

# **The Promoting Heritage Education through Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Kalasha Valleys of Pakistan**

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## **Abstract**

The current paper addresses the inherent contradictions between mainstream education and its implementation among marginalized communities whilst providing examples of how some of these contradictions may be tackled. In November 2015, THAAP, the only UNESCO accredited NGO under the Convention 2003 from Pakistan, initiated the process of community-based inventorying (CBI) of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) among the Kalasha community residing in Mumuret, Biriu, and Rukmu valleys located in the district Chitral, North-Western Pakistan. Out of a total population of nearly 221 million, the Kalasha are one of the smallest religious minorities of Pakistan, with a population of approximately four thousand people. The prior efforts led to the eventual inscription of Suri Jagek: Meteorological and Astronomical practice of observing the sun, moon, stars, and shadows on UNESCO's list of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2018. Over the previous decade, with formal modes of knowledge dissemination evolving, it is reputed that more than 99% of the Kalasha youth attend schools. This results in a proportionally high literacy rate compared with their Muslim counterparts; unfortunately, 'education' and 'literacy' for the Kalasha have also led to cultural amnesia.

The paper highlights the organization's success stories, challenges, and further opportunities for exploring ICH and its relationship with formal education structures.

Primary themes to be highlighted include:

1. The binary opposition between the benefits of becoming 'educated' and learning about one's own culture;
2. The structural demands for religious conversation and the role of education in countering such pursuits;
3. The lack of advocacy and structural involvement of ICH related subjects in formal education curriculums and exploring ways to advocate with the Government;

4. Use local content and its integration informally taught classes in the pre and post-pandemic era (Challenges and opportunities).