

Texts from the Winter Feasts of the Kalasha of Birir

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Abstract

The author presents a collection of texts recorded in 2006–07 during the winter ritual cycle of the Kalasha of the Birir valley – in North-West Pakistan – who still practice an archaic form of polytheism with pre-Vedic roots. The fulcrum of the cycle is the Chaumos Winter Solstice Festival, but a number of other festivities follow it at intervals forming a sequence almost two months long, lasting until February. The selection includes texts of songs, chants or prayers from each of these festivities. To allow the reader to relate them to the context in which they were recorded, the texts are accompanied by explanatory ethnographic notes. An introduction sketches the broader scene in which the research was carried out. The texts are in the Birir dialect of Kalashamon, the language of the Kalasha, a North-West-Indo-Aryan, or Dardic, language.

Keywords: Hindu Kush, Kafir, Kalasha, language, Pakistan, polytheism, religion, texts, New Year festival.

The objective of this article is to present a number of texts recorded by the author between December 2006 and early February 2007, during the winter ritual cycle of the Kalasha community of Birir, which

culminates in the Chaumos Winter Solstice Festival. The Kalasha are a small minority group that lives in three valleys – Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir – located in the south of the district of Chitral, in the North-West-Frontier-Province of Pakistan. Numbering only a few thousands, they speak an Indo-Aryan language of the North-West-Indo-Aryan (Dardic) (Bashir 2003) group called Kalashamon (Morgenstierne 1973; Bashir 1988; Trail & Cooper 1999; Heegård 2006; Di Carlo 2009), and they are the last polytheists of the Hindu Kush¹. Their religion is the last example of a multifarious constellation of archaic polytheisms that still at the beginning of the nineteenth century were widely practiced throughout the Hindu Kush/Karakorum chain, from present-day Afghan Nuristan to western Ladakh. In the two following centuries the advance of Islam, that had made inroads in the area since the sixteenth century, gradually brought about the conversion of these communities of mountaineers² with the sole exception of the three Kalasha communities who, though partially converted, still practice their traditional religion to this day.

The religion of the Kalasha has long attracted the attention of scholars not only because it is the only surviving shred of the pre-Islamic cultural fabric of the Hindu Kush, but also because it is the only living example of what we may call a “tribal” Indo-European religion, that is a religious system practiced by speakers of an Indo-European language, which has not been absorbed by any one of the great historic systems, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam. Its roots hark back to pre-Vedic times. Morphologically it is a form of polytheism based on a pastoral ideology revolving around a pure/impure (*'onjiSTa/pr'agata*) polarity that attaches positive values, such as solidarity and harmony with wild nature, to the male sphere of goat-herding, as opposed to the female sphere of agriculture where

1 Recently converted Kalasha communities where Kalashamon is still spoken are found also in the two southern valleys of Jinjeret Kuh (Cacopardo & Cacopardo 1992, 1996) and Urtsun (Cacopardo, A. S. 1991, 1996; Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001: 261–277). Earlier converts, living in various settlements around Drosh and in the Shishi Kuh valley, have abandoned Kalashamon for Khowar (the majority language of Chitral), opting for a radical change of identity (Cacopardo A.M. 1991, 1996; Decker 1992: 96–114; Mørch 2000).

2 For a detailed presentation of the relevant sources see Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001: 25–44.

individual interests and control over nature prevail. Its practice consists essentially in the celebration of the rites composing their complex ritual system. It is an orthopraxic rather than an orthodoxic religion (Bell 1997: 191–197); founded, that is, on the respect of a code of behaviour – mainly ritual – rather than on the adherence to a system of beliefs.³

As focus of the rich ritual cycle, the yearly festivals have been studied from the very beginning of ethnographic research among the Kalasha. Of these, the Joshy (*zh'oshi*) spring festival and the Chaumos (*caum'os*) winter solstice festival are the most important.⁴ The former was documented by Morgenstierne already in 1929 and then by Schomberg and Siiger in 1935 and 1947 respectively, in Rumbur, and by Loude in 1978 in Bumburet (Schomberg 1938; Morgenstierne 1947; Siiger 1956: 24–26; Loude 1980: 79–90), while the latter was observed for the first time only in 1955 by the German ethnographers Adolf Friedrich and Peter Snoy in the Bumburet valley. The data on Chaumos remained however unavailable to scholars for twenty more years, until they were finally published (but only in German) by Karl Jettmar (1975) in his main work on the pre-Islamic religions of the Hindu Kush. Subsequently, no other researcher participated in a Kalasha winter solstice festival until 1973 when the present author took part in the Chaumos of the Rumbur valley together with Alberto Cacopardo and Manuela Borriello, and the Austrian Karl Wutt participated in the winter festival of Bumburet. The publication of this new data however was also delayed. It appeared only in the '80s (Wutt 1983; Cacopardo, A. S. 1985; Cacopardo & Cacopardo 1989), when a complete book focussed largely on the Rumbur Chaumos also appeared, authored by the French ethnographers Jean-Yves Loude and Viviane Lièvre (1984) who had begun their fieldwork among the Kalasha in the late '70s. Lastly, a full account of his (and Friedrich's) 1955 observations in Bumburet has recently been published in English

3 For descriptions of Kalasha religion see Jettmar 1975; Witzel 2004; Cacopardo A.S. 2010.

4 Other important cyclic celebrations are the Uchaw late summer festival, especially in Rumbur (Loude & Lièvre 1987: 193–203) and Bumburet, and the Prun autumn festival in Birir (Staley 1964, 1982: 71–75; Lines 1988: 224–232; Loude & Lièvre 1987: 204–219; Lièvre & Loude 1991; Di Carlo 2007).

in the form of a long essay by Peter Snoy (2008). Thanks to these works we may say that the Chaumos of the two northern valleys is by now fairly well documented.

In contrast, no data at all was available on the winter festival of the southern valley of Birir, until the present author conducted his research there in the winter of 2006–07. The internal cultural variety of the Kalasha had been rather overlooked. Though it had long been quite clear that the southern valley of Birir presented many cultural peculiarities, no thorough study had been conducted of that community until 2006, so that its ritual system was largely unstudied and its main festivals still mostly undocumented. The investigation carried out on the Birir Chaumos showed that the peculiarities are quite remarkable, and that they concern not only single traits but, to some extent, the structure itself of the festival.

Both in Bumburet/Rumbur and in Birir, Chaumos is an extremely complex festival lasting many days and followed by other ritual events composing a sequence that continues well into January. An article on the Birir Chaumos, that includes a comparison with the festival of Bumburet/Rumbur, has already been published by the present author on this same journal (Cacopardo, A. S. 2008).⁵ Since, however, only three texts could be included in that article for reasons of space, this second work has the specific purpose of making available to scholars – both anthropologists and linguists – a larger part of the corpus of prayers, songs, and invocations, that were recorded during the festival.

For all general aspects and for an overall description/interpretation of the festival, I refer therefore the reader to my previous work, but to allow him to relate, here, the texts to the events in which they were generated, I offer a concise ethnographic comment and analysis of each text, as well as an outline of the whole winter ritual sequence where the main ritual activities are indicated for each day (see Appendix). Apart from making the texts more intelligible, these comments will also give me the opportunity to present some

5 A detailed description and analysis of the Birir Chaumos is now available in Italian (Cacopardo A. S. 2010).

ethnographic data – especially about the January festivities following Chaumos – which could not be included in my former article.⁶

The Texts

The texts presented here are only a small part of those recorded, which amount to 28 hours and 29 minutes. A first transcription and rough translation of a part of the materials recorded was done in the field, with the help of a young Kalasha teacher, by the name of Baras Khan, who had a fair command of English, and of some other non-English-speaking middle-aged informants – Danok, Erfan (also known as Turap Khan) and Gulistan (also known as Nur Bek) – who were more knowledgeable as to the content of the texts.⁷ The parsing and final interlinear translations were done in Italy with the support of the software *Toolbox for linguists*.⁸ I present here 17 texts. The majority are chants and songs, but there are also three recited prayers (texts nos. 2, 16, 17), two chanted prayers (texts nos. 10, 12) and one text of ritual insults (text no. 1).

As for the songs, in the Birir Chaumos we can distinguish two categories of songs/dances. There are songs/dances which are heard at all yearly festivals and at social celebrations – like funerals and merit feasts – as well, and there are songs and chants sung only for the winter festival. The first category consists of three genres of verbal art, *ca~*, *d'ushak* and *drazha'ilak*.⁹ Of these, I have included only one

6 Linguists will forgive me if I do not offer linguistic comments, but I hope they will find the texts useful as new materials for the study of the still little known dialect of Birir, and of Kalasha ritual language in general.

7 Several other people, too many to list, offered me assistance and warm hospitality. To all I express my gratitude.

8 I want to thank here Pierpaolo Di Carlo, who participated in the Birir project as an ethnolinguist documenting the autumn Prun festival (Di Carlo 2007), for preparing the software and, in general, for his precious support in linguistic matters (only mine of course the responsibility for any faults). The project was part of a research mission funded, partially, by the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (Is.I.A.O.) of Rome, and by the University of Florence. A third member of the team was Alberto M. Cacopardo, who conducted ethnohistorical research in Upper Chitral, Swat, Dir and the Bashgal valley.

9 For a detailed description of the three genres see Parkes 1994, 1996; Di Carlo 2007: 63–76, 89–97; Cacopardo A. S. 2010: 160–178. One of the main

example – a *ca~* – in the selection presented here. The other ten songs in the selection all belong to the second category, which includes songs that appear to stem from the female world, and were sung almost exclusively by the women. I have chosen to present mostly texts of women's songs because they are the ones more specific to Chaumos and are directly connected to the rituals. They may be quite ancient because they were qualified as *b'aLuSa ghO~*, 'old songs', and their lyrics appeared to be common knowledge.

In reading the texts, I advise the reader to note that the first two lines (both in Kalashamon and therefore in bold italics) are, respectively, the text and the morpheme break; the third and the fourth, the English glosses and the free translation. When a verse takes two lines, the sequence, save for the free translation, is doubled. For transcriptions and abbreviations see the note at the end of the article.

Text no. 1

The ritual insults transcribed below, were recorded on the evening of the third day of Chaumos called *goST-s'araz* (December 16th, 2006), during a torchlight procession from the surrounding hamlets to the temple of the village of Guru.

<i>g'uruh'O~Ri</i>		<i>zh'awi</i>	
<i>g'uru</i>	<i>h'O~Ri</i>	<i>zh'aw</i>	<i>-i</i>
Guru.village	inhabitants	fuck	-IMPV.2S
<u>people of Guru, fuck you!</u>			

<i>o</i>	<i>zh'awi</i>	
<i>o</i>	<i>zh'aw</i>	<i>-i</i>
oh	fuck	-IMPV.2S

differences between the Chaumos of Birir and that of the two northern valleys is that only Chaumos songs and dances are allowed there, while the ordinary songs/dances of the other celebrations are banned, together with the beating of drums that invariably accompanies them.

g'uruh'O~Ri *zh'awi*
g'uru *h'O~Ri* *zh'aw* *-i*
 Guru.village inhabitants fuck -IMPV.2S
people of Guru, fuck you!

bar'u *nom'aa*
bar'u *nom* *-a* *-a*
 loud.noise name -IMPV.2P -RTM
let's cry out loud!

a *zh'awi*
a *zh'aw* *-i*
 ah fuck -IMPV.2S

baSalit'ada *moc* *zh'awi*
baSalit'ada *moc* *zh'aw* *-i*
 Bashalitada man fuck -IMPV.2S
people of Bashalitada, fuck you!

pr'enawaw *zh'awi*
pr'enaw *-iaw* *zh'aw* *-i*
 from.downstream -ADJ fuck -IMPV.2S
down-valley people, fuck you!

In its last part, the procession took the form of an assault on the temple with the crowd rushing up the hill, whistling and yelling. The insults were cried out mainly (though not exclusively) by the young virgin boys (*'onjiSt'a s'uda*) and by the initiates; i.e. the 'pure' ones were insulting the adults, considered 'impure' because of their sexual contact with women. The insults were at times addressed also to individuals, and especially to respected ones. In a society, like that of the Kalasha, in which the hierarchical principle, apart from gender relations, applies only to the relations between the young and the elder, these insults represent a reversal of roles that is quite typical of New Year celebrations. Such reversals have been seen as a ritual of separation (Van Gennep 1981: 98), in which ordinary social ties are modified and sometimes even severed. On this very day indeed the boys who are to be initiated begin to form a separate group that will

isolate itself from the village community, together with those who are already initiated but are still virgin (*'onjiSTa s'uda*).

Text no. 2

As the torchlight procession streamed at a fast pace into the temple, a group of women, gathered under the porch, greeted the assailants with this chant:

<i>t'ai</i>	<i>Lucapat'a</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>sh'aio</i>	
<i>t'ai</i>	<i>Lucapat'a</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>sh'ai</i>	<i>-o</i>
2S.GEN	lighting.up	-RTM	REFRAIN	-RTM

your light of many torches, shaiooo

<i>b'ira</i>	<i>m'ari</i>		<i>Dh'ou</i>	<i>sh'aio</i>	
<i>b'ira</i>	<i>mar</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>Dh'ou</i>	<i>sh'ai</i>	<i>-o</i>
he.goat	sacrifice	-PRF.P.	heaping	REFRAIN	-RTM

the sacrifice of many he-goats, shahiooo

<i>r'oZHas</i>		<i>th'ara</i>	<i>r'Ozho</i>		<i>sh'aio</i>
<i>roZH</i>	<i>-as</i>	<i>thar</i>	<i>roZH</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>sh'ai</i> <i>-o</i>
blessing	-OBL	on	blessing	-RTM	REFRAIN -RTM

blessings upon blessings, shaiooo

<i>sh'aio</i>		<i>t'ai</i>	<i>Lucapat'a</i>	<i>sh'aio</i>	
<i>sh'ai</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>t'ai</i>	<i>Lucapat'a</i>	<i>sh'ai</i>	<i>-o</i>
REFRAIN	-RTM	2S.GEN	lighting.up	REFRAIN	-RTM

shaiooo, your light of many torches

<i>sh'ia</i>		<i>se</i>	<i>caum'os</i>	<i>dewasam'E~a</i>
<i>sh-</i>	<i>'ia</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>caum'os</i>	<i>dewasam'E~a</i>
INT-	PROX.S.NOM	REM.S.NOM	Chaumos	celebration

this is the Chaumos celebration

With a slow, drawn out, melody sung in unison, the chant was hailing the arrival of the central part of the festival with the torchlight processions, the goat sacrifices, and the many blessings that the rites would bring. The term *dewasam'E~a* in the last verse – which my assistant translated as ‘celebration’ – is applied only to Chaumos and it implies, I was told, the idea of a descent of a god, a central theme of

the winter solstice festival, as we shall see in the song that follows. A possible etymology of this term could be *d'ewa* (god) - *sam'E* < *samana*,¹⁰ meeting, reunion: the meeting with the god.

Only women were chanting and no man joined in. I could not obtain any comment on the meaning of the refrain, which is possibly mere harmonizing sound without a referent.

Text no. 3

When the processions reached the temple greeted by the chant of the women gathered under the porch, inside the building the drums were beating and the dancing had already begun. The text transcribed here is only one of the many – the singing and dancing went on until 3 a.m. – that were recorded that night. It is a *ca~*, a genre that is considered to be a dance (*nat*) rather than a song (*ghO~*). The rhythm is fast and joyful and the dancing prevails indeed over the singing. Of the three genres featured in all Kalasha celebrations, *ca~* is the one that usually expresses the core theme of the event (Di Carlo 2007: 76).

<i>tu</i>		<i>ta</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>caum'os</i>	<i>dewasam'E~a</i>
<i>tu</i>		<i>ta</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>caum'os</i>	<i>dewasam'E~a</i>
2S.NOM		TOP	O	Chaumos	celebration
<i>du</i>	<i>bas</i>	<i>ajh'ona</i>	<i>uchund'a</i>		
<i>du</i>	<i>bas</i>	<i>ajh'ona</i>	<i>uchund</i>	<i>-a</i>	
two	day	guest	descend	-PST.A.2S	

O Chaumos celebration for two days (now) you have been our guest

<i>m'ai</i>	<i>t'asa</i>	<i>tsh'atak</i>	<i>jur'uka</i> ¹¹	
<i>m'ai</i>	<i>t'asa</i>	<i>tsh'atak</i>	<i>jur'uk</i>	<i>-a</i>
1S.GEN	REM.S.GEN	young	dear.little.girl	-GEN.S.

10 Though this proposal is not quite in line with the existing reconstructions of the formation of retroflex vowels in Kalashamon – following the loss of an intervocalic retroflex consonant (Heegård J. and I. E. Mørch 2004; Di Carlo 2010) – it seems nevertheless likely.

11 According to Trail and Cooper (1999: 143) this term, which has an endearing connotation, is used by people other than the parents and those who can address the girl as *chu*, daughter.

*Sumber'osh**Sumber'osh*

first.celebration

my little girl will be initiated

<i>m'ai</i>	<i>shay'a</i>	<i>Dandiagr'om</i>	<i>s'uda</i>	<i>tamash'a</i>
<i>m'ai</i>	<i>sh-</i>	<i>ay'a</i>	<i>Dandiagr'om</i>	<i>s'uda</i>
1S.GEN	INT-	here	Guru.(old.name)	child
entertainment				

it will be a feast for the children of my village of Guru

<i>dewasam'E~a</i>	<i>h'awale</i>		
<i>dewasam'E~a</i>	<i>h'aw</i>	<i>-aw</i>	<i>-e</i>
celebration	become.PST.A	-PST.A.3S	-RTM
<i>m'ai</i>	<i>neas'alak</i>	<i>h'iu</i>	
<i>m'ai</i>	<i>neas'alak</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>-u</i>
1S.GEN	regret	become	-P/F.3S

when the celebration will be over I shall be sorry

<i>d'ewa</i>	<i>'ilo</i>		<i>biramar'at</i>
<i>d'ewa</i>	<i>'iu</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>b'ira</i>
god	come.P/F.3S	-RTM	he.goat
			-sacrifice

k'ariuo

<i>kar</i>	<i>-iu</i>	<i>-o</i>
make	-P/F.3S	-RTM

the god is coming, many he-goats will be sacrificed

<i>d'ewa</i>	<i>'ilo</i>	<i>sh'ala</i>		<i>jur'uka</i>	
<i>d'ewa</i>	<i>'iu</i>	<i>sh</i>	<i>-ala</i>	<i>jur'uk</i>	<i>-a</i>
god	come.P/F.3S	INT	-DIST.ACC	dear.little.girl	-GEN

Sumber'osh

<i>Sumber'osh</i>	<i>band'alo</i>	
<i>Sumber'osh</i>	<i>band</i>	<i>-au</i>
first.celebration	announce	-P/F.3S

the god is coming; he announces the initiation of those dear little girls

<i>d'ewa</i>	<i>'ilo</i>		<i>sh'asa</i>		<i>L'ui</i>	<i>thum</i>
<i>d'ewa</i>	<i>'iu</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>sh-</i>	<i>'asa</i>	<i>L'ui</i>	<i>thum</i>
god	come.P/F.3S	-RTM	INT-	DIST.S.NOM	blood	smoke

zhe s'aras thum

zhe s'aras thum

and juniper smoke

the god is coming, the scent of blood and of juniper (will rise as smoke from the sacrificial fires)

d'ewa 'ilo

sh'asa

s'aras

d'ewa 'iu

-o

sh-

'asa

s'aras

god come.P/F.3S

-RTM

INT-

DIST.S.NOM

juniper

gand'uryak 'dalo

gand'uryak d

-au

-o

scent

give

P/F.3S

-RTM

the god is coming, the scent of juniper is all around

d'ewa 'ilo

sh'asa

L'ui

thum

d'ewa 'iu

sh-

'asa

L'ui

thum

god come.P/F.3S

INT-

DIST.S.NOM

blood

smoke

zhe s'aras thum

zhe s'aras thum

and juniper smoke

g'oSTay

biramar'ato

goST -ay

b'ira

-mar'at

goatshed

-ADJ

goat.

sacrifice

the god is coming, clouds of juniper smoke are rising from the sacrificial fires burning in the goat-sheds

The verses were not sung by a single singer, but were cried out in turns by six singers – all male – who formed in that moment the circle (*magl'is*) that in a Kalasha celebration directs the singing and the dancing, while the people around plunged themselves in the dance without paying them any attention. The text is composed largely of standard formulas. The first verse welcomes the feast, addressing it as if it were a person. The temporal reference is exact: it was indeed the third day of Chaumos. The other verses, like the women's chant of text no. 2, recall the main events of the festival, the initiations of the girls, the many animal sacrifices for the male initiation ceremonies, and evoke the joyful atmosphere of those days. From the point of view of its contents, the most interesting point of the song is the announcement of the arrival of a divine being; who remains however

without a name. This, I was told, is a central point in the ideology of Chaumos. That this was the case in Birir as well came rather as a surprise, because the main structural difference between the Chaumos of Birir and that of the two northern valleys was known to be the absence of the cult of the god Balimain who is believed to arrive in Bumburet on a winged horse on the holiest night of the festival. The lyrics of this *ca~* show instead that the idea of the descent of a divine being for the winter solstice is present in Birir as well, though it is not fully ritualized as is the case in the two northern valleys.

Text no. 4

The following day, the fourth of Chaumos, is called *non~g rat*. Since the initiation ceremonies that take place on the fifth day require three he-goats to be killed for each male novice, the sacrifices started already the day before. The meat of the animals sacrificed was going to be offered the following day in a banquet that took place after the *ist'on~gas* initiation rite (Cacopardo A. S. 2008: 90–91). The text below is a prayer that was uttered just before the throat of one of the sacrificial victims was slit by an *'onjiSTa suda*, on the roof of a goat-shed belonging to the family of one of the novices.

<i>...ban</i>	<i>k'ari</i>		<i>o</i>	<i>k'ushaLa</i>	<i>sh'ura</i>	<i>war'in</i>
<i>ban</i>	<i>kar</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>k'ushala</i>	<i>sh'ura</i>	<i>war'in</i>
closed	make	-IMPV.2S	O	wise	valiant	Warin
<i>b'ato</i>		<i>p'iSTay</i>		<i>sh'ura</i>	<i>war'in</i>	
<i>bat</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>piST</i>	<i>-ay</i>	<i>sh'ura</i>	<i>war'in</i>	
stone	-RTM	crest	-LOC	valiant	Warin	

(initial words lost) prevent O wise and valiant Warin: you, valiant Warin, who dwells among the rocks of the crest

<i>sh'ia</i>		<i>se</i>	<i>dewasam'E~a</i>
<i>sh-</i>	<i>'ia</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>dewasam'E~a</i>
INT	-PROX.S.NOM	REM.S.NOM	celebration

this is the celebration (of Chaumos)

<i>suw'ash</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>aw'icas</i>		<i>tu</i>
<i>suw'ash</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>aw'ic</i>	<i>-as</i>	<i>tu</i>
promptly?	do.CP	accept	-P/F.2S	2S.NOM

k'ushala sh'ura war'in
k'ushala sh'ura war'in
 wise valiant Warin
promptly accept (this offering) you wise and valiant Warin

khayr'i k'ari bato piSTay
khayr -i kar -i bat -o piST -ay
 peace -ADJ make -IMPV.2S stone- RTM crest -LOC
sh'ura war'in
sh'ura war'in
 valiant Warin
bring peace O valiant Warin of the rocky crest

kh'ayr zhaL'ai kim'on 'isa tazag'i
khayr zhaL -ai kim'on 'isa tazag'i
 peace arrive -CP much PROX.2S.OBL health

k'ari ab'at k'ari
kar -i ab'at kar -i
 make -IMPV.2S offspring make -IMPV.2S
give him (to the initiate) well being, great health and many children

sh'ala mi roS dy'ai
sh- 'ala -mi roZH dy -ai
 INT- DIST.S.ACC -INT blessing put -IMP.2S
tu gh'ona sh'ura war'in
tu gh'ona sh'ura war'in
 2S.NOM great valiant Warin
give him your blessings, you great valiant Warin

pak Parwadig'ar k'ushaLa sh'ura war'in
pak parwadig'ar k'ushala sh'ura war'in
 holy Creator.God wise valiant Warin
khod'aiaS dust 'asas
khod'ai -as dust 'as -as
 God -GEN friend be -P/F.2S
you wise and valiant Warin, you who are the friend of the holy Creator God

The prayer is addressed to Warin, one of the main gods of Birir. For Ralph Turner (T-444) the name Warin – *war'indras* in the genitive – is

etymologically connected to **a-parendra* (unrivalled Indra) and Morgenstierne (1973: 58) relates that one of his informants actually identified Warin with In, Indr. The epithet *sh'ura* (valiant), traditionally attributed to Warin, seems to indicate that his personality is that of a warrior god, who defends his people from their enemies; *k'ushaLa* (wise, ingenious), in contrast, is an epithet more frequently attributed to Mahandeo, another important Kalasha divinity who is believed to have taught them important techniques, like that of making cheese. Warin is invoked also as “Warin of the rocky crests” because his shrine, that appears to inspire a sort of ‘sacred terror’, is located high up on a crest overlooking the lower part of the valley. The requests made in the prayer are quite standard; only that they are made specifically for the novice. The lost initial word was probably a term for sorrow or suffering. The god is asked to avert sorrow from him and to give him peace, health and many children. The last verse is particularly interesting because it shows the evolution undergone by Kalasha polytheism as a consequence of its multi-centennial contact with Islam: as I have discussed more in detail elsewhere (cf. Cacopardo, A. S. 2006: 147–151), a conciliatory version of the traditional religion has probably long prevailed among the Kalasha, which identifies the ancient Creator God Dizala Dezaw (*D'iziLa Diz'aw*) with the God of Islam. In the light of this reinterpretation the other deities of the traditional pantheon are conceived more as messengers and carriers of wishes to God than divinities in their own right (cf. Saifullah Jan 1996: 240). Yet, the image of the divinity conveyed in the prayer is that of a full-size god able to grant wishes and bestow favour in the circumstances of life; it is only in the last verse that the conciliatory version surfaces with the quite overt statement that Warin’s powers are due in the end to his special relation to God.

Text no. 5

The fifth day of Chaumos (*ist'on~gas rat*) is the day of initiations. For male novices, as soon as the rite is performed (Cacopardo, A. S. 2008: 90), a period of seclusion begins that is to last 48 hours, until the last day of the festival. The seclusion consists in the boys being confined in the area of the goat-sheds, which are located above the villages in the holly-oak forest. In the pastoral ideology of the Kalasha, the whole activity of goat-herding and the places where it is conducted are

'onjiSTa and hence forbidden to women, who have no access to the area of goat-sheds and to the pastures. The song transcribed below recalls the ritual activities carried out by the novices and their peers (the *prabal'on g'Uak*) during their seclusion, with a reference to the hardships they have to go through. It was recorded on the sixth day (*koT SaT'ek*) of Chaumos – December 19th, in 2006 – on the *gri* dancing ground, from a group of women.

<i>t'ai</i>	<i>Law'ak</i>	<i>iSk'ar</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uakan</i>	
<i>t'ai</i>	<i>Law'ak</i>	<i>iSk'ar</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uak</i>	<i>-an</i>
2S.GEN	fox	hunting	Praba	child	-P.DIR

your fox hunt, Praba boys

<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhus</i>	
<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhu</i>	<i>-s</i>
apple-mash	and	bread	standing?	eat	-P/F.2S

you cannot sit down to eat your bread and apple-mash

<i>t'ai</i>	<i>pr'ai</i>		<i>iCh'oe</i>	
<i>t'ai</i>	<i>pr</i>	<i>-ai</i>	<i>iCh'oa</i>	<i>-e</i>
2S.GEN	give.PST.A	-PRF.P	hind.leg	-RTM

<i>nat</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uakan</i>	
<i>nat</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uak</i>	<i>-an</i>
dance	Praba	child	-P.DIR

your dance of the grazing goats, O Praba boys

<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhus</i>	
<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhu</i>	<i>-s</i>
apple-mash	and	bread	standing?	eat	-P/F.2S

you cannot sit down to eat your bread and apple-mash

<i>gh'ora</i>	<i>r'eZHai</i>	<i>bas</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uakan</i>	
<i>gh'ora</i>	<i>reZH</i>	<i>-ai</i>	<i>bas</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uak</i>
white	trail	-LOC	spend.night	Praba	child

					<i>-an</i>
					-P.DIR

you spend the night on the white trail, O Praba boys

<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhus</i>	
<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhu</i>	<i>-s</i>
apple-mash	and	bread	standing?	eat	-P/F.2S

you cannot sit down to eat your bread and apple-mash

<i>t'ai</i>	<i>cAh'aka</i>	<i>Dh'ou</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uakan</i>	
<i>t'ai</i>	<i>cAh'aka</i>	<i>Dh'ou</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uak</i>	<i>-an</i>
2S.GEN	thick.bread	heaping	Praba	child	-P.DIR

your thick bread cake, O Praba boys

<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhus</i>	
<i>s'aTuk</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>kuS'urek</i>	<i>ciSTuni'aka</i>	<i>zhu</i>	<i>-s</i>
apple-mash	and	bread	standing?	eat	-P/F.2S

you cannot sit down to eat your bread and apple-mash

<i>ek</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>birb'o</i>	<i>eko</i>		<i>juwar'i</i>
<i>ek</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>birb'o</i>	<i>ek</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>juwar'i</i>
one	CORR	walnut	one	-CORR	corn

<i>gE~'ak</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uakan</i>	
<i>gE~'ak</i>	<i>prabal'on</i>	<i>g'Uak</i>	<i>-an</i>
cob	Praba	child	-P.DIR

a walnut and a corn-cob, Praba boys

<i>sanab'aci</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>zhu</i>	<i>gazhag'azhi</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>zhu</i>
<i>sanab'a~ci</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>zhu</i>	<i>gazhag'azhi</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>zhu</i>
corn.mash	do.CP	eat	walnut.butter	do.CP	eat:IMPV.2S

you eat bean mash and walnut butter

The *prabal'on g'Uak*, the boys of the god Praba, form as a group already on the day of *goST-s'araz*, the third day of Chaumos – when, as we have seen, they animate the torchlight procession with their crude insults against adults – and they conduct an extorsive ritual begging the following day to collect the grains to make bread during their seclusion. The verses of the song, as mentioned, celebrate their main ritual activities. The fox hunt of the first verse takes place on the day of *koT SaT'ek*: the *prabal'on g'Uak*, always keeping to the '*onjiSTa*' area of the goat-sheds, made the round of a mound overlooking the dancing ground yelling and raising a great commotion to chase away an invisible fox. The meaning of the ritual is somewhat obscure. Since the fox is an animal connected to the sexual sphere,¹² it is probably taken as the symbol of the impurity that must be evicted from the '*onjiSTa*' area. The dance of the grazing goats of the second verse is a dance that the novices perform that same day in front of the

12 See the text in Cacopardo, A. S. 2008: 92 and Loude & Lièvre 1984: 272.

whole male community, imitating the movements of the goats when they rise on their hind legs to graze from the lower branches of the holly-oak trees. The ‘white trail’ of the third verse is the trail the *prabal'on g'Uak* follow during the second night of their seclusion to reach the shrine of Praba where the most sacred sacrifice of the year – a holocaust – is celebrated at the break of dawn. It is called the ‘white trail’ because the boys reach the altar just when the white light of dawn begins to shine on the valley. The thick bread cake of the following verse is an offering they bring to the altar, which is called *indr h'arik*, to be brought to Indra. Also behind the god Praba, as we have seen is the case with Warin, looms indeed the figure of Indra; his name can be derived from *pravabhra*, a name of Indra found in the *Maitrayani Samhita* (T-8782). The refrain seems to refer to the hardships the *prabal'on g'Uak* have to go through. Informants were not sure of its exact meaning. They suggested that the boys could not sit down to eat because the goat-sheds sheltering them were too crowded or because the ground near the altar was covered with snow. The last two verses mention the food the boys eat during the seclusion, which apparently has to be mashed. Could that symbolize a baby-like status after the rebirth brought about by the initiation? It may be, though none of my assistants gave this explanation.

Text no. 6

After the *prabal'on g'Uak* have reached the shrine of Praba following the ‘white trail’, and the holocaust has been performed at the first lights, in the following morning the whole community slowly gathers on the main dancing ground, located more or less at the centre of the valley, not far from Praba’s altar. Now all activities are carried out in broad daylight. It is the sixth day of Chaumos, one of the holiest, called *koT SaT'ek*, from its main ritual event. This is a race between runners of the two moieties that ends with the lighting up by the winner of a stack of brushwood piled up at Praba’s shrine (Cacopardo, A. S. 2008: 94–95); but, as the text above relates, many other ritual activities are performed. While the men are busy with these, the women sing on the main dancing ground, just nearby. They are not allowed to watch the race nor any of the other rituals, because they

take place in 'onjiSTa territory. The following song – like the preceding one – was recorded that day on the *gri* dancing ground.

<i>pilinsh'oa</i>		<i>jeST'alas</i>		<i>pilinsh'oa</i>	
<i>pilinsh'o</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>jeST'ali</i>	<i>-as</i>	<i>pilinsh'o</i>	<i>-a</i>
Pilinsho	GEN	m.law	-POSS.3.S	Pilinsho	GEN
<i>jeST'alas</i>					
<i>jeST'ali</i>	<i>-as</i>				
m.law	-POSS.3.S				

Pilinsho's mother-in-law, Pilinsho's mother-in-law

<i>'indras</i>		<i>k'oTuna</i>		<i>par'a</i>		<i>kakaw'a~k</i>
<i>indr</i>	<i>-as</i>	<i>koT</i>	<i>-una</i>	<i>par</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>kakaw'a~k</i>
Indra	-GEN	tower	-LOC	go	-PST.A.2S	chicken
<i>m'ari</i>		<i>m'ai</i>	<i>des</i>			
<i>mar</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>-es</i>		
kill	-CP	1S.DAT	give	-P/F.2S		

went to Indra's castle, you kill a chicken and offer it to me

<i>'ala</i>		<i>k'ya</i>	<i>k'arim</i>	<i>day</i>
<i>'ala</i>		<i>k'ya</i>	<i>kar</i>	<i>-im</i>
DIST.S.ACC		what	do	-P/F.1S
<i>c'uri</i>	<i>meS</i>	<i>m'ari</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>de</i>
<i>c'uri</i>	<i>meS</i>	<i>mar</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>m'ai</i>
braid ram		kill -	-CP	1S.OBL

of what use is that to me? slaughter a braid-ram and give it to me

<i>k'ayo</i>		<i>m'ai</i>	<i>b'ata</i>	<i>h'ile</i>
<i>k'ay</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>bata</i>	<i>h'i</i>
when	RTM	1S.OBL	OPP	become
<i>ao</i>		<i>t'ai</i>	<i>b'ata</i>	<i>dem</i>
<i>a</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>t'ai</i>	<i>bata</i>	<i>d</i>
1S.NOM	-CORR	2S.OBL	OPP	give

when it becomes mine, I will give it to you

Like text no. 5, this is a Chaumos song and a women's song, as indicated also by the mention of the 'braid-ram' which is the animal offered for the initiation of a girl when, as she dons the female head-dress, her hair is braided for the first time. According to Jettmar (1975: 356) *indr'as koT* is the place where a fire is lit at the *indr'eyn*

shrine in Bumburet, to welcome the visiting god Balimain.¹³ In fact, it is more likely that the expression refers to the pile of wood which is lit, rather than to the place where it is lit. In Birir *'indras koT* could be considered the two piles of brushwood held each by four poles, representing the two moieties, which stand by Praba's altar on the day of the race, ready to be lit by the runners. The song, like other Chaumos songs, is sung also in Bumburet and Rumbur.¹⁴ It is a jokingly ironic chant, sung at a lively rhythm, teasing those who give the worst of what they have: chicken are impure for the Kalasha and their meat is forbidden, while the meat of the 'braid-ram', the initiation ram, for a woman is the purest of all. The last verse, however, is of capital importance because it states most explicitly the principle of reciprocity on which Kalasha society is ideologically based, with an expression that reminds closely the Maori proverb reported by Mauss at the end of his famous *Essai sur le don* (Mauss 1965: 277).¹⁵

Text no. 7

In the songs sung by the women at Chaumos we may distinguish two genres. Some, like the preceding ones, celebrate the event. Others, which are called *Lac ghO~* (shameful songs), have a crude sexual content and make use of a language considered shameful in ordinary female speech. The text presented here is an example of this second genre. It was recorded on the *gri* dancing ground the evening of December 19th, the day of *koT SaT'ek*.

<i>shenm'aluk</i>	<i>b'itsaay</i>		<i>g'ehenraw</i>	
<i>shenm'aluk</i>	<i>b'itsa</i>	<i>-ay</i>	<i>geh'en</i>	<i>r'aw</i>
bed.end	gap	-LOC	side	as

13 As I have shown in my former article on Chaumos (Cacopardo, A. S. 2008: 102–103), Balimain is also to be identified with Indra.

14 The virilocal marriage rule has probably always favoured the circulation of women's song in the three communities.

15 Which he translated as "donne autant que tu prends, et tout sera bien" (Mauss *Ib.*).

<i>con~g</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>uSp'ung</i>	<i>badh'ai</i>	<i>istr'izha</i>	<i>goc</i>
<i>con~g</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>uSp'ung</i>	<i>badh</i>	<i>-ai</i>	<i>istr'izha</i>
beard	and	moustache	shave	-CP	woman
<i>gaL'a</i>		<i>ruk'm'u</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>mamur'et</i>	
<i>g'aLa</i>		<i>ruk'm'u</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>mamur'et</i>	
go.PST.HRS	Rumbur	and	Bumburet		

then he shaved his beard, trimmed his moustache, and went to look for a woman in Rumbur and Bumburet.

The song makes fun of a man who is trying to make a pass at his mother-in-law demanding she make up for the refusal of her daughter; but since sexual relations of this type are considered incestuous, the man tells her that she will be for him like a sister-in-law, with whom sexual relations, though deemed illegitimate, are not tabooed. The woman rejects him and pushes him to the end of the bed where the ropes holding the mattress are further apart, to the point that the pursuer falls through them with one of his legs and remains there half naked with his trousers thrown across his shoulders. The woman, further, threatens to set on fire the hair of his scrotum and makes clear that he better forget about that exchange. The threat is apparently effective, because the man trims his moustache and beard and goes to look for a woman in the other two valleys. The scene is less improbable than it may appear to a western eye, because, since Kalasha girls are often already married in their very early teens to men quite a bit older, a mother-in-law may be still a young woman, possibly even not older than her son-in-law.

Text no. 8

The text below is another example of *Lac ghO~* recorded on the same day and from the same group of women as the preceding one.

<i>Sung</i>	<i>Sungaw</i>	<i>day</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>kay</i>	<i>ishl'agan</i>
<i>Sung</i>	<i>Sung</i>	<i>-aw</i>	<i>d'ay</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>kay</i>
corner		from	-VIA	1S.OBL	to
					shell
<i>tyen</i>					
<i>ty</i>	<i>-en</i>				
throw	-P/F.3P				

hiding behind a corner they throw nutshells at me

m'ai p'io k'ya kh'ojis baS'ara con~g cu'ai
m'ai pi -o k'ya khoj -is baS'ara con~g cu -ai
 1S.OBL from -RTM what seek -P/F.2S old beard shake-PP
what do you want from me old shaking beard?

eil'a ol'a t'aisom c'ilu m'alu sh'iaw
eil'a ol'a t'ai -som c'ilu m'alu shi -aw
 RTM RTM 2S.OBL -with hookah ECO be.INAN PST.A.3S
you have a hookah and all the rest

te tambak'u khaS'an
te tambak'u khaS -an
 REM.P.NOM tobacco apply -PST.A.3P
they put tobacco into it

'ia sh'arum tr'eyla gh'o~ n
'ia sh'arum tr'eyla gho~ -n
 PROX.S.NOM sexual.organ coarse say -P/F.3P
this sexual organ is coarse, they say

istrizh'on som mo pras'ua
istr'izha -on som mo prasu -a
 woman -P.OBL -with NEG sleep -IMP.2P
do not sleep with women

t'ai aC'una wA tri'iu
t'ai 'aCuna wA tri -iu
 2S.GEN dried.up scrotum split -P/F.3S
your shrivelled scrotum will split

We have here another ironic scene in which a woman teases poignantly an older man who tries to flirt with her in a childish way, throwing nutshells at her from behind a corner. The pipe and the tobacco are probably sexual allusions. The sexual organs, at any rate, are explicitly named in the subsequent verses in which the girl accuses the man of having an exceedingly coarse organ and urges him to forget about women because his shrivelled scrotum would split. As in the preceding song, the woman rejects the man who is ridiculed in his virility.

In both texts the male-female opposition comes to the fore. This is one of the central themes of Chaumos. While the *prabal'on g'Uak* are in seclusion in the area of the goat-sheds, the women appear to take the lead in the ritual activities carried out in the villages. It seems to be their task, especially, to stimulate the energy of reproduction with the shameful songs.¹⁷ The obscene is one of the key dimensions of Chaumos in Rumbur and Bumburet (cf. Loude & Lièvre 1984: 214, 272, 282–285, 287, 289, 293–294; Snoy 2008: 50; Wutt 1983) where often improvised ‘shameful songs’ are sung in unison in true chanting contests between opposing parties of men and women, mainly instigated by the latter. In Birir these songs were sung only by women in unison, with no rival dancing party of men, and the verses were not improvised: they were old songs, I was told.¹⁸ Chanting contests – with the two parties addressing each other as *mai b'aya ko*, “my dear brother” or *mai baba ko*, “my dear sister” – did take place that same day especially on the way to the dancing ground, but their verses were more of a romantic than a crudely sexual nature. In the Chaumos of Birir, the obscene in general seems in fact to have a less prominent role than it has in the festivals of the two northern valleys. Maybe because it is the central theme of another celebration – the Prun festival which does not exist in the other two valleys – or, more likely, because of the higher number of converts in Birir, and of the absence of the period of *diC* – a sort of ‘village cloistering’ – when, in Bumburet and Rumbur, the Muslims are physically banned from Kalasha villages.

Text no. 9

This song belongs like the preceding ones to the repertoire of women, but here the singer is a mother, not a pursued sexual partner like in the

17 For the relation between obscene words and behaviours and fertility of humans and nature in New Year celebrations see, e.g. Caillois 2001: 117; Eliade 1976: 372–73; Lanternari 1983: 517–519; Propp 1978: 209–211.

18 They were solicited, I am not sure to which extent, by one of my assistants who – not on my request – addressed a chanting group of women urging them to sing ‘old’ songs.

shameful songs. Like the last four texts presented, the song was recorded on the *gri* dancing ground, from the same group of women.

<i>goST</i>	<i>d'uruna</i>		<i>par'a</i>	
<i>goST</i>	<i>dur</i>	<i>-una</i>	<i>par</i>	<i>-a</i>
goat.shed	house	-in	go	-PST.A.2S
<i>goST</i>	<i>d'uruna</i>		<i>par'a</i>	
<i>goST</i>	<i>dur</i>	<i>-una</i>	<i>par</i>	<i>-a</i>
goat.shed	house	-in	go	-PST.A.2S

you went to the goat-shed, you went to the goat-shed

<i>khe~</i>	<i>h'iu</i>		<i>se</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>butr'uk</i>
<i>khe~</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>-u</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>butr'uk</i>
how	become	-P/F.3S	REM.S.NOM	1S.GEN	child

how is he doing, my baby?

<i>ne</i>	<i>khe~</i>	<i>h'iu</i>		<i>m'ai</i>	<i>butr'uk</i>
<i>ne</i>	<i>khe~</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>-u</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>butr'uk</i>
RTM	how	become	P/F.3S	1S.GEN	child

is he doing well or not, my baby?

<i>shas'e</i>		<i>capacunD'aLi</i>
<i>sh-</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>capacunD'aLi</i>
INT-	that.REM.S.NOM	prickling

maybe his legs are prickling

<i>shas'e</i>		<i>pat</i>	<i>pat</i>	<i>uST'ali</i>
<i>sha-</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>pat</i>	<i>pat</i>	<i>uST -ali</i>
INT-	REM.S.NOM	quickly	quickly	get.up -PST.A.2P

he has to get up in a rush

It is the song of a mother who worries for the hardships her 'baby' will encounter as a novice, during the seclusion in the area of the goat-sheds. "Is he doing fine? Will he be uncomfortable? Will he get cramps?" asks the preoccupied mother. The text shows that for the novices the days of seclusion are an initiatory trial. A trial consisting in the almost sleepless nights in the crowded goat-sheds, in the sudden risings, in the arduous mountain trail that the boys have to negotiate in the dark with the only light of their pine torches. Not a trial requiring

the endurance of strong physical pain, as is the case in other contexts, but still a trial for children aged no more than ten.

Text no. 10

This song is sung on the seventh and last day of Chaumos, the feast of the beans (*dA'u tat'u*), by groups of young girls who, separately in each village, make the round of all the houses begging for beans. Since the ritual begging took place in the afternoon when the dances were still going on in the temple of Aspar village, I only caught a glimpse of the last part of the ceremony and could not record their singing. The words of their song were dictated to me the next day by the wife of my host.

<i>dA'u</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>gri</i>	<i>tru'aio</i>			
<i>dA'u</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>gri</i>	<i>tru</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-o</i>
beans	seed	with	grow	-CAUS	-IMPV.2S	-RTM

make beans and their seed grow

<i>sharal'a</i>		<i>tru'aio</i>			
<i>sh'ara</i>	<i>-la</i>	<i>tru</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-o</i>
markhor	-ENDM	grow	-CAUS	-IMPV.2S	-RTM

make the markhor increase

<i>rashm'uk</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>gri</i>	<i>tru'aio</i>			
<i>rashm'uk</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>gri</i>	<i>tru</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-o</i>
speckled.bean	seed	with	grow	-CAUS	-IMPV.2S	-RTM

make speckled beans and their seed increase

<i>sharal'a</i>		<i>tru'aio</i>			
<i>sh'ara</i>	<i>-la</i>	<i>tru</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-o</i>
markhor	-ENDM	grow	-CAUS	-IMPV.2S	-RTM

make the markhor increase

<i>im'o</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>gri</i>	<i>tru'aio</i>			
<i>im'o</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>gri</i>	<i>tru</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-o</i>
imo.beans	seed	with	grow	-CAUS	-IMPV.2S	-RTM

make imo-beans with their seeds increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

goraL'a *bi* *gri* *tru'aio*
goraL'a *bi* *gri* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 white.lentils seed with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make white lentils and their seeds increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

p'ay *bi* *gri* *tru'aio*
p'ay *bi* *gri* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 she.goat seed with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make goats and their seed increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

baty'a *bi* *gri* *tru'aio*
baty'a *bi* *gri* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 goat.kid seed with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make goat-kids and their seed increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

dond'iki *bi* *gri* *tru'aio*
dond' *-ik* *-i* *bi* *gri* *tru* *-'a* *-i* *-o*
 ox DMN -RTM seed with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make oxen and their seed increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

baCh'Oaka *bi* *gri* *tru'aio*
baCh'Oa *-k* *-a* *bi* *gri* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 calf -DMN -RTM seed with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make calves and their seed increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

jamilish'ir *gri* *tru'aio*
jam'ili *sh'ir* *gri* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 female.lineage. kin with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make female kin increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

graur'i *gri* *tru'aio*
graur'i *gri* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 men with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make male kin increase

sharal'a *tru'aio*
sh'ara *-la* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 markhor -ENDM grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make the markhor increase

moc *kuw'at* *gri* *tru'aio*
moc *kuw'at* *gri* *tru* *-a* *-i* *-o*
 men strength with grow -CAUS -IMPV.2S -RTM
make virile strength increase

<i>sharal'a</i>		<i>tru'aio</i>			
<i>sh'ara</i>	<i>-la</i>	<i>tru</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-i</i>	<i>-o</i>
markhor	-ENDM	grow	-CAUS	-IMPV.2S	-RTM
<u>make the markhor increase</u>					

Reproduction and fertility are the manifest themes of the chant. The last verse invokes abundance of male energy, without which there can be no generation, while the other verses invoke abundance of everything: of the fruits of the earth, of animals, of offspring. They ask especially for abundance of all types of beans and lentils for the fact, we can surmise, that pulses are the main food in the winter.¹⁹ The refrain, that invokes the multiplication of the markhor (*capra falconeri*), seems to testify to the past importance of the meat of these wild goats in the diet of the Kalasha,²⁰ as well as to their significance as symbols of abundance (cf. Lièvre & Loude 1990: 48). In winter, as they migrate to lower altitudes they become an easier prey for hunters.

The text does not mention the name of any god, but the fact that in all verses the verb is in the second person of the imperative indicates that the chant must be implicitly addressed to some divinity. The most appropriate addressee of such requests would no doubt be Jeshtak (*j'eSTak*), the goddess presiding over family relations and reproduction, who is invoked with very similar verses in the *dA'u tat'u* of Rumbur (Loude & Lièvre 1984: 302–310). The song is repeated by the girls on the doorsteps of each house and it has essentially a well-wishing function: to each family they wish abundance of everything. It is significant, we may note, that the prayer for fertility is chanted by young girls who are the most apt to impersonate the idea of a budding seed.

Text no. 11

This song I recorded from the voices of a group of little girls who were playfully singing and dancing in the temple on the night of *dA'u tat'u*. The pulses collected in the afternoon had been brought there for

19 Pulses, on the other hand – for the fact that they are seeds and as such contain the potential of life – may be seen as symbols of abundance (Propp 1978: 47).

20 Women are allowed to eat some parts of these wild animals (Lièvre & Loude 1990: 72)

a communal cooking and were boiling in two large aluminium pots set on two lively fires lit under the wooden porch of the building. The party seemed to be only for youngsters and adults would only occasionally peep in. The beans cooked all night and were distributed to all the families in the village the following morning.

cid'inik t'ai buny'ate gak Sing'Oyak
cid'in -ik t'ai buny'at -e gak Sing'Oyak
 iron.pot -DMN 2S.GEN bribe -RTM cow hornlet
you want to bribe me with an iron pot, oh Gakshingoyak

m'ai chu t'ai ja ne d'eme
m'ai ch'ul t'ai ja ne d -em -e
 1S.GEN daughter 2S.OBL wife NEG give -P/F.1S -RTM
gak Sing'Oyak
gak Sing'Oyak
 cow hornlet
but I shall not give you my daughter as a spouse, oh Gakshingoyak

i'donik t'ai buny'ate gak Sing'Oyak
i'don -ik t'ai buny'at -e gak Sing'Oyak
 tripod -DMN 2S.GEN bribe -RTM cow hornlet
you want to bribe me with an iron tripod, oh Gakshingoyak

m'ai chu t'ai ja ne d'eme
m'ai ch'ul t'ai ja ne d -em -e
 1S.GEN daughter 2S.OBL wife NEG give -P/F.1S -RTM
gak Sing'Oyak
gak Sing'Oyak
 cow hornlet
but I shall not give you my daughter as a spouse, oh Gakshingoyak

aZH'aRik t'ai buny'ate gak Sing'Oyak
aZH'aRi -ik t'ai buny'at -e gak Sing'Oyak
 apricot -DMN 2S.GEN bribe -RTM cow hornlet
you try to bribe me with apricots, oh Gakshingoyak

m'ai chu t'ai ja ne d'eme
m'ai ch'ul t'ai ja ne d -em -e
 1S.GEN daughter 2S.OBL wife NEG give -P/F.1S -RTM

gak Sing'Oyak

gak Sing'Oyak

cow hornlet

but I shall not give you my daughter as a spouse, oh Gakshingoyak

The lyrics of the song are an apparent expression of female solidarity. The issue is that of a woman's role in the choice of her husband. Marriage among the Kalasha (Maggi 2001: 167–212) is traditionally organized by the father when the girl is still a child, in response to proposals coming from the family of the prospective groom. As text no.15 also testifies, Kalasha girls sometimes accuse their fathers of “having sold them” when they do not like the choice he made for them:²¹ the iron tripods and the vessels for cheese-making mentioned in the verses, are the objects traditionally composing the *mal*, the bride-price. In the song we hear the voice of a mother who is trying to protect her daughter. The name *gakshing'oiak* is probably a derogatory nick-name for an unwelcome aspirant; literally it means “little cow horn”, a clear phallic allusion. The woman addresses him saying that if he thinks he can bribe her with his gifts, he is mistaken. She will never let him marry her daughter. The song expresses thus the plight of Kalasha girls when they are given in marriage to men much older than they are, who take them away from their homes and friends when they are still in their childhood.²²

Text no.12

This text was recorded between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. of January 6th 2007. It is a prayer (*suw'al*) – not a song (*ghO~*), I was told – that was chanted by a group of women, one for each household, gathered around a fire in the temple of Guru village. It is part of a ritual that

21 Kalasha tradition, however, offers an escape from situations of unbearable unhappiness: the woman may elope with a man of her choice if her new mate is ready to pay the double of the bride-price to the abandoned husband. The institution called *aLaS'in~g* is discussed at length in Parkes 1983 and Maggi 2001.

22 According to several people I questioned, fathers no longer impose their choices on their daughters; but without behavioural data we cannot really draw any conclusions on the subject.

takes place for Lagaur, a festival that follows Chaumos after a couple of weeks and is connected to it. It includes some ceremonies that in the two northern valleys are considered an integral part of Chaumos. Lagaur lasts altogether ten days but it is not as intense as the winter solstice feast: in the first two days the only ritual activity is a special meal consumed in the evenings, while the last six²³ concern only children who dance and imitate the ritual activities of Chaumos. It has an explicit pedagogic character: “we teach them to play the drums,” I was told, “so that they will not become Muslims.” After participating in Chaumos mostly as spectators, children are given the opportunity to be the actors without any adult supervision. A practice of peer-education, it would seem.

The nocturnal chant in the temple is maybe the core event of the two central days of Lagaur. The day before, animal figurines of dough are made in the homes to ensure the reproduction of useful animals, while young girls sing to call the White Crow and fetch green branches to decorate the temples. The White Crow is a supernatural being, bringer of wealth and fertility, who visits the Kalasha at this time. The prayer recorded that night was addressed to him.

ab'atani ab'at k'ario i
ab'at -ani ab'at kar -i -o i
 prolific -ADJ offspring make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o kagarik'o
o kag'a -rik -o
 O crow -DMN -RTM
make us prolific with offspring, come O little crow

kosh'anas th'ara koshan'i pash'ai i
kosh'an -as thar koshan'i pash -ai i
 happy -OBL on happiness see -CAUS.IMPV.2S come.IMPV.2S
o kagarik'o
o kag'a -rik -o
 O crow -DMN -RTM
show us happiness upon happiness, come O little crow

23 In 2007 these were reduced to only two because of a funeral celebration that had to be held just then.

khayr'i *k'ario* *i*
khayr *-i* *kar* *-i* *-o* *i*
 well.being -ADJ make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o *kagarik'o*
o *kag'a* *-rik* *-o*
 O crow -DMN -RTM
give us well being, come O little crow

b'ira *mar'at* *k'ari* *-o* *i*
b'ira *mar'at* *kar* *-i* *-o* *i*
 he.goat sacrifice make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o *kagarik'o*
o *kag'a* *-rik* *-o*
 O crow -DMN -RTM
bring he-goat sacrifices, come O little crow

bagannoR'ik *baz'uriak* *tren* *k'ario*
bagannoR'ik *baz'uri* *-ak* *tren* *kar* *-i* *-o*
 village.epithet sleeve -ENDM? line make -IMPV.2S -RTM
i *o* *kagarik'o*
i *o* *kag'a* *-rik* *-o*
 come.IMPV.2S O crow -DMN -RTM
make the population of our village numerous, come O little crow

h'uTali *i'don* *'onio* *i*
h'uTali *i'don* *on* *-i* *-o* *i*
 high iron.tripod bring -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o *kagarik'o*
o *kag'a* *-rik* *-o*
 O crow -DMN -RTM
bring high iron tripods, come O little crow

m'ai *moc* *kuw'at* *k'ario* *i*
m'ai *moc* *kuw'at* *kar* *-i* *-o* *i*
 1S.OBL man strength make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o *kagarik'o*
o *kag'a* *-rik* *-o*
 O crow -DMN -RTM
give me male energy, come O little crow

m'ai bab'aa p'utras k'asik
m'ai b'aba -a putr -as kas -ik
 1S.GEN sister -GEN.S son -POSS.3.S walk -INF
ne bha'au day i o kag'ariko
ne bha -au d'ay i o kaga -rik -o
 NEG be.able -P/F.3S P/F come.IMPV.2S O crow -DMN RTM
my sister's son is not able to walk, come O little crow

Chom'ik-o d'esha k'ario
Chom'ik -o d'esha kar -i -o
 pain -RTM far make -IMPV.2S -RTM
i o kagarik'o
i o kag'a -rik -o
 come.IMPV.2S O crow -DMN -RTM
keep pain away from us, come O little crow

tazag'i k'ario i
tazag'i kar -i -o i
 health make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o kagarik'o
o kag'a -rik -o
 O crow -DMN -RTM
bring health, come O little crow

aLL'ah p'akas kay suw'al k'ari
aLL'ah pak -as kay suw'al kar -i
 Allah holy -OBL to prayer make -IMPV.2S
i o kagarik'o
i o kag'a -rik -o
 come.IMPV.2S O crow -DMN -RTM
pray Allah for us, come O little crow

pr'enaw zho bi 'onio
pr'enaw zho bi on -i -o
 downstream barley seed bring -IMPV.2S -RTM
i o kagarik'o
i o kag'a -rik -o
 come.IMPV.2S O crow -DMN -RTM
from downstream bring the seed of barley, come O little crow

bo kay mob'i hal'io i
bo kay mob'i hal -i -o i
 a.lot do.CP people bring.AN -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o kagarik'o
o kag'a -rik -o
 O crow -DMN -RTM
increase our population, come O little crow

perishan'i d'esha k'ario i
perishan'i d'esha kar -i -o i
 anxiety far make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o kagarik'o
o kag'a -rik -o
 O crow -DMN -RTM
keep anxiety away from us, come O little crow

manj'aro dr'iga k'ario i
manj'ar -o dr'iga kar -i -o i
 life -RTM long make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o kagarik'o
o kag'a -rik -o
 O crow -DMN -RTM
make our life long, come O little crow

pili'aw pruST k'ario i
pili'aw pruST kar -i -o i
 offspring good make -IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S
o kagarik'o
o kag'a -rik -o
 O crow -DMN -RTM
make our children good, come O little crow

h'oma sh'asa b'aya Sumb'er day putr
h'oma sh-'asa b'aya Sumb'er d'ay putr
 1P.OBL INT- VIS.S. OBL brother before VIA son
d'eo i o kag'arik-o
de -o i o kag'a -rik -o
 give.IMPV.2S -RTM come.IMPV.2S O crow -DMN -RTM
to this brother of ours give first a male child, come O little crow

zh'anani *maks'at-o* *has'il* *k'ario*
zh'an -ani *maks'at -o* *h'asi* *-l* *kar* *-i* *-o*
soul -ADJ purpose -RTM fulfilment -ADJ make -IMPV.2S -RTM
i *o* *kagarik'o*
i *o* *kag'a* *-rik* *-o*
come.IMPV.2S O crow -DMN -RTM
satisfy the aspirations of the soul, come O little crow

The chant had an imploring and melancholy tone. A soloist, in turns, would call out a verse, and the others repeated it in unison. The verses invoke happiness, well-being and a long life. They ask to avert anxiety and sorrow; but most of all they express the wish for fertility and reproduction. The text contains also two specific requests: one by a woman who prayed for her sister's son who could not walk; and one on my behalf, that I may be granted a male son soon.²⁴ The White Crow is seen as a messenger, as an intermediary who carries the wishes of humans to God, called Allah, as in the Quran: the identification of the Supreme Being of the Kalasha pantheon with the God of Islam, as we have seen, is now an established fact. The prayer ends with a verse asking the Crow to fulfil all the aspirations of the soul. A conclusion in which we may discern a recurring theme of winter feasts: the descent of a benevolent being who fulfils all wishes.

Text no.13

The melancholy chanted prayer ended after less than an hour, and the following song, sung in a merry tune that created a sharp contrast, concluded the ritual for the White Crow.

tr'iku *tr'aku* *ie* *kag'arik*
tr'iku *tr'aku* *i* *-e* *kag'a* *-rik*
crow crow come.IMPV.2S -RTM crow -DMN
crow crow, come little crow

24 A prayer that was fulfilled.

<i>w'iku</i>	<i>w'aku</i>	<i>ie</i>		<i>kag'arik</i>
<i>w'iku</i>	<i>w'aku</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>kag'a -rik</i>
crow	crow	come.IMPV.2S	-RTM	crow -DMN

crow crow, come little crow

<i>t'ai</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>r'iCuna</i>		<i>LO'an</i>
<i>t'ai</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>riC</i>	<i>-una</i>	<i>LO -an</i>
2S.OBL	CORR	excrement	-in	mix -P/F.3P

for you they prepare excrement

<i>mai'o</i>		<i>m'onDuna</i>		<i>LO'an</i>
<i>m'ai</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>monD</i>	<i>-una</i>	<i>LO -an</i>
1S.OBL	-CORR	whey	-in	mix -P/F.3P

for me they prepare whey

The song is addressed to the real crows this time, ironically reminding them that they eat excrement. After a short while the lively song was interrupted abruptly and the women streamed out of the temple, each with a piece of burning wood from the fire in one hand, and a small aluminium cup with offers of cracked walnuts in the other, which they emptied down the slope from the porch of the temple. The real crows are supposed to arrive at this time to consume the offerings, if the incoming year is to be a fortunate one. I set my gaze in the obscurity to see if I could spot a crow, but under the trees the veil of darkness was still too thick.

Text no.14

Once the prayer to the White Crow was over and the women were back in their homes, a man from each household was supposed to leave at dawn for the goat-sheds carrying as a gift a large bread-cake with a decoration representing a herd on its surface, baked in the homes the previous evening, along with a few dough figurines. I went with one of the men. The goat-shed we reached after an hour's walk in the snow was crowded with children and a few men. The large bread cake was split and distributed, while a few cups of wine made the round of all present, children included. Stimulated by the wine, one of the men sang the song transcribed below. Though I had not heard it yet in Birir, the song was not new to me. I had heard it at the Rumbur Chaumos in 1973 where it was chanted by the whole community on

the holiest night of the festival (Cacopardo A.S. 1985: 746; Cacopardo & Cacopardo 1989: 325; cf. Loude & Lièvre 1984: 287; Snoy 2008: 62). The melody was now different, but the chant was no doubt the same one. Even if in no way solicited, it was seemingly not in its proper ritual context.

k'onDa meSaL'ako Cakabr'onzay k'asi-o
k'onDa meSaL'ak -o Cakabr'onz -ay kas -i -o
 hornless lamb -RTM mountain.grass -LOC walk -CP -RTM
the hornless lamb roams on the mountain grass

k'onDa meSaL'ak t'ai-o S'in~gan
k'onDa meSaL'ak t'ai -o Sin~g -an
 hornless lamb 2S.ACC -RTM horn -P.OBL
ty'ale
ty -au -e
 hit -PST.A.3S -RTM
the hornless lamb hits you with his horn, the hornless lamb

k'onDa meSaL'ako se nash'a ti
k'onDa meSaL'ak -o se nash'a ti
 hornless lamb -RTM REM.S.NOM inebriated become.CP
k'asio
kas-i -o
 walk-CP -RTM
the hornless lamb walks around drunk

k'onDa meSaL'ak am'E~a goT meSaL'ak
k'onDa meSaL'ak am'E~a goT meSaL'ak
 hornless lamb sheep crazy lamb
the hornless lamb, crazy for a sheep

k'onDa meSaL'ak saraw'atay k'asio
k'onDa meSaL'ak saraw'at -ay kas -i -o
 hornless lamb Sarawat -LOC walk -CP -RTM
k'onDa meSaL'ak
k'onDa meSaL'ak
 hornless lamb
the hornless lamb roams to Sarawat, the hornless lamb

k'onDa meSaL'ako Sin~g zhe br'oay
k'onDa meSaL'ak o Sin~g zhe bro -ay
 hornless lamb -RTM peak and crest -in

k'asio

kas -i -o
 walk -CP -RTM

the hornless lamb roams among crests and peaks

k'onDa meSaL'ak s'uci pari'ansom mish'ari
k'onDa meSaL'ak s'uci par'i -an -som mish'ari
 hornless lamb fairy fairy -P.OBL -with mixed

k'onDa meSaL'ak

k'onDa meSaL'ak

hornless lamb

the hornless lamb mixes with the fairies, the hornless lamb

k'onDa meSaL'ak 'onjiSTa zhew kas'alo
k'onDa meSaL'ak 'onjiSTa zhew kas -au -o
 hornless lamb pure row walk -CAUS.PST.A.3S -RTM

k'onDa meSaL'ak

k'onDa meSaL'ak

hornless lamb

the hornless lamb leads the pure herd

k'onDa meSaL'ak Cakabr'onz c'arawe
k'onDa meSaL'ak Cakabr'onz car -aw -e
 hornless lamb pasture graze -PST.A.3S -RTM

k'onDa meSaL'ak

k'onDa meSaL'ak

hornless lamb

the hornless lamb grazes on the mountain grass, the hornless lamb

k'onDa meSaL'ako k'irik th'ara n'atio
k'onDa meSaL'ak -o k'irik thar nat -i -o
 hornless lamb -RTM snow on dance -CP -RTM

k'onDa meSaL'ak

k'onDa meSaL'ak

hornless lamb

the hornless lamb dances on the snow, the hornless lamb

k'onDa meSaL'ako to sha'ios zh'uei
k'onDa meSaL'ak -o to sha'ios zhu -ai
 hornless lamb -RTM S.REM.ACC glacial.ponds²⁵ eat -CP
k'onDa meSaL'ak
k'onDa meSaL'ak
 hornless lamb
the hornless lamb eats worms, the hornless lamb

k'onDa meSaL'ak s'aras pres c'arila
k'onDa meSaL'ak s'aras pres car -ila
 hornless lamb juniper branches graze -PST.HRS
k'onDa meSaL'ak
k'onDa meSaL'ak
 hornless lamb
the hornless lamb grazes on the lower branches of the juniper trees, the
hornless lamb

“The hornless ram hits you with his horn” was the refrain repeated after each verse (not transcribed here for the sake of brevity). The sentence contains an apparent contradiction that was unravelled at the moment of the translation of the text, when it was explained to me that the horn was a metaphorical one, representing the male organ. *meSaL'ak* is a ram aged between one year and one year and half, that can therefore easily be still without horns. The chant evokes thus the image of a young ram, madly in search of a female, in a state of exhilaration (*nash'a ti*), roaming the high peaks among the mountain spirits (*s'uci*), dancing in the snow and grazing on mountain grass and juniper buds, ready to hit anyone with his male organ. An image of male virility, it seems, represented as bursting out of the *'onjiSTa* sphere of the high mountains. An image containing the three most apparent traits of the realm of the ‘pure’: it is male, it is pastoral, it is connected to wild nature.²⁶ The reference to Sarawat is of some importance. It is the name of a remote mountain pasture that plays a

25 The reference is, I was told, to the worms found in glacial ponds: the grass soaked in snow produces worms, on which the herds feed. The term used in the verse for glacial pond is *Khowar*; the Kalasha word is *p'utsas*.

26 It is interesting to note that in a Vedic hymn Indra is represented as a famous ram (De Gubernatis 1872: 403): it could be that the hornless ram of the song is none other than Indra.

role in the mythology, because it is the place where the dough figurines made for Lagaur are believed to be led during the night by their *walm'oc*, their shepherd, a majestic dough markhor to whom a special place is reserved on the main beam (*sat'ar*) of the house; the animals are then taken into custody by the fairies (*s'uci*), which indicates that they are seen as an offering to the mountain spirits. Sarawat, where – I was told – there is a spring and a lake, is deemed to be their abode and represents therefore the very core of *'onjiSta* territory in the Birir valley.

The lyrics of two different chants appear in fact to have been conflated in this text. One is the chant of the 'hornless ram', the other is a chant the same man sang immediately after, on a different melody, called *mai muzh'ik*, my markhor kid, which missed the refrain but had for the rest very similar verses. It may be that the former was imported from the two northern valleys because it is closely connected to the Balimain cult (cf. Wutt 1983: 116),²⁷ while the latter is a song of Lagaur celebrating the markhor that leads the goats to Sarawat. The verses "leads the pure herd" and "roams to Sarawat" surely belong to this second one.

Text no.15

While the time of Chaumos is indicated by the movement of the sun, the time of the festivities that follow is regulated by the lunar cycle. Between the fifth and the seventh day of the January moon, about two weeks after Lagaur – from the 23rd to the 25th of January in 2007 – Jhanì was celebrated. The event concerned in fact only little girls (and their female relatives), while the male population appeared to ignore it altogether and to hardly consider it a festival. For the girls, however, the celebration brought three days of fairly intense activities. On the first day they conducted a ritual begging collecting beans and flour: while on the last day of Chaumos (*dA'u tat'u*), the begging was carried out at the village level, for Jhanì the girls made the round of all the villages of the moiety they belonged to. In the evening the foodstuffs collected were brought to the temple of Guru where – like for the

27 One of my assistants asserted that it is chanted in Birir on the morning of the day of initiations (*ist'on~gas rat*), but I do not remember hearing it on that day.

'feast of beans' – young people gathered until late at night singing and dancing, while a few adolescent girls watched over the pots boiling under the porch; the following day the cooked food was distributed to all the families, to be eaten only by women. The third day the ceremony of the purification of dolls took place. These consist of a wooden skeleton in the shape of a cross on which a tailored little dress is fitted. They are made by the parents as a gift to their daughters. The little girls, with the help of their mothers, are supposed to bake bread for them. The rite did not amount to much: there was no fumigation with juniper as in women's purification rites, and once the bread cakes were ready, the girls grabbed their dolls and ran out of the house. The ceremony, at any rate, is meant to introduce them to the basic feminine tasks, making bread, fetching water and taking care of babies. Though not formally considered part of the initiation rituals, Jhanì seems therefore to have an initiatory character. It announces indeed an impending change of status and it gives the little girls a first glimpse of their future life as wives and mothers. A future life not free of sorrow, as testified by the song transcribed below. Its text was not recorded, but was dictated to me by a middle-aged man who maintained it was that of an old song, forgotten by the women.

<i>tu</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>mai</i>	<i>kAmbAh'uki</i>	<i>k'ari</i>	
<i>tu</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>kAmbAh'uki</i>	<i>kar</i>	<i>-i</i>
2S.NOM	CORR	1S.OBL	doll	make	P/F.2S
<i>ao</i>		<i>t'ai</i>	<i>khazin'a</i>	<i>pash'em</i>	
<i>a</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>t'ai</i>	<i>khazin'a</i>	<i>pash</i>	<i>-em</i>
1S.NOM	–CORR	2S.DAT	treasure	see.CAUS.P.	1S

you make a doll for me and I will show you a treasure

<i>khoy</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>aug'an</i>	<i>desh</i>	<i>mai</i>	<i>de</i>
<i>khoy</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>aug'an</i>	<i>desh</i>	<i>m'ai</i>	<i>de</i>
or	CORR	Afghan	country	1S.ACC	give.IMPV.2S
<i>mai</i>	<i>d'adako</i>				
<i>m'ai</i>	<i>d'ada</i>	<i>-ko</i>			
1S.GEN	father	–ENDM.			

either you give me away in the land of the Afghans, my dear father

kO'A shak amish'oti k'arim
kO'A shak amish'oti kar -im
 koa vegetables salt.mix make -P/F.1S
and I will cook vegetables with salt

khoyo kushtyagr'om k'ui mai de
khoy -o kushtyagr'om k'ui m'ai de
 or -CORR Kamdesh valley 1S.ACC give.IMPV.2S
or you give me away in the Bashgal valley

a ta kiL'A pac'aw chu'aem
a ta kiL'A pac -aw chu -'a -em
 1S.NOM TOP cheese cook -AGT dip.bread.in.food -CAUS -P/F.1S
and I will prepare cheese

kr'iSna cimb'arai kre mai 'ari
kr'iSna c'imbar -aik kre m'ai 'ar -i
 black iron -ADJ price 1S.OBL make.PST.A -
 PST.A.2S
mai d'adako
m'ai d'ada -ko
 1S.GEN father -ENDM
you gave me away in exchange for dark iron, my dear father

mai ta kAk h'Ia osh h'awalo
m'ai ta kAk h'Ia osh h'aw -au -o
 1S.GEN TOP extremely heart cold become.PST.A -PST.A.3S -RTM
my heart is frozen with sorrow

In the song a girl addresses her father saying that he makes a doll for her, but she will give him a treasure; a quite clear reference to the bride-price he will receive when he'll give her in marriage. "You will give me away in exchange for iron," she adds, referring to the tripods and the cauldrons for making cheese that customarily compose it. She fears especially to be given to a foreigner and her heart, she says, is frozen with grief.

kushti'a is the name given by the people of Birir to the Kom of the neighbouring Bashgal valley, in Afghan Nuristan. A marriage between a Kom man and a Kalasha girl may have been a possibility before the Kom were forcibly converted to Islam at the end of the nineteenth

century.²⁸ In contrast, a marriage to a Pashtun – this is what is intended by “Afghan” – seems hard to imagine, because these people have been Muslims for a long time. It could be, however, that there were times when a Kalasha father in dire straits would sell his daughter outright, under the feeble disguise of a marriage, to a Muslim man who would of course convert her.

We have here one more song expressing the suffering of Kalasha girls when they are married still children to a man who will take them away from their family and friends, if not from the whole community; as it is feared by the girl in the case she is given to a foreigner.

Text no. 16

Though Chaumos has all the characteristics of a New Year festival, the beginning of the new year is not marked by the solstice. The new cycle begins in fact in the following lunar month, when the moon is full, with an animal sacrifice celebrated at one of the main shrines.

A New Year celebration at the end of January is not surprising, because in the Indo-European world the date of the beginning of the year, though quite variable, remains generally included between December and March (Dumézil 1929: 6–10; cf. Propp 1978: 44–45; Van Gennep 1988: 3471–3472). From the name of the sacrifice – *b'asun don*, ‘spring bullock’ – and for the fact that it is celebrated at the end of the coldest period, the New Year day of Birir seems to be connected to the spring, rather than to the winter, season. This was the trend prevailing in ancient Persia. An influence from the Iranian world seems to be indeed indicated by the name itself of the Birir celebration, which is called *salgher'ek*: while *gher'ek* is a Kalasha term meaning ‘rotate’, *sal* is the Persian term for ‘year’, which I never recorded in Birir in any other instance.

The sacrifice of *b'asun don* that celebrates the ‘rotation’ of the year is performed at the shrine of the god Mahandeo. In 2007 the sacrificial victim, however, was not a bullock, as the name of the ritual would seem to imply, but a kid. What follows is the text of the

28 For a detailed reconstruction of the events see Cacopardo & Cacopardo 2001: 180–190.

prayer that accompanied the central part of the rite, recorded at the Mahandeo shrine on January 31st.

e all'ah parwadig'ar
e all'ah parwadig'ar
 O Allah Creator.God
O Allah Creator

d'eshuna khayr k'ari tazag'i k'ari
desh -una khayr kar -i tazag'i kar -i
 country LOC peace make -IMPV.2S health make -IMPV.2S
pruST'I k'ari barak'at de heesh!
pruST -i kar -i barak'at de heesh!
 good -NML make -IMPV.2S blessing give.IMPV.2S heesh!
bring peace and health to the community, make everything good, give
blessings, heesh!

e all'ah pak parwadig'ar
e all'ah pak parwadig'ar
 O Allah holy Creator.God
O Allah, holy Creator

tu k'ushala mahand'eo khod'ayas h'atya
tu k'ushala mahand'eo khod'ay -as h'atya
 2S.NOM ingenious Mahandeo God -GEN to
suw'al k'ari
suw'al kar -i
 prayer make -IMPV.2S
you, ingenious Mahandeo, pray God for our sake

mun ta pili'ai m'undo uchund'ai heesh!
mund ta pili -ai munD -o uchund -ai heesh!
 top CORR climb -CP top -CORR descend -CP heesh!
once the top is reached, from the top you descend, heesh!

As in other prayers we commented, we find here the Kalasha god represented as an intermediary between humans and the Creator God, in line with the monotheistic reinterpretation of Kalasha religion which, as we have seen, is now quite firmly established. The requests are the usual ones, of peace and good health. The peculiarity of this

prayer lies in the cry *heesh!* which I had not heard before, and in the last verse, for which I could obtain no explanation. It is in all likelihood a traditional formula referring, it would seem, to the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. A formulation, that is, of the idea of cyclical time: once the end, the top, or if we want, the climax, has been reached, you can only descend and start over again. The ‘rotation’ of the year had been celebrated.

Text no.17

The same evening a final ritual was celebrated in all households, dedicated this time to the goddess Jeshtak, who presides over the domestic world of the family. A mash of walnuts and cheese with wheat bread was the ritual meal. The prayer below was recorded in the home of one of my hosts, who recited it personally.

<i>'ia</i>		<i>b'asun</i>	<i>don</i>	<i>'arimi</i>		<i>kh'ayras</i>
<i>'ia</i>		<i>b'asun</i>	<i>don</i>	<i>'ar</i>	<i>-imi</i>	<i>kh'ayr -as</i>
PROX.S.NOM		spring	bull	do.PST.A	-PST.A.1P	peace -OBL
<i>bat'i</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>ab'at</i>		<i>kar'ikas</i>		<i>bat'i</i>
<i>bati</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>ab'at</i>		<i>kar -ik</i>	<i>-as</i>	<i>bati</i>
PURP	and	prolificness	make	-INF	-OBL	PURP

we have done this basun don ritual for the sake of peace and abundance of children

<i>'ama</i>		<i>ishper'i</i>	<i>k'arik</i>	<i>day</i>
<i>'ama</i>		<i>ishper'i</i>	<i>kar -ik</i>	<i>d'ay</i>
PROX.S.ACC		ritual.meal	make -P/F.1P	P/F.CONT

now we are having this ritual meal

<i>se</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>d'uray</i>	<i>j'eSTak</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>baS</i>	<i>zhu'aw</i>
<i>se</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>dur</i>	<i>-ay j'eSTak</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>baS</i>	<i>zhu'aw</i>
HON	2S.NOM	house	-of Jeshtak	and	share	eater

khayr k'ari
khayr kar -i
 peace make -IMPV.2S

you Jeshtak of the house, and eater of a share (of the offer), give us peace

<i>Chék</i>	<i>Chom'iko</i>		<i>d'esha</i>	<i>h'isti</i>	
<i>Chék</i>	<i>Chom'ik</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>d'esha</i>	<i>hist</i>	<i>-i</i>
trouble	pain	-SEQ	far	throw	-IMPV.2S
<u>keep trouble and pain away from us</u>					

The deity is called goddess of the home because her emblem – two little wooden horse-heads protruding from a small wooden plank – is usually found in Birir in every house and, of course, because she presides over family relations. She is also addressed as ‘share eater’, an epithet given to all gods because in sacrifices they are given a part of the body of the victim – mostly the blood – and they share thus the sacrificial meal with men. The requests are again the usual ones, but the rite has nevertheless a special significance because, once it is completed, the prohibition over the consumption of the fruits of the last harvests is lifted: the sacred meal of that evening was indeed made with flour and walnuts from the autumn harvests. From that moment on, all the products of the cycle just concluded, could be consumed.

With that rite the old year was finally dismissed, and the new one was hailed in. The following day – the day of *benjisht'em* – was going to be the very first of the New Year. It was celebrated with a meal of squash in the morning, fertility rites at the goat-sheds, and a ritual meal in the evening.

Appendix: Outline and chronology of the winter ritual celebrations in Birir in 2006–07

Preparations for Chaumos

acar'ik – *gandalik'an* – 10 December 2006

- virgin boys make preparations at the shrine of the god Praba
- old baskets are burnt and Chaumos songs and dances are sung around the bonfires

Chaumos – 14 – 20 December 2006

desh suc'ein – 14 December

- purification of the territory with juniper smoke

ruzh'ias – 15 December

- cleaning of the houses
- animal sacrifices for the first wine of the year
- offerings to the dead

goST-s'araz – 16 December

- purification rites with juniper smoke at the goat-sheds
- processions/assaults with torches to the temples: the young and the novices insult the elderly
- songs and dances in the temple until late at night

non~g-rat – 17 December

- ritual begging of the novices
- beginning of initiation sacrifices
- purification rites in the homes for female novices
- washing of kitchen implements, which are not to be touched until the early morning rite (see below)
- evening fast
- rite with offerings of rice and juniper smoke just before the break of dawn

ist'on~gas-rat – 18 December

- offerings to the dead brought by young girls
- novices are dressed with ceremonial clothes in the homes by the maternal uncle, and are brought to the temple
- male initiation rites at the goat-sheds with animal sacrifices
- beginning of seclusion for the novices
- banquets with meat and wine offered in the goat-sheds by the families of the novices to all the male members of each moiety
- holocaust at the break of dawn at the shrine of the god Praba, with the participation of the novices
- singing and dancing in the temples and torchlight procession in the early hours of the morning (3:00 a.m.): each of the two moieties is reunited in one of the temples

koT SaT'ek – 19 December

- the whole community gathers in full daylight for a whole day of singing and dancing
- ritual game of the capture of the fortress (*nog'or grik*)
- ritual chasing away of the fox (*Law'ak bih'ik*)
- running competition and lighting of a fire (*koT SaT'ek*)

- fight and general commotion
- rite with mistletoe and secret prayer
- concluding dance led by man with mistletoe, called the dance of the markhor (*sharacat'aki*)

dA'u tat'u – 20 December

- dancing and singing in full daylight outside one of the temples
- ritual begging of beans by young girls
- rite with mistletoe marks the end of the seclusion of the novices
- young people gather in the temple to oversee the cooking of the beans.

After Chaumos

*dah'u pac'ei*n – 21 December

- the cooked beans are distributed in the homes

SiS khur – 6 days later

- the heads and the legs of sacrificed animals are eaten

Lagaur – 3–9 January 2007

First day

- the kazi announce the beginning of the festival
- ritual meal with cheese in the evening

Second day

- in the evening ritual meal with beans and walnuts

Third day

- in the morning the women make animal figures with bread dough
- children of both sexes go to the goat-shed area singing the song of the Crow, and they collect leafy branches to decorate the temples.
- in the evening the men make animal figures stuffed with walnut mash mostly representing markhors, and a large bread cake to take to the goat-sheds early the following morning.

Fourth day

- women gather in the temple two hours before dawn to invoke the White Crow
- when they are finished, the men take the large bread-cake to the goat-sheds.
- in the villages children imitate the rituals of Chaumos.

Six days of dances for children follow (reduced to two in 2007)

Last day

- game in which the children imitate the ritual race of the central day of Chaumos
- boys take the dough figurines made by the men up to a small plateau above Guru village and leave them there for the crows
- the bread figurines made by the women are given to the goats.

Jhanì – 23 – 25 January 2007

First day

- ritual begging of flour and beans by little girls who make the round of the villages of each moiety
- cooking of the beans in the temple and gathering of young people

Second day

- distribution of the cooked food to all the families of the village (only for female members)

Third day

- ritual purification of the dolls

Salgherek – 31 January 2007

- in the morning animal sacrifice at the shrine of the god Mahandeo
- in the evening, rite in the homes in honour of the goddess Jeshtak, which marks the lifting of the ban over the consumption of the fruits of the last harvests.

Benjishtem – 1 February 2007 – first day of new year

- in the morning breakfast with squash
- fertility rites at the goat-sheds
- in the evening, ritual meal with cheese and walnut mash at the goat-sheds

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Note on the Transcriptions and Abbreviations Used in the Texts

Capital letters express a retroflex articulation which in Kalasha occurs not only in consonants but also in vowels (Heegård & Mørch 2004; Di Carlo 2010). < sh > represents the voiceless palatal sibilant, < zh > its voiced counterpart; but all other consonants followed by < h > are to be pronounced as aspirates; < y > represents the palatal approximant and < w > the voiced labio-velar approximant. All the other phones are transcribed according to Masica’s ‘Standard Orientalist’ transcription (Masica 1991: XV–XVI), including the palatal affricate expressed with < c >. Since Kalasha syllabification is not as yet thoroughly studied, stress is marked by the symbol < ' > in front of the stressed vowel, and not, as in IPA, in front of the stressed syllable. Nasalization is expressed by < ~ > following the nasalized letter.

Abbreviations

ACC: Accusative Case
 ADJ: Adjectivizer
 AGT: Agent
 AN: Animate
 CAUS: Causative
 CORR: Correlative
 CP: Conjunctive Participle
 DIR: Direct Case
 DMN: Diminutive

DIST: Distal
ECO: Eco-words
ENDM: Endearment
GEN: Genitive Case
HUM: Humoristic
IMPV: Imperative
INAN: Inanimate
INT: Intensifier
LOC: Locative
NEG: Negation
NML: Nominalizer
NOM: Nominative Case
OBL: Oblique Case
P: Plural
P/F: Present Future
P/F CONT : Present Future Continuous
PCL: Particle
POSS: Possessive (suffixes)
PRF.P Perfect Participle
PROX: Proximal
PST.A: Past Actual
PST.HRS: Hearsay Past
PURP: Purpose
REM: Remote
RTM: Rhythmical Element
S: Singular
SEQ: Sequencer
TOP: Topical
VIA: Vialis
VIS: Visible