

ORIGIN OF KALASH

There are three theories about the origin of the Kalash. Some historians believe that the Kalash are descendants of the soldiers of Alexander the Great, while the second group believes that they are indigenous to Asia and came from what is now the Nuristan area of Afghanistan, and according to the third school of thought; the Kalash ancestors migrated to Afghanistan from a distant place in South Asia, which they call "Tsiyam" in their folk songs and epics. However, it is established that the Kalash migrated to Chitral from Afghanistan in the 2nd century B.C.

By the 10th century AD., the Kalash ruled a large part of present-day Chitral. Razhawai, Cheo, Bula-Sing and Nagar-Chao were famous Kalash rulers in the 12th through 14th centuries AD. Their fellow tribesmen in Afghanistan were known as Red Kafirs. The thriving Kalash culture began to fall in 1320 AD., when Shah Nadir Raees subjugated and converted the people to Islam.



DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF KALASH CULTURE

The Kalash language is called Kalasha which is archaic type of Indo-European language (Dardic subgroup). Kalasha has a rich tradition of folklore, epics, love songs and idioms demonstrating a high standard of indigenous wisdom and human experience.

This knowledge is believed to be at the verge of extinction. The Kalasha follow a Polytheist religion based on ancestor worship, as well as twelve gods and goddesses dominated by the main God, Mahadeo. The Kalash religion is based on myths and superstitions that relate to the relationship between the human, soul and the universe. This relationship, according to Kalash mythology, needs its manifestation in music and dance,



which also contribute to the pleasure of gods and goddesses. In their festivals, music and dance are performed not only as entertainment elements, but as a religious ritual.

The Dehar or Shaman plays an important role in the Kalash culture. He makes prophecies during religious rituals. He seeks the help of fairies to make prophecies with regard to the weather, crops, livestock and other agro-pastoral activities, including prospects for the coming year.

An important practice in Kalash mythology is the close observation of the Kalash astronomers in the beginning of New Year in December. The Kalash believe that a new sun is born on Dec 21 and the time and style of new sun affects the flora and fauna of the land.



THE ENDANGERED KALASH

The Kalash are one of the world's endangered minority communities. Their population decreased from 10,000 in 1951 to 3,700 in 1998, motivating conservation experts, development workers and anthropologists to preserve and protect the Kalash culture.



KALASH FESTIVALS

The Kalash celebrate four major festivals commemorating seasonal change and significant events in agro-pastoral life.



Rat Nat (part of Uchaw)

This is a lesser-known festival in which young girls and boys meet in a special place, called Charsu in Brun and Krakal in Bumburet & Rumbur valley, to sing and dance in order to console loving couples. This continues for two months (June 21 - Aug. 21) and culminates at the Uchaw festival.

IMPORTANT SITES

Brun

A village in Bumburet valley, famous for Jastakan and Charsu, dancing halls for festivities. There is also an interesting three-hour walk along the irrigation channel.

Batrik

A historic place in Bumburet, known as the capital of the Kalash ruler Rajawai (10th century A.D.) and also a sacred place of the grand Kalash god, Mahadeo.

Karkal

A Kalash hamlet in Bumburet, famous for its dancing hall and Madojaw (cemetery) and also for a sacred cedar (Deodar) tree. Traditional Kalash charity is distributed under the shade of this tree.

Kalash Grom

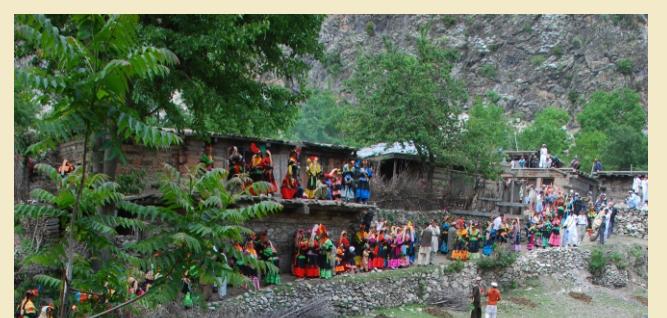
A hamlet in Rumbur, known for its oldest origin and picturesque view.

Balanguru

A hamlet in Rumbur valley, known for its cultural elements and resource persons of anthropology. It has been home to various researchers.

Acholga

An Alpine forest in Rumbur valley, famous for its hot springs and walking trails.



Ghaz Guru

A hamlet of Kalash in Birir valley, is famous for its beauty.

Guru

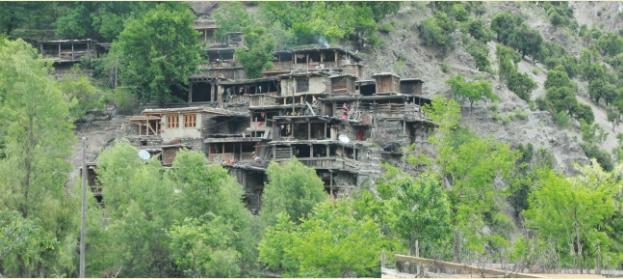
A historic place in Birir valley, is famous for its ancient and multi-tiered abodes, cultural sites and a dancing hall.

Aspar

A scenic village in Birir valley, is famous for its beauty.

Sheikhanandeh

The name means "village of the converted". Its residents are the descendants of the Red Kafirs who migrated from Nuristan (former Kafiristan) in Afghanistan in the late 1890s. These villages of now-Muslim Kalash are situated at the end of all three Kalash valleys Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur. Their way of life, architecture, traditional culture and language are remnants of the former Red Kafir's tradition of Afghanistan.



TEMPLES AND PLACES OF SPECIAL RESPECT

The Kalash holy places are widely respected by all. Tourists are requested to move around quietly while visiting these places.

Malosh

They are the Holy places where sacrifices are offered. These places are situated on the outskirts of a village. Some famous Malosh sites are in Batrik, Krakal, Birir, Rumbur and Gromun.

Jeshtak-Han

This is a large hall. Decorated with female paintings and animal figures. Jeshtak-Han are holy places where rituals are performed at the times of birth, death and festivals.



goddesses for the safety of the herds and crops of the Kalash community.

Uchaw

The summer festival is celebrated from Aug. 22-23 every year. The festival commemorates the summer season and the abundance of dairy products in the summer pastures.

Phoo

The autumn festival is celebrated around mid-October every year, depending each year on the ripening of the crops and fruits. The festival also celebrates the return of livestock herds from the summer pastures.

Chaumos

The winter festival is celebrated from Dec. 10-23 every year. This is the most important Kalash festival. New clothes are arranged for each family member on the eve of festival. The grand Kalash god, Mahadeo, is offered sacrifices.

Charsu

A dancing place where young couples gather to perform a dance in commemoration of their love.

KALASH HANDICRAFTS

Due to their proximity to nature, the Kalash are fond of natural colours in handicrafts. Skills in spinning and weaving are exhibited in Palesk (rugs), Qalin (carpets), Chehari (belts) and Copesi (headgear).

KALASH ARCHITECTURE

Kalash architecture is a unique mixture of ancient wooden craft and medieval traditions of figure art. Multi-storey Kalash buildings present a spectacular view of beautifully carved wooden pillars and beams decorated with unmatchable human and animal figures and effigies. Each one depicts certain myths and superstitions.

KALASH CULTURE CENTRE

The Kalash Culture Centre is in Brun, Bumburet valley, where folk history, culture and civilisation of the Kalash is preserved under one roof. It is an ethnological museum of the Kalash community, initiated and facilitated by the citizens of Greece. Nearby is a government-run archaeological museum.



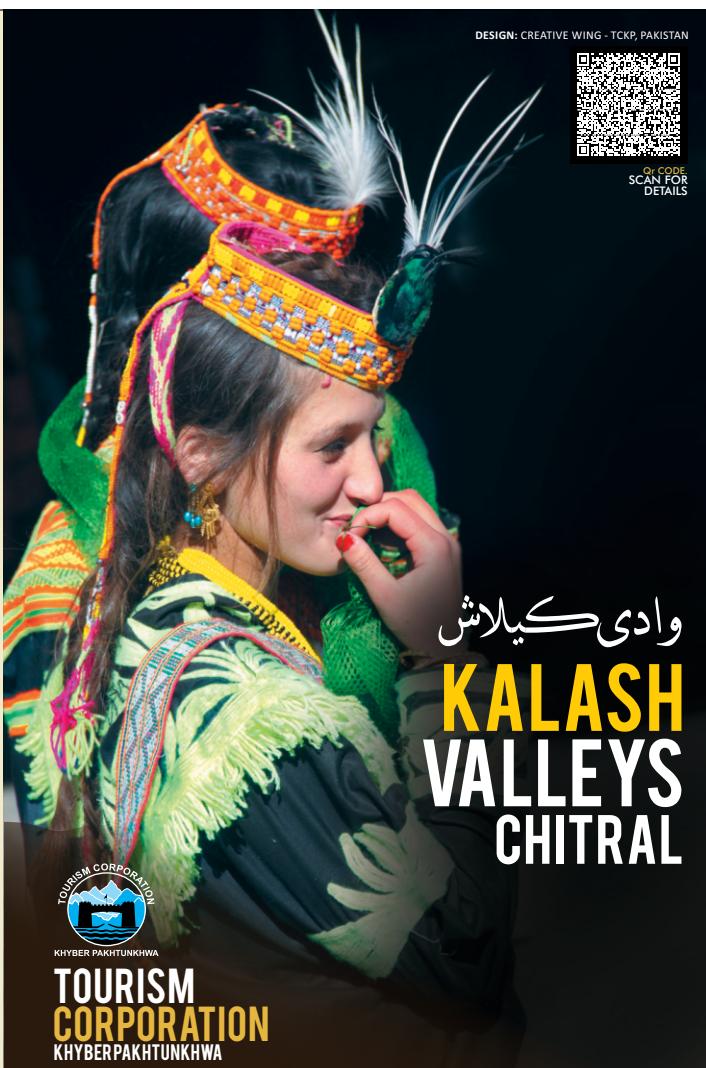
THE LEGENDARY LAKES

Bahuk the Sacred Lake

Bahuk, the sacred lake of the Kalash ancestors, lies between the two picturesque valleys of Bumburet and Rumbur. The turquoise-hued glacier lake is situated at 4000m amongst an amphitheatre of jagged peaks with a good view of Tirich Mir 7708m to the west. The Kalash believe that after the death, their souls go to this lake. The area is famous amongst both the Kalash and the Muslim Kho community as the resting place of fairies. Reported sightings of a mythical Barman (yeti) have also been made here. Its surroundings are the summer pastures of the Kalash community and villagers from Ayun. It has some magnificent cedars, some 1,200 years old. There are lovely treks from both Bumburet and Rumbur linking different valleys in the region where you can see shepherd settlements and a variety of fauna and flora. A special trail has been developed to Bahuk Lake for trekkers. From Bumburet the journey to the lake and back takes five days.

Lake Awazak

This lake flows in the southwest of Bumburet valley, on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its water streams into the Bashgai valley in the Nuristan. Locals say it takes a quick trekker twelve (12) hours to reach the lake, but for the average tourist it will take much longer. Considerable



LOCATION

The Kalash valleys of Chitral are located in the southern gorges of the Hindu Kush mountain range in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The valleys share a 380 km border with Afghanistan to the north & west, and the Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan are easily accessible from the area. To the east lies Gilgit, from where one can reach China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region along the legendary Karakoram Highway.

HOW TO REACH

During summers from May till November the Kalash valleys of Chitral are accessible from Peshawar and Gilgit over the Lowari Pass 3118 m and Shandur pass 3735 m. The distance from Peshawar is 365 km and Gilgit 385 km, a 12-hour journey in either case. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) operates daily flights from Peshawar and Islamabad to Chitral, weather permitting. From Chitral town it takes two hours of jeep drive to access any of the three Kalash valleys located at a distance of 25 Km.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Tourist Information Center (TIC) Chitral	(0943)413540
Dubash Post Junction Point	(0943)490009
between Bumburet & Rumbur	
Deputy Commissioner's Office Chitral	(0943)412055
District Headquarter Hospital Chitral	(0943)412142
District Police Officer (DPO) Chitral	(0943)412077
Police Station Chitral	(0943)412913
Police Station Ayun	(0943)490007
Kalash Exchange / Enquiry	(0943)404000



Birir Walking Trail

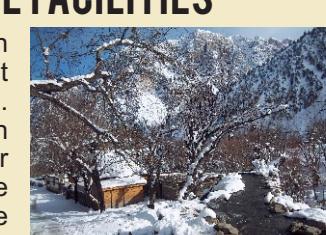
This trail starts from the village of Grom on the left side of the jeep road and follows the face of a steep slope through a dense oak forest. In Grom is a Kalash graveyard with wooden effigies on the graves symbolising the importance and leadership of the deceased. Close by is the dancing place and higher up the sacrifice place, along with the sacred stone and effigies of goats and humans around the altar. The trail passes through the Kalash villages of Balanguru, Kalashgrom and Palo.

REGISTRATION OF FOREIGNERS

On arrival in Chitral, foreign visitors have to register their names and particulars with the local authorities. TCKP's Tourist Information Centre or CAMATs reception desk at airport or office in town can provide guidance regarding the process of registration and other requirements of foreigners.

HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

There is a Basic Health Unit (BHU) in Bumburet for secondary healthcare. First Aid Post/Designation are available in Rumbur and Birir. More adequate health facilities are available in nearby Ayun and Broz and in Chitral town.



▲ A View of Kalash village

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An image of a snowy mountain landscape.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR VISITORS (DOs & DON'Ts)

- Before you visit the Kalash valley, educate yourself about local customs and culture, TCKP TIC & CAMAT can help with this.
- The Kalash are friendly, hospitable and gentle. Unlike other villages in Pakistan, the womenfolk in the Kalash valleys are more visible. Their traditional values must be respected by the visitors.
- Do not gawk at the Kalash, consider how you feel when you are stared at during your travels.
- Always ask permission before photographing people. Do not pay to take photographs.
- Do not disturb the Kalash working in fields or in the privacy of the Bashali (the women's house of seclusion).
- Do not walk into houses and temples or participate in dances or festivals without being invited. It is considered intrusion and bad manners.
- Buying local products benefits the local economy, but buying antiques and ancient artefacts robs the local culture and is illegal in Pakistan.
- All meadows are preserved for animal fodder. Avoid trampling them, and do not camp without permission. Avoid parking vehicles in fields.
- Do not use streams for washing or cleaning. Keep all pollutants, even biodegradable ones, away from streams.
- Use toilets wherever available. (Where not available, stay at least 30 meters from streams)
- Do not preach any religion or seek to convert.
- The Kalash get very little economic benefit from tourism, use Kalash guides, hotels and pay for any space that you utilise.



HOTELS & GUEST HOUSES IN THE KALASH VALLEYS

Hotels in Bumburet					
Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room - Amount in Pak Rs.	Single	Double
Anish	16	(0943)404066	2500	3000	
Bron	8	(0943)404158	1200	2500	
Bron	5	(0943)404011	1500	2500	
Anish	8	(0943)404190	800	1500	
Batrik	10	(0346) 8994394	800	1500	
Kandisar	24	(0943)404153	1000	1500	
Bron	9	(0943)404033	500	2000	
Krakal	8		800	1500	
Krakal	4	(0344)9700024	800	1200	
Bron	7	(0943)404122	400	800	
Batrik	4	(0943)404177	600	1500	
Bron	7	(0943)404043	600	1500	
Anish	11	(0345)8747077	350	1000	
Krakal	6		600	1200	
Krakal	7 Lodges		600	1200	
Krakal	12	(0943)404255	800	2000	
Krakal	2	(0943)404206	600	1200	
Krakal	4		600	1200	
Batrik	4		600	1200	
Guest Houses in Bumburet					
Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room - Amount in Pak Rs.	Single	Double
Bron	3	(0943)404112	800	1500	
Anish	4	(0943)404121	800	1200	
Bron	3	(0943)320610	600	800	
Karkal	3	(0321)4001336	1200	1800	
Anish	5	(0943)404181	600	1200	
Sheikhanandeh	3		600	1200	
List of Hotels & Rest Houses in Rumbur					
Hotels in Rumbur	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room - Amount in Pak Rs.	Single
Munir Hotel	Grom	4		800	2000
Garden Hotel and camping	Grom	4		600	1500
Bashara Khan Hotel	Grom	4			
Guest Houses in Rumbur					
Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room - Amount in Pak Rs.	Single	Double
Balanguru	14		1200	2000	
Grom	4	(0943)315788	800	1500	
Kalashgrom	3		600	1000	
List of Hotels & Rest Houses in Birir					
Hotels in Birir	Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room - Amount in Pak Rs.	Single
Insaf Hotel	Guru	6		800	1600
Kachai Hotel	Guru	7		800	1800
Guest Houses in Birir					
Location	Rooms	Contact Number	Room - Amount in Pak Rs.	Single	Double
Guru	3	(0943)302091	800	1600	
Guru	4		800	1800	



TOURISM CORPORATION KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

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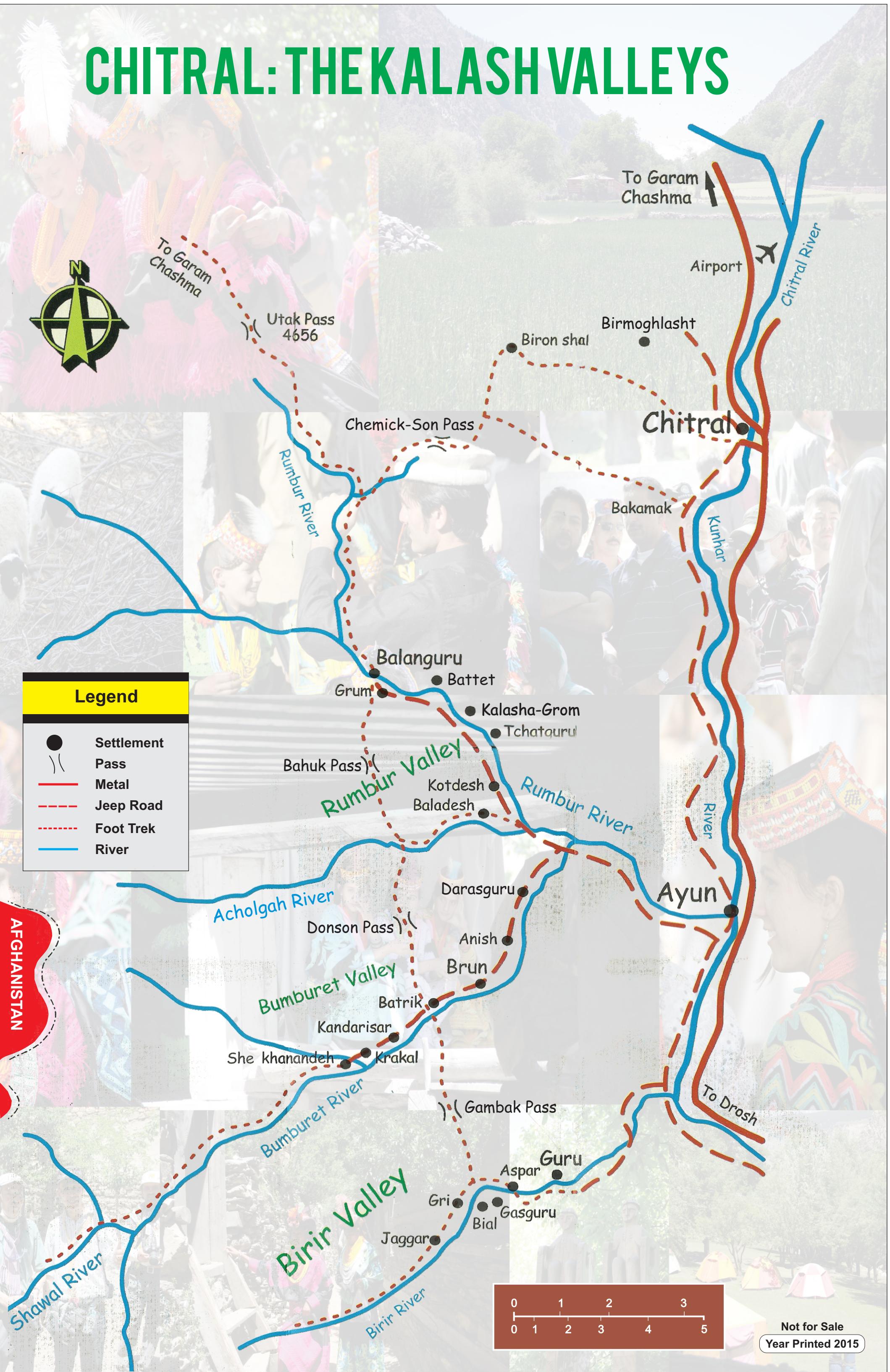
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CHITRAL: THE KALASH VALLEYS



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