in the outside world as well as on the inside:

The government should have an interest in sustaining and not destroying the potential of tourist incomes: This demands attentive control of and influence on the tourist enterprises delegated to the Kalasha community. It also means education of the visitors - from this country too.

Sustaining this economic potential should also be taken literally in the sense of sustaining resources - land, wood, pasture land - a strong economic argument in favour of the Kalasha struggle for their resources.

Some people might think that sustaining the Kalasha culture means that the valleys rather should be kept as a game reserve for researchers and maybe heavily paying tourists to enjoy?

Saifullah Jan has said to me "Man has been to the moon, then why should we be kept in darkness?" Of course the Kalash do not want to be kept like wild animals.

They know about the outside world. They may not want to go to the moon, but they want development on their own conditions.

Development of course means change, which has always occurred. Maybe the outside world should listen to how the Kalash define their own culture ("our tradition"), and forget worrying about material changes:

"When the kerosene lamp replaced the torches, did it then destroy our culture? So why should electricity?" (Saifullah Jan)

Now back to the initial questions about the consequences of Globalization:

Is it a threat to the Kalasha community and culture?

Globalization means contacts between values and ideas, but not necessarily amalgamation: In many places contact has led to greater awareness of one's own values, and even to a strengthening of these, like for instance when young daughters of Muslim immigrants to the West put on the veil. In the globalized world of today ethnic consciousness is increasing, and "ethnic boundaries" frequently drawn anew.

This is, what happened in the case in the beginning of this paper:

Like most of the Kalash the religious heads are concerned about the tradition, which is what keeps the people united above political factionalism and daily petty conflicts - the communal rites like festivals and funerals in particular serve as uniting forces and should not be reified into tourist objects.

Chickens to be sold to tourists for money, as well as new ideas, like that going to Bashali is oppression of the women, was obviously interpreted as harmful intrusions from outside which might lead to a gradual cultural decay. The goats are fine indicators and gave the evidence that something was wrong. The quasis gave their advice, and apparently everybody obeyed. They did so, as in the Kalasha religion the individuals share the responsibility for the entire community, because individual religious offence may lead to communal disaster.

So beside the basic resources, the religious tradition is imperative for the survival of the Kalasha community.

At present the Kalash know this very well, they even strengthen the tradition from inside - a kind of ethnic boundary making - as shown in the example. Through their outward activities and also internally through their culture the Kalash respond actively to the impact from the outside world as they have always done. The Kalash are not victims of globalization, but active actors on the national and global stage.

"What is going to happen in a hundred years we don't know, but then we are all dead anyway!"

(Saifullah Jan 1994)

Birgitte Glavind Sperber
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Notes:

_ I have asked Saifullah Jan whether to say Kalash or Kalasha. He said, that the name is Kalash, but when used as an adjective it should be Kalasha.

_ Once, when all the people in Chitral were Kalash, there was no place for Mahandeo in Jumur. There was a woman shaman. She was the daughter of Shai, and her name was Mali. She ordered the people in Jumur to level a flat place. When they had done so, she asked them to bring a pot of milk, a pot of wine, a pot of ghee and seven handful of wheat to the place. When they had done this and everybody were gathered there, she entered in a trance - she walked around on the flat place, they had made - and suddenly a carved piece of wood appeared upon her head. It just came down from the sky. Then she said:

- This place is Mahandeo. He has come here now; but in three years a new living thing is going to appear on this place. After that the Muslims will come - the new thing is going to bring Islam here. After having said so, the woman shaman died, and they buried her. After this incident people were anxious to see which new thing was going to appear - they did not know what Islam was.

After the three years a chicken appeared, and after that the Muslims arrived, and the people of Jumur began to pray like them and became Muslims.

That is why we Kalash do not want to keep the chicken (Khrosh Nawaz 1983)

_ The religious expert of a Kalasha village.

_ Parkes 1990

_ The "Mosaic Stereotype", R. Keesing 1975: 111

_ Barth 1956

_ Fabian 1983

_ Wolf 1982

_ In my paper from the Hindukush Conference in 1990 I documented how the traditional is not at all static with the Kalasha dresses, beads etc. as examples.

_ Amin 1976 Wallerstein 1990, Giddens 1985 et al.

_ In this context I abstain from defining "culture"

_ Appadurai 1990, Friedman 1992 & 1993, Hannerz 1987 & 1992, Foster 1991, Giddens 1990, Lash & Urry 1993

_ The expression was invented by Mac Luhan

_ Foster 1991, Hannerz 1992

_ Hannerz 1989

_ Barth 1971

_ Hobsbawm 1983

_ For discussions see for example Loude & Livre 1984

_ Morgenstierne 1973, Bashir 1988

_ Saifullah Jan 1990

_ See for example Parkes 1994

_ Augusto and Alberto Cacopardo are working on these subjects.

_ Ahmed 1993

_ Parkes 1994, Baig 1994

_ Baig 1994

_ at the Conference for Kalasha Researchers held in Aarhus, Denmark in April 1993.

_ Mary Douglas 1993, which Peter Parkes kindly borrowed to me: Based on the period the ancient Jews spent "In the wilderness" (described in "The Book of Numbers" in the Bible) Douglas makes a general theory about which strategies small enclave groups surrounded by strong forces will chose to survive.

_ Parkes 1994

_ Smith 1989, Hylland Eriksen 1989, Anderson 1991, Foster 1991, Arnason 1993, Bourdieu 1992

_ Although Islam was the reason for the formation of Pakistan, the non-Islamic minorities of the country (for example the Kalash) have the constitutional rights to practice their beliefs.

_ The roads may even be there more because of the tourists than because of the local people: If the road to the major tourist target Bomburet breaks due to a flood, it is

repaired in a few days. When the road to Rumbour broke in 1991, the repair lasted three years - -

_ Urry 1988, Mac Donald 1993

_ In the film "Kalasha Rites of Spring" by Peter Parkes

_ Sperber 1993

_ According to the former DC of Chitral in the film "Kalasha Rites of Spring" by Peter Parkes

_ Sperber 1992 & 1995

_ Eidheim 1971

_ Barth 1971, Hylland Eriksen 1989 for a general survey on the ethnicity discussion.

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