

Tracing the Roots: Origin and Evolution of the Indigenous Dardic Torwali Culture of Swat

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Abstract

The people of the Torwali community are enriched in culture and traditions from a historical point of view. They have their rituals, customs, and colorful culture just like all the other communities of northern Pakistan. They are the Dardic type of people living with all the other Dardic communities, like Gawri, Kalasha, and Shina. They are not probed and studied historically. So, this article comprises the living traditions and culture of the Torwali people. This work is done with the help of Secondary as well as Primary sources and Data. In the secondary data, some books and research articles are reviewed and studied to get the most relevant Data for this Article. While for primary Data, some interviews are also conducted at the indigenous level. And for interviews, relevant people are approached and questioned. This article is based on the qualitative approach of the research. Interviews are conducted where the Data from the books are felt insufficient for the analysis. The people of this community have two main Dialects, spoken in Bahrain and Chail Valley. The dominant Dialect is the Bahraini Dialect. Their language has its literature and history. A lot of proverbs are spoken and used in their locality. They have their poetry and Grammar. They have their food items and cuisine still in use and famous. A lot of shops and foods are in the market of Bahrain. They have their indigenous style of clothing. There are also some social evils in the Torwali community. Economically they have a multitype of economy consisting, of agriculture, animal keeping, tourism, and some seasonal work. They are probed in this article very deeply and have tried to explore their culture. They should have explored on official and academic levels so that they may be introduced to the people who are unknown to them.

Keywords: Torwal, Torwali, Torwali culture, Daric, Dardistan, Swat, indigenous Customs

Tracing the Roots: Origin and Evolution of Indigenous Dardic Torwali Culture of Swat

This article concentrates on the original culture and heritage of the Dardic Torwali people of Swat. It starts with the etymology of "Torwali" from different historical and linguistic views. This study emphasizes their traditional farming life, staple crops like maize and wheat, and preferred vegetables like spinach, which is stored for winter as a dish called "Saag". Economic transformations to tourism and hoteling from agriculture are also considered. Social customs, such as the use of moist snuff and hashish due to surrounding cultures, are mentioned in passing. Linguistic legacy of the Torwali language, a Dardic language with two regional dialects, Bahrain and Chail Valley, is considered along with its literature, folklore, and poetry, with special reference to works by women and poets such as Javed Iqbal Torwali.

Research Methodology

This study of the Torwali people and their culture in Swat Valley utilizes a rigorous mixed-methods design, combining secondary and primary data sources to provide a complete picture of the topic. An extensive review of the literature was done, using scholarly articles and books that examine different aspects of Torwali culture. Significant works included and reviewed. These sources provide rich context and background for the research. To record the lived traditions and experiences of the Torwali people, various primary data collection techniques were used. In-depth interviews were conducted with elders, cultural practitioners, and members of the community to learn about their customs, rituals, and day-to-day life. Photographs were also taken on multiple visits to visually record cultural events, traditional clothing, and community activities, adding a rich visual background to the study. Long-term stays in Torwali villages enabled close observation of cultural traditions, festivals, and everyday life, allowing for an in-depth comprehension of the people's lifestyle. Several visits were undertaken during various periods of the year to witness seasonal activities, farming techniques, and festivals, and thereby gain a holistic idea about the people's annual cultural cycle.

The Torwal

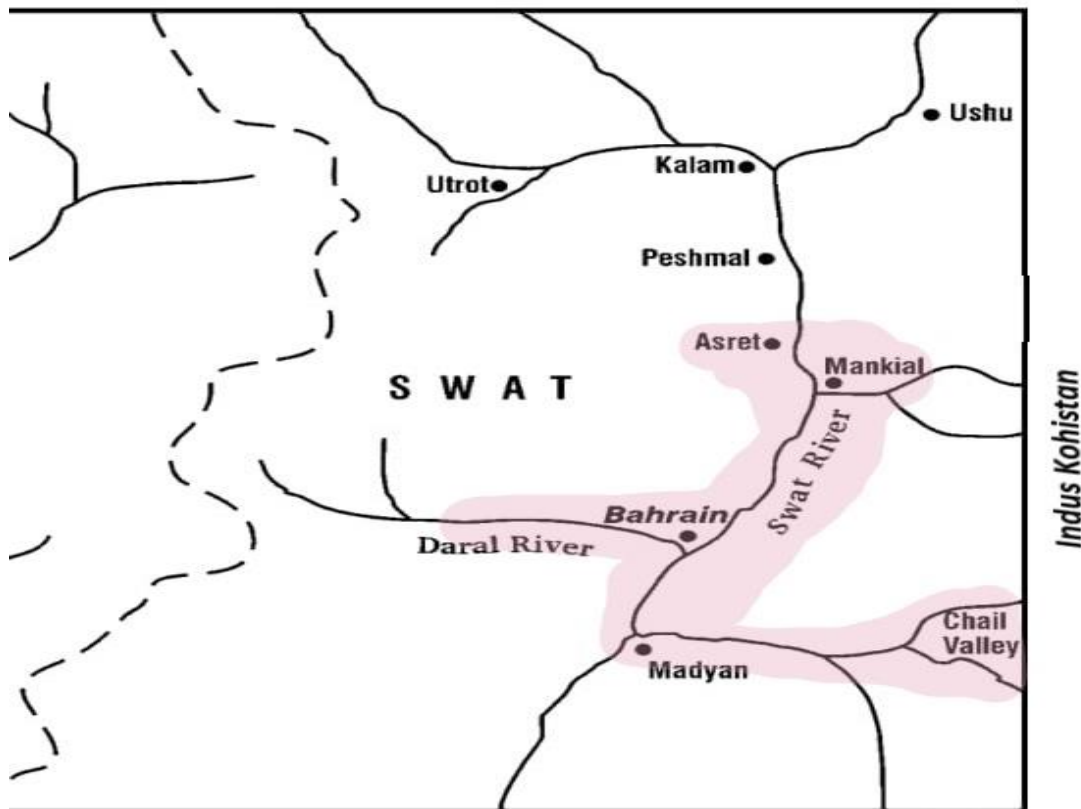


Figure. 1: Map of Geography of Torwali People (Map courtesy: www.theodora.com/maps, Google).

As of now, the people of the Torwali community are generally inhabited in the Tehsil of Bahrain and Chail Valley. The town of Bahrain is also considered the cultural, economic, and political hub of the Torwali community. It is located at an elevation of 4700 feet above sea level and about 60 km north of Mingora. It is located on the right bank of the Swat River.

The word Torwal or Torwali is related to the language that they speak in their area. Its etymology is described in different ways by different historians and writers. This language is the Indo-Aryan language and is spoken only in Swat. There are a large number of speakers of Torwali in Swat. The meaning of

the word Torwal or Torwali refers to the nation or the group of people who were considered warriors. They were considered closely related to swords and fighting. In Tirahi (a language spoken in Afghanistan spoken by a very small number of people) language they were called Men of Swords because of their nature of fighting with the help of swords (Torwali, 2024). The etymology of Kohistan, Dards, and Torwal, all these words are exonyms; these are not indigenous words (Inamullah, personal communication, July 10, 2024). These are given by anthropologists, culturalists, and linguists in some way. The origin of this language is considered as a village named Torwal towards the north of Bahrain (Abid et al., 2001). A small village comprising 40 to 50 houses of Torwali people. The primary author was told that these words were alien words bestowed by some foreigners (Azad, personal communication, May 10, 2024). Both Azad and Inamullah was not able to provide any valuable sources or traces about the word Torwal. They did not even mention any theory raised by anyone about it. However, the research of Zubair Torwali will be considered nearer to accepted because Tucci wrote in his book that the northern side of Gandhara was occupied by various groups of people speaking a variety of languages and are warriors in nature (Tucci, 1977). So, the description given by Zubair Torwali about the etymology of the word Torwal is more credible and acceptable as compared to the other theories.

Culture: A Brief Understanding

From the start of human history, culture has been considered the cooperative element of society. It even provided human beings with the most suitable way of living. It helped in cooperation with the society in a very safe and perfect way. There are a lot of elements and traits as components of culture, which are the basic units that provide humans with a constitution to live and survive in a society. This is defined as the people's behavior towards society and the other people living in their surroundings. It is the pattern of behavior of the people in a society (Offorma, 2016). On general accounts, culture consists of Physical and non-physical elements. The physical elements are Fashion, cuisine, literature, dance, etc. The non-physical elements are beliefs, values, and customs, etc. (Hofstede & Jan Hofstede, 2005). According to the sociologists, there are three main components of the culture: universals, alternatives, and specialties (Offorma, 2016). The first one is considered the base or the core of any culture; without it, no culture can stand. The universal of the culture is language, which is the basic unit of society. While the Alternatives are the innovations and ways of doing some things in a society. These endowments are the alternatives that are necessary for the survival of the culture. The specialties are the knowledge and the different domains that are used to bring benefits to society. Examples of the specialties of the culture are teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and farmers etc. (Offorma, 2016). It is the general definition of the culture and introductions of the components of the culture. Here below the culture of the Torwali people is also probed in the light of various types of sources. Some of them are primary sources collected on a self-basis while others are secondary sources such as books and articles etc.

The Torwali Economy

The economy of the Dardic people of Swat, including the Gawri and Torwali people, is the same because of geographical features. The mountains are very high with icy caps, and naturally, they produce streams in rainy seasons. Therefore, the upper Swat, which starts from Madyan and ends in Utrot and Gabral, has an agricultural-based Economy. The people have their gardens of apricots, cherries, and apples. While the wheat crop is not for reaping purposes, due to cool weather conditions in the summer of March and April, they cut it as fodder for animals. From March, they grow vegetables of different kinds, for example, cabbage, potato, peas, turnip, French beans, cucumber, and spinach are the conventional vegetables of the area (Shah, personal communication, April 21, 2024). But on a commercial level, they also import some vegetables and fruits from other areas of the country. Mingora is the biggest city in Swat It is the

hub of trade, transport, and education. So, all the things that are in short supply in Bahrain are taken from Mingora and then further exported.



Figure. 2: The Grocery Shop, Bahrain Bazar (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

From October, every kind of vegetation starts to end due to the coming winter, along with its snow. In Bahrain and its vicinal areas, the people grow two crops in a year due to less snow falling as compared to Mankiyal, Chail, Balakot, and Bishigram. In October, they grow wheat, and the soft shoots then remain under the snow for 5 and 6 months. After the end of the winter season in March and April, the shoots start to grow again. The areas of cultivation are on slopes, but the farmers converted them into small land patches from the top to the bottom of the hills. The plow they use is made up of wood, and the tool to dig up the soil is called **Phaal** (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).



Figure. 3: An Agricultural Tool of Torwali Farmers (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

A couple of the bulls (called Yuarr in the indigenous language) are used to pull the plow instead of a tractor or any other machinery (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024). The water for irrigation is taken from the small and mini streams created by the glaciers.



Figure. 4: Torwali Farmers Working with their **Yuarr** (Photo: Yasoob Khan Torwal, 2024)

The most favorable vegetable of the Torwali people is spinach. They make a dish called **Saag** with spinach, which is most favorable for the people of Torwal (Shah, personal communication, April 21, 2024). Some of them are also connected with animal keeping. Nowadays, these people have a multiplicity of economies other than agricultural and animal keeping. The authors traveled much in these areas to find out the real information about animal keeping and only found cows in the hills grazing here and there. The physical condition of cows is very miserable, especially at the start of summer, due to a long

period being confined in closed places to prevent a cold winter. So, due to the shortage of grass and for a long time eating dry fodder lacking essential nutrients, they become physically weak and lean. In the summer season, they graze for a long time every day due to the abundance of green and fresh grass, making them healthy. In the whole area of Torwal, only settled Gujjars of Torwali areas keep the goats, while a water buffalo in any area, a single one. This is because buffalo need more grass to eat and more attention for care. Moreover, buffalo cannot survive such a long time of winter in harsh climate conditions because its physical features make it more vulnerable. However, in the lower parts of Swat, one can see buffalo here and there. Due to two crops in a year, there is plenty of grass and fodder to eat. While sheep grazing is still the work of Shpoonkies (another local name for unsettled Gujjars), it is because they owned this profession centuries ago and still are doing it (Shah, personal communication, April 21, 2024). They migrate to plain areas when snow starts and come back at the start of winter in April. Animal keeping has now become a common profession for all the races of Swat. While herding is not favorable except for Shpoonkies. The pure herding of goats is still limited to local Gujjars. Tourism and trading have also become a new source of income for the Kohistani people. In Bahrain, which is considered the most populated area of Torwali people, there are a lot of hotels and restaurants on the banks of the Swat River. A lot of Torwali people owned these hotels and restaurants. In the upper Swat, the tourism industry constantly flourishes throughout the year because of the attractive places and weather. So, Torwali now has a tendency towards this business for earning.

Seasonal work, such as honey-selling and collection, is also common as a good source of earnings. In summer, the honey bees come and make the honey due to the abundance of fruits and pollen everywhere. People collect the honey and sell it in the market. The best collection season of honey is the months of September and October (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).

Another seasonal profession is mushroom collection and selling. People also have shops in the market to sell it because it is pure natural and a good source of smart earnings. People collect it from high mountains and take it to their shops. Its price is in thousands per kilogram. The primary author was traveling in the market of Bahrain, and on asking a shopkeeper, noticed that its price was about 25,000 PKR per kilogram. Its usage is to make soup and serve it in the premium hotels of big cities in Pakistan. It is also used in medicine.



Figure. 5: A Shop of Mushroom in Bahrain (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)



Figure. 6: Hanging Mushrooms in a Shop for Sale, Bahrain (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

The Torwali Language

George Grierson did the first detailed work on the Torwali language in 1929. Sir George Grierson wrote a comprehensive book on the Torwali language and its grammar (Torwali, 2021). Another attempt was also made before Grierson by John Biddulph in 1880 in his book *Tribes of Hindu Koosh* he wrote on the phonetics of the Torwali language. In 1982, the first indigenous work was conducted by Abdul Hamid Karimi, who wrote a book by the name *Urdu Kohistani Bol Chaal*.

Here, the most interesting thing is that after the academic strife of Abdul Hamid Karimi of 1982 in the form of *Urdu Kohistani Bol Chaal*, it has become very easy to understand the historical evolution of the Torwali language. A Torwali activist named Inamullah claimed as the first person who worked for the alphabet of the Torwali language. The evolution and pioneering of the alphabet and its preparation are sometimes claimed by Zubair Torwali in his works (Inamullah, personal communication, July 10, 2024). Both claimed their pioneering work on the language and its development on various forums.

There are two known dialects of this language, Bahraini and the Chail dialect (Abid et al., 2001). Sometimes the Bahraini dialect is also called as Sankiani Dialect. Almost 11% of words in the Bahraini or Sankiani accent are not understood by the Chail Torwali people (Abid et al., 2001). This is due to the language shifting in Chail Valley by the Pashtu vicinity. This is the language and cultural pressure applied by the Pashtu people on the Torwali population of the Chail. Bahrain is considered the hub and center of the Torwali culture. So, the originality of the culture and language is sustained in Bahrain due to the large population of Torwali people. The Torwali people of Chail Valley are nearer to Pashtu-speaking areas than Bahrain; therefore, the tendency of adaptation of the Chail people to the culture is towards Madyan, Kalakot, Asharay, and Khwazakhela. Moreover, the people of Chail and Bishigram Valleys go towards the western side towards Mingora and the nearby towns rather than the eastern or northern side towards Bahrain or Kalam. This is due to the trade, medical, and educational purposes. This dialect is known by the name of the area where the speakers of this dialect are living. In Chail Valley and its vicinal areas, a

new language is also spoken, which is called as Ushojo language. It is recorded as a mixture of Kohistani Shina and Torwali languages (Abid et al., 2001). The effect of the Kohistani Shina is due to the vicinity of Indus Kohistan's eastern side of the Bishigram and Mugalmaar. But its original roots and history are debatable. Almost one lakh people speak the Torwali language in Swat nowadays (Torwali, 2015). This is considered the most southern Dardic language of all the other languages. This is 65% similar to the Gawri language (Abid et al., 2001). The evolutionary map of the Torwali language according to Strand is drawn below:

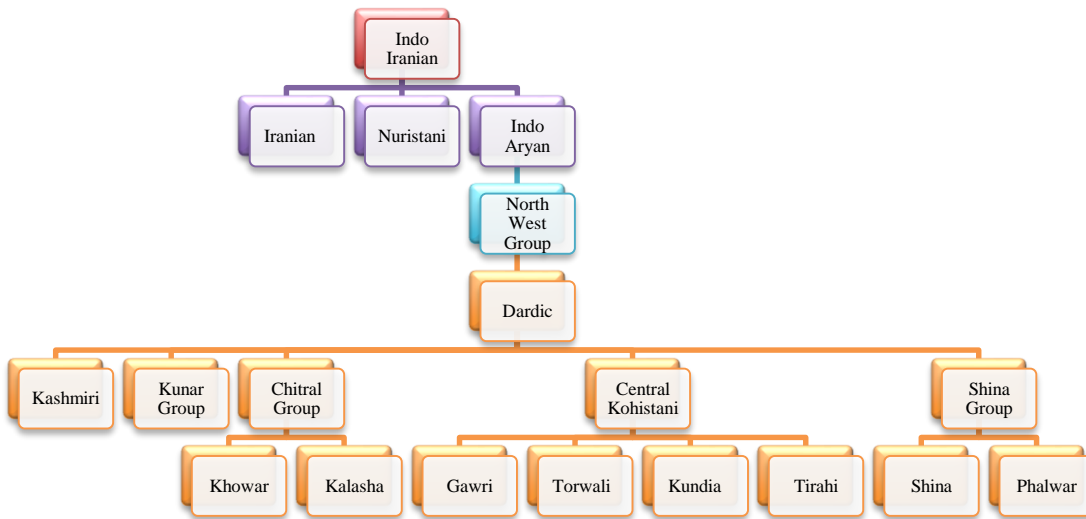


Figure. 7: The family tree of the Torwali Language (Strand, 1973)

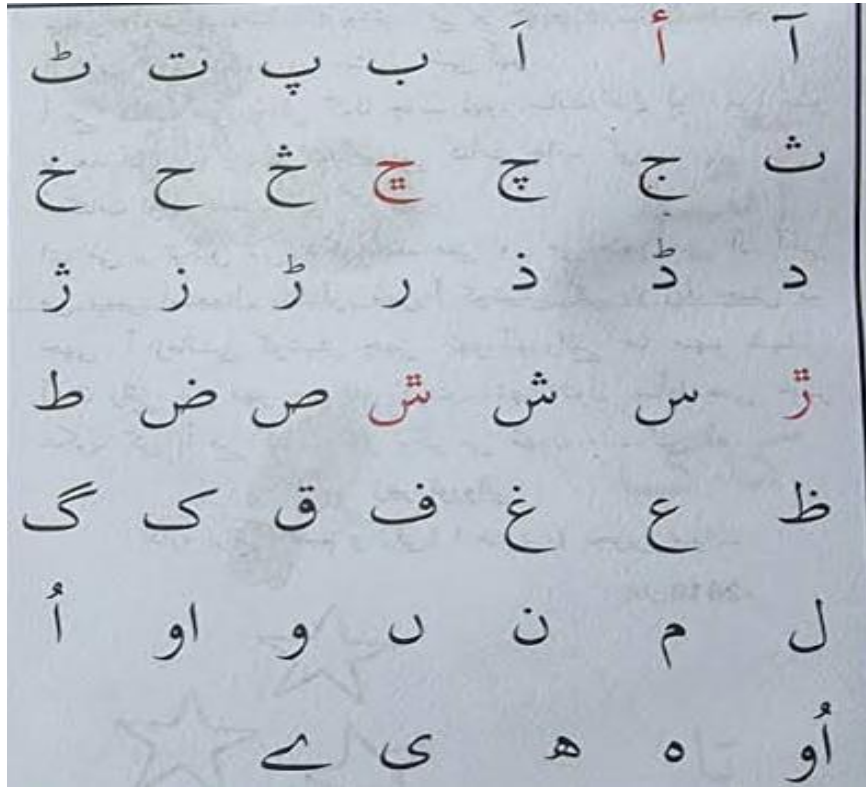


Figure. 8: The Torwali Alphabet (Photo: taken from the book consisting the indigenous lessons, IBT, 2007)

There are a total of 47 alphabets in the Torwali language, which are mostly similar to the Urdu language (Abid et al., 2001). This is an Indo- Aryan language, while the language of the Aryan people was Sanskrit. Therefore, there are a huge number of words in the Torwali language that are taken from Sanskrit. In the 15th and 16th centuries Torwali language was affected by the Pashtu language, and still, Pashtu is doing so with Torwali. But Torwali language, being an Indo-Aryan language, is closer to Urdu, Punjabi, and Sindhi as compared to Pashtu (Abid et al., 2001). The evolutionary history of Torwali is very complicated because of the geography and cultural history in which it is spoken.

Torwali Poetry

The poetry in the Torwali language consists of love affairs, the beauty of the area of the Torwali people, and occasional verses. There are three genres of poetry in the Torwali language. It is believed that women are the major source of poetry in the Torwali language rather than men (Abid et al., 2001). There are three major forms of Torwali poetry:

Phal

It was considered as the old genre of the Torwali language. In modern poetry it is going to be as unconventional genre of this language. This is very romantic type of poetry mostly consisted of a single verse (Abid et al., 2001).

تو یی زله کا می خائست چھی زوانی تھییزید نیم

تو یی گھینہ شال سی جالی یی کوہ مزہ چیر

دی ہو مست ہامو می زوانی ہے نیچھی قیصہ نیم
ہودی زبردست می میطاعت ہوا ہودو حی

The poet in this verse says to his beloved that she has become gorgeous when she puts a shawl over her face. He is praising the beauty of his beloved (taken from the poetry of Jawed Iqbal, an ill-known local poet from Gurnal village near Bahrain town).

Landi Zo

This is also an old type of poetry, and nowadays this is not a conventional poetry. This was used on the occasion of reaping the corn maze and on occasions of joy and happy events. There is a musical effect in the verses of this genre (Torwali, 2021).

پشا عقل لارے بیڈو ئے باوا پیر
منارا جھڑقی کو لہینگی ئے روضہ موش

In this poem, a man wants to visit his spiritual leader's mausoleum, but he does not have the right way to get there. He wants to be an obedient and sacrificial follower. He is very happy but also very caring about etiquette (Torwali, 2021).

Zo

This is the modern genre of Torwali poetry and is considered the most conventional genre of the Torwali language. The poet of the Torwali language revealed that this type of poetry consisted of all the warfairs, events, reaping of the crops, and romance (Torwali, 2021).

لینلا واد گے دھیرین آسمانا اینان یا تو
موا ئوخوڈو لوش آئی ژانگ قسیم سات

In these lines of poetry, a lover is praising the beauty of his beloved. He is saying that the colors of the rainbow are reflected in your facial appearance. I think you came from the heavens (Torwali, 2021). There were many poets and poetesses in old times. The females were not exposed due to the strict traditional barrier. While the males are still remembered from various areas of the Torwal. From the Chail Valley, Mulla Gulzar, Jamroz, and Rustam are famous poets. From Bahrain Valley, Pir Dad, Samundar Khan, and Maluk Shah are the known poets (Abid et al., 2001). A man named Javed Iqbal Torwali is a member of the IBT community as a poet, considered the most active and famous poet of the Zo. He has compiled a book by the name of Inaan in 2015.



Figure. 9: A well-known Poet of the Torwali Language, Javed Iqbal Torwali (Photo: Raheem Sabar, 2024)

The Torwali Proverbs

The proverbs are the real reflection of impressions, expressions, and thoughts of a spoken language in any area by a community. This may reflect the culture, traditions, rituals, and customs of the language and the people. The proverbs are the true indigenous reflection of a culture, other than any aspect of a community. These can easily be understood by every person because of their nature being short, precise, simple, and metamorphic. The author and inventor of proverbs cannot be traced because these are very old materials of any language (Balachandran, 2008). The study of proverbs is called Paremiology, and their origin may be traced back old as the time of Aristotle. The proverbs of the Torwali language are highly affected by the Pashtu language (Ullah, 2020). If one can see the effect of Pashtu on Torwali, then there are possibilities of the effects of Persian on Pashtu. Written below are some Torwali proverbs with English translations:

English Translation	Torwali Version
A weak person is always vulnerable to a stronger person. (It is spoken when someone tries to achieve their purposes at any cost or by using any means.)	پھورڈو وا پوت کمزور او ہوئے جیا ہوئے بھوئی
Money is the source of money.	بڑی گھڑا پیسیدے پیس
It is spoken in situations when someone does their work but not perfectly.	تے گھیر پت اسے دیڑی چھی چھیال
It is said when someone ordered the other to go from here.	سی لہما ای ڈو کو تئو کھو ڈو

These are the indigenous types of proverbs that are commonly used in daily conversation (Ullah, 2020).

Religion in Torwal: Past and Now

The Dardic people are considered the original inhabitants of Swat by sources, including foreigners and indigenous linguists and historians. When they were pushed towards the north, that was the time of the invasion of the Ghazanavi army in Swat. The defeated ruler was Raja Gira, the last ruler of the Hindu Shahi in Swat in the 11th century. Then there may be the chance that the religion of Raja Gira is the old religion of the Torwali people. But nowadays they are the followers of Islam. Swat was the hub and center of Vedic civilization, and this identity of Swat was mentioned in many books. Before the Hindu religion, Swat was the hub of Buddhism at the time of the Gandhara civilization. Foreigners used to come to the Swat Valley to enter the Gandhara. So, the effects of the Gandhara civilization and Buddhism can be seen in Swat. Buddhist culture and its remaining form of sculptures, scriptures, and monasteries were found in lower Swat in plenty. Zubair Torwali told that they (Torwali people) are the indigenous inhabitants of Swat and also asserted that they were not Hindus nor Buddhists but had their religion like the people of Khowar and Kalasha in Chitral (Torwali, personal communication, March 10, 2024). They were not the followers of Hinduism or Buddhism. While they were called Kafirs (who do not believe in Allah or who do not accept Islam) by the invaders and non-Arab people of Afghanistan (Inamullah, personal communication, July 10, 2024). If, as Zubair Torwali theorizes, the Torwali themselves at some point shared the same religion with the Kho and Kalasha communities of Chitral, their religious practices can also be reasonably assumed to have had a substantial resemblance to Rig Vedic religion (or early Hinduism) considering the close connection of Kalasha with the Vedic creed. Michael Witzel underscores this relationship, observing that much of the Kalasha religion closely resembles that of the Rig Veda and still endures in their practices today. In support of this view, Alberto Cacopardo observes that Indian cosmological motifs further underscore the deeply rooted relationships between Vedic and Kalasha worldviews (Ali, 2024). Raja Gira was defeated by Mahmud of Ghazni in the eleventh century (Warriach, 2008). He was considered the last king of the Hindu dynasty of Swat. At that time, both the Buddhists and Hindus and both are to accept Islam and are driven away towards Madyan. An excavation was conducted near Butkara and a human skull. The analysis on a scientific basis revealed that the skull was probably the most ancient human skeleton found in Swat, and it is most similar to the present physical structure of the Kohistani people (Torwali, 2015b). After the decline of Buddhism, the new religion of Hinduism was accepted by the inhabitants. The Valley of Swat then remained under the Hindu Dynasty till the 11th century B.C. From many aspects and sources, the Kohistani people are called Dards by historians, and these Dards are the Gawri and Torwali people of the present time. While the Pakhtun of Swat are identified, they are not the real inhabitants of Swat. They are the invaders and foreigners who come from Afghanistan. Thus, the Pakhtun are the Muslims at the time of invasion, and the Dardic people are the non-Muslim community of Swat. Here are the Dilazaks having their historical importance for Swat. They were also the Pakhtun people living in Swat before the Yousafzai invaders. Even Dilazaks

are deterred by the Yousafzai invaders. So, other than the Pakhtun, only Dardic communities faced religious changes and fluxes from time to time in ancient Swat. The known religious history of Swat starts from Buddhism. Hazrat Mian Qasim (a known preacher of Islam) came to this area to preach to the people (Abid et al., 2001). Some oral traditions revealed that Mian Qasim converted most of the tribes of the Torwali people to Islam religion. While some of the tribes did not accept Islam. Torwali people were converted to Islam by the Mullahs (preachers of Islam religion) of the Pakhtun tribes (Biddulph, 1880). In fact, at that time they were practicing and were stuck to their traditions and culture. Like other Dardic tribes, they have retained their customs as an indigenous identity. There may be some chances about the religious conversion of the Torwali people which tells us that it was the number game that inserted Islam into the Valleys of the Torwali people. After the invasion of the Pakhtun people, there is majority of the migrants came to Swat from Afghanistan. Thus, they became the majority or colonizers of the Swat, and the Dardic community became the minority; therefore the minority was forced to accept the culture, traditions, and religion of the majority. I was told that the 16th and 17th centuries are the most unique centuries of Swat because, in these two centuries, there are all three religions, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism in Swat at the time (Khaliq, personal communication, September 6, 2023). But the religion of the Pakhtun people which was Islam, dominated all the other religions of the Swat. The orientalist did not provide any valid source on the ancient religion of the Torwali people. The works of Grierson, Barth, and Biddulph did not have much reflection on the conversion of the Torwali people into Islam. They did not deal with the ancient religion of the Torwali people. The modern and indigenous researchers, for example, Fazal Khaliq, Inamullah, and Zubair Torwali, also could not provide a credible and valuable source about this problem. According to Biddulph, Boner was considered the territory under the ancient empire of the Torwali people in ancient times, and Torwali was pushed by Pakhtun to such a small area of present-day Kohistan (Biddulph, 1880). From many aspects, they claimed that they were also the inhabitants of lower Swat in old times. So, this confrontation is debatable because if they were the real inhabitants of the Swat, then which race practiced the religion of Buddhism and Hinduism? On the other hand, they are still not ready to accept Hinduism or Buddhism as their ancient religions. They said that Raja Gira was the last ruler of the Dardic people, then Torwali was the real Dardic people of Swat. But they said that our religion was not Hinduism, but they had their own religion and traditions, and this theory may be accepted in the sense that I visited all the areas of Torwali people, but I did not find any other old religious holy place or temple other than a mosque. They may be the community just like Kalasha Dardic in Chitral.

Birth Traditions

Birth traditions are affected by the dominance of the male in the Torwali people. The main reason behind it was the male dominance over society. The male is still considered superior to the female. So, when a male is born in the Torwali region, there are celebrations and greetings (Torwali, 2014). The relatives used to come and greet the mother and father with gifts and sweet food. At the age of 2 or 5, the male child is circumcised according to the religious rituals. This operation was performed by a drum beater who is called **Dom** in the local language (Torwali, 2014). He, at the same time, was a surgeon and a drummer. But nowadays, a doctor does it rather than Dom. A common meal is served to the people who join this time of joy and happiness. But at the time of the female birth mother was cursed and was not helped in recovery even. It was thought that only the mother was responsible for female birth. There were no celebrations or greetings. But time has changed and people have become less reactive to the birth of female children. But the birth of a male is still celebrated and greeted with joy.

Death Rituals and Burial Practices

The burial practices and death rituals are comprised of five things or phases according to the Greek myths. Roman and Greek rituals are considered the most ancient practices as well so, these practices are mourning at the time of death, preparations of the expired body for burial, the journey towards graveyards, burial, and at the last various rituals after the burial of the dead body (Khattak et al., 2016). The burial practices of the Mesopotamian civilization told us that the dead person was buried along with their total ownership, wrapped in a cloth or put in a pot. The excavations in Swat in various areas and sites revealed that they also practiced the same rituals as were in the Mesopotamian culture in ancient times. They put a stone pot or a cist in the grave along with the dead body beside the skull (Kuz'mina, 2007). Mostly, the death rituals of Torwali people are according to the religion they follow. But the rituals they follow as of now are the same throughout the Dardic races, but with a little bit of difference from the other world. Their burial rituals are the same as in the whole country of Pakistan because of the religion they follow. While a little bit different due to their ancient beliefs and customs, they are still practicing culturally. When they were asked about the rituals of ancient times, they replied that they were Muslims from 400 to 500 years ago. So, they performed some of these practices according to their Islamic religion. A Torwali man told that he witnessed that when a man or woman died the heirs of the dead gave the money or food to the poor and needy as alms (Shah, personal communication, April 21, 2024). The women used to go to the house of the dead for mourning. They did it in a musical accent. After the death of a man or woman, some small rituals are performed but after 40 days of death there is a large gathering of people and a big meal is served to the people who come to condole. In the Torwali language, it is called Dubeshum. After every year on the day of death, they served a meal to the people and this is called Tilaen in the local language. He added that nowadays people quit the old rituals of providing money or food to the needy.



Figure.10: A Wooden fence to cover the grave, Chamgarri (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

The wooden fences once were common around and on the graves in the region and locally called “**Jangla Qabar See**” or grave fence. The main purpose of this frame was to secure the dug from shrinking and going down because of the it soil of the hills and also protect the grave from animal grazing. The primary author saw these wooden frames in Mankiyal, Bishigram, Chamgarri, and Chail Valley during the field visits. However, these days, despite wooden frames, concreted blocks are used for this purpose. According to the old beliefs, they did not go to the graveyards because they thought these places were bad and unholy (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024). In old times, the announcement of the death was the responsibility of a specific person who was called Kotwal in the local language. It was because in old times there were no loudspeakers or other such facilities. He used to beat a drum to call the people of the village for the announcement of the news. Kotwal was then provided by the locals after six months with a fixed quantity of grains. There was another ritual commonly practiced in the past called Ishkaat (Torwali, 2014). This was the ritual to pay or to serve gurr (molasses) to the men and women attendants of the funeral. In the past, it was a common ritual but nowadays it is limited to rich families.

Traditions of Marriage

The marriage celebrations of these people are described in a way that includes the competition of dance at the occasion of marriage. The whole village was invited to this celebration. The married couples participated in the dance competition one by one. Kabal Shah, an informant, informed that there was a

tradition among couples to compete with each other in dancing. The song was sung by the participant himself or herself. First, the female performed and showed it to his male partner for his turn. The performance was applauded by the audience with clapping. Then the male performed to beat his female partner. The decision of the winner or loser depended on the audience. And the people are invited by the Kotwaal (an Indigenous name for a community worker). Kabal Shah said that nowadays this tradition is swamped out by modern values, while people have become limited and less social as compared to the old times. The bond of boys and girls was created by the families of both sides. The ceremony of Nikah (a religious bond) is celebrated or held in the presence of all the people invited by both families (Shah, personal communication, April 21, 2024). The ritual of engagement is also practiced, but with the mutual collaboration of both families. The marriage traditions of Torwali with deeper concern reveal that the concept of dowry is also common among the Torwali people. Dowry is the collection of things for daily usage, including furniture, utensils, and ornaments, and even sometimes cows and goats are also given (Torwali, 2014). In old times, silver was used as an ornament, but as of now, gold has replaced it. After the first or second day of marriage, both the groom and bride are called by the friends of both on an invitation. This invitation shows the social honor of both in the community and in the family. They are celebrating their marriages according to their rituals and customs.

The Torwali Cuisine

Nowadays, they are eating the food items followed by the people of the whole Swat Valley. There is no such big difference among the food items of the various races of Swat. The food adopted by these people depends upon the agriculture of the Torwali people. They eat what they grow in their fields. The food even in old times was very simple. However, they are fond of the saag (spinach). The saag is also common in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa even in the whole of Pakistan.



Figure.11: The wild Saag, Madyan Bazaar (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

Wheat was unknown to this region, and people used to bake barley bread (Torwali, 2015), and the indigenous name of this bread is Rhod. Moreover, milk and its products, such as curd, butter, and cheese, are commonly used throughout the year. The tool that is used for stirring the curd is called Mehdaen, and the pot of curd is called Khaelle in their language. A sweet dish called Hagraat is very famous in the Torwali areas. They like it very much and serve it in front of the guests with pride. The three main components are flour, honey, and ghee. They also serve it in front of visitors in their hotels and restaurants. It is considered the special dish of the winter season (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).



Figure.12: A Picture of Hagraat, Bahrain (Photo: Nisar Ahmad Torwali, 2024)

Dance

The dance, in many ways, is the source of joy and entertainment. Its history of invention and evolution is very old. Dance can be a serious way of joy, a passionate mode to show love, and also a way to connect with other people (Bailey, 2015). Some people dance to remain connected with their culture rather than to perform or to feel joy. It is not only a performance, but it is a source to connect the people of a certain community with each other. So, it is the main part of the culture of any community, along with poetry and singing. The dance in the whole of Swat is Attan (the cultural dance of Pakhtuns), which is considered the conventional dance of Swat. As of now, due to cultural pressure from the Pashtu people, the various indigenous cultural aspects of the indigenous people are being abandoned. The indigenous dance of the Torwali people is called Dhiz; however, according to Inamullah, the Dhiz has been performed less (Inamullah, personal communication, July 10, 2024).



Figure.13: A group of the people performing the Dhiz in Simam festival, Bahrain (Photo: Aftab Angel, 2011)

According to Inamullah (personal communication, July 10, 2024), the Torwali people have adopted the Pakhtun dance *Attan*, while abandoning their traditional dance *Dhiz*. Three main reasons for this shift include the influence of Islam, exposure to global cultures through technology and social media, and the growing popularity of *Attan*. Though distinct in style and form, *Attan* has gradually replaced *Dhiz*. A local from Kalam also mentioned that in the past, the Gawri people performed and considered *Dhiz* part of their indigenous tradition as well (Aali, personal communication, July 15, 2024). According to Azad (personal communication, May 10, 2024), some claim *Naat* as an indigenous dance, but it is practiced in Dir Valley by the Gawri community. *Dhiz*, traditionally linked to both Torwali and Gawri people, may be more accurately described as a Kohistani or Dardic dance rather than belonging solely to one group. Though *Dhiz* was common among various Dardic communities, its origins are believed to lie in the Torwali region.

The Torwali Costume

The Torwali women's traditional clothing is a vibrant depiction of their cultural heritage, symbolizing the rich traditions of the Dardic communities of northern Pakistan. They have a unique costume with long, brightly colored frocks richly decorated with hand-stitched embroidery, mirror work, and colorful thread patterns. These finely stitched clothes are usually handmade and kept as family heirlooms, symbolizing the artistic traditions inherited by generations. A stunning embroidered dupatta or headscarf is a fitting addition to the dress, not only as a cultural symbol but also as an indicator of modesty. Although modern fashion has impacted ordinary attire, the Torwali traditional outfit continues to be a valued component of ceremonial life, remaining proudly true to their indigenous heritage and craftsmanship. Not only does the attire serve to honor their heritage, but it is also a symbol of the community's enduring cultural legacy. These embroidered shirts are usually observed hanging in the markets of Bahrain, where local craftsmen have transformed this art form into a means of income.

Through the making and selling of embroidered shawls and shirts to tourists, they make a living out of their traditional craft (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).



Figure.14: Hanging Shirts of Female, Bahrain (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

Architecture

The architecture of the Torwali people is slightly different from the Gawri people of most Upper Swat. It also does not have a similarity with the lower Swat. Due to the limited resources and facilities, the houses of the Torwali people are large but simple. Here, large means a compound-type main room collectively comprised of a dining room, a washroom without a latrine, and a kitchen (Torwali, 2015b). The purpose of the single room was to get warmth in severe winter. The main pillar of the room and the front door are engraved. There is also a storehouse behind every main room because of the storage of basic foods and dry grass for animals. The problem of the latrine was solved in old times in such a way that every community or village specified an area for this purpose. The same area was further divided into two parts for both genders. There were very strict instructions and warnings to prevent crossing the limitations and boundaries of both areas (Shah, personal communication, April 21, 2024). So, these open toilets were used in old times, but nowadays every house has its latrine or toilets. Due to the passage of time, the people of the Torwali community adopted the change of age and era and modified themselves according to modern needs. So, their old techniques of housing are speedily disappearing. And there is a modification in the Architecture of the Torwali people throughout the area and villages also. They are adopting the changes of modernism in their houses and buildings.



Figure.15: A Picture of Bahrain (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

Indigenous Treatments

In the history of the Human race, there are the conventional treatments done by every marginalized society in every part of life. These treatments are based on the ethnobotanical information. This information is the result of extensive research on the plants and trees throughout Human history. Some of them are very important in such a way that major drugs to cure various diseases are made by plants and shrubs. Even in modern times, medicinal plants are biologically tested and verified to improve the health effects of mankind. Nowadays, biomedical analysis extensively provides a large study and ways to improve the health of Mankind by using plants. Not only Humans but also animals were cured by using shrubs and trees as medicines (Rowan et al., 2014). There is a large body comprising research on these medicinal plants in every society of the world. Some of them are even cultivated commercially in some regions of the world. There are even some indigenous plant-based ointments used as healers in various societies of the world, such as in African countries (Sodi, 2009).

Like all other cultures, the Torwali culture also tends to use medication with the help of plants and trees. They also used shrubs and herbs for Bio-Medication to cure Human and animal diseases. Some herbs have been used since ancient times to cure the indigenous diseases of Animals and Humans. The following are some indigenous herbs with indigenous names commonly in use from old times:

سپالنی (Sapalni)

Its scientific name is *Peganum Harmala* it is locally used in throat and larynx diseases (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).



Figure.16: A Picture of Peganum Harmala (Photo: <https://manpasandstore.com/product/harmal-kala-dana/> Google, 2024)

بئین (Baen)

It is the name of an oak tree in the Torwali language. It is used in the treatment of stomach problems and is still used as a local remedy. Its green branches and leaves are also used by the animals as fodder. Its seeds are baked and are used for backache and joint pains (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).



Figure. 17: A Picture of an Oak Tree, Bahrain (Photo: Nisar Torwali, 2024)

تتری (Tatri)

Its scientific name is *Fagonia Cretica*. It is used to control the blood pressure of the body as well as the temperature. It is also used to purify the blood (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).



Figure. 18: A Picture of *Fagonia Cretica*, Bahrain (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

دنداسه (Dandasa)

It is the Bark of the walnut tree (*Juglans regia*) used to clean the teeth. It is considered an alternative to toothpaste and a brush combined. It is the bark of the walnut trunk (Ahmad, personal communication, September 12, 2024).



Figure. 19: A Picture of Juglans Regia (Photo: Mohsan Sattar, 2024)

These are some major herbs and plants that are still in use for medical purposes. It showed their cultural intelligence and research about the medicinal plants found in their habitat. And they know how to use the plants and herbs for their healthy and better life.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Torwali people possess a vibrant cultural heritage that is quickly being affected by modernization and external cultural pressures. From the research and observations in different interviews and meetings, it is evident that although the Torwali people are embracing modern lifestyles, measures need to be taken to conserve their cultural identity. Some of the recommendations to preserve and promote the Torwali culture are listed below:

1. Documentation of Oral Traditions: Their cultural heritage comprises the Torwali language, folklore, songs, and poetry. It is imperative to document these oral traditions in the form of written records, audio recordings, and video documentaries. This will not only help document the language but also help future generations identify with their cultural heritage.

2. Museums and Cultural Centers: Creating museums and cultural centers in Bahrain and other major Torwali areas will preserve artifacts, costumes, tools, and other cultural items symbolizing Torwali traditions and history. They can also function as centers for education for both locals and foreigners, promoting awareness of the Torwali culture.

3. Encouraging Traditional Crafts: The Torwali people's traditional handicrafts, such as embroidery and weaving, are an important part of their lifestyle. Initiatives should be undertaken to motivate the young generations to acquire and practice these age-old crafts. Moreover, providing avenues for selling these crafts locally and globally can help generate economic benefits for the Torwali community.

4. Revitalizing Traditional Dances and Music: While traditional dances like Dhiz have been largely abandoned, efforts to revitalize these cultural practices could help preserve the Torwali's unique identity. Holding cultural festivals, where traditional dances and music are performed, can promote these practices among younger people and visitors.

5. Education and Awareness: Schools and universities in the area should incorporate Torwali culture, language, and history into their curricula so that younger generations can grow up with a good knowledge of their heritage. Promoting cultural exchange programs and partnerships with other indigenous groups could help build mutual respect and understanding.

6. Support for Indigenous Language: The Torwali language must be included officially in schools and documented in linguistic research. Language is the biggest contributor to cultural identity, and it must be preserved so that future generations of Torwali people can speak in their indigenous language.

7. Community-Based Tourism: By encouraging community-based tourism, where visitors get to experience Torwali culture in person, the local economy can benefit without diluting the culture. Tourists can attend cultural workshops, sample traditional cuisine, and learn about Torwali history and traditions, generating an appreciation for their heritage.

8. Partnership with Cultural Institutions: The Torwali people ought to partner with cultural institutions, local and global, in order to raise funds and access resources to finance their cultural activities. In unity, their efforts to conserve their heritage can be strengthened to guarantee that it succeeds in today's world.

By adopting these suggestions, the Torwali community can preserve its cultural heritage while evolving with the changing world around them. Conservation of the Torwali culture will not only serve the community but will also add to the rich fabric of South Asian cultural diversity.

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