

# ***The Impact of US Invasion in Afghanistan on the Tribal Culture of Waziristan***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The tribal culture of Pashtuns inhabiting the North-Western border of Pakistan has evolved over a long time spreading over several centuries. Given its unique geographical location, barren terrains and above all its distance from the centre has enabled the Pashtun tribesmen to preserve their ancestral culture in its natural form. The US invasion of Afghanistan, however, caused unprecedented rupture in the tribal society, affecting almost every part of the Pashtun culture. This paper gives a critical analysis of some of the basic Pashtun's cultural values practiced in Waziristan that have undergone dynamic changes as a result of the rising militancy in the region. These values include: Panah (Pashto: Asylum), Melmastya (Pashto: Hospitality), Badal (Pashto: Revenge), Tigah (Pashto: Ceasefire) etc, which in combine constitute Pashtunwali, a major component of the Pashtun culture. These cultural values are interpreted and analyzed both in the pre and post-9/11 period in order to*

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*know the level of change they have experienced during War on Terror (WOT).*

### **Introduction**

Culture is not a static thing; rather it is a product of an evolutionary process taking long time to evolve. The culture of tribal periphery, away from modern influences, even takes longer time to evolve. Its evolutionary character not only keeps it alive but updates it according to the changing circumstances.<sup>1</sup> The more the process of change in culture is smooth and free, the more it will be stable and lasting. Conversely, "Any forced and swift change in a culture might lead to great rupture in society."<sup>2</sup> This has been proved true in case of Waziristan where the tribal culture underwent swift changes as a result of the uneven relationship between the core (Washington) and periphery centre (Islamabad) after the unpleasant event of 9/11.

Owing to their peripheral position, the people of this region successfully managed to retain their culture in its aboriginal state. Until the mid-19th century, the culture of this region was non-receptive to any foreign influence. It was only after the encounter of colonial power that its culture became vulnerable to external influences. The special legislation of the colonial government and the resultant changes in the power dynamics of this region had deep implications on the tribal culture of Waziristan.

The process of cultural transition in the tribal periphery (Waziristan) expedited during Afghan Jihad when the region became the hub of national and international agencies, each vying for its own imperial designs. It was, however, the US invasion of Afghanistan and the resultant flow of the militants into Waziristan which caused great rupture in the *Pashtuns'*

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1 Muhammad A. Qadeer, *Pakistan: Social and Cultural Transformation in a Muslim Nation* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2011), 19.

2 Interview with Dr. Syed Manzoor Ahmad on Feb 9, 2017. He is an Associate Prof. of Economics and Dean Faculty of Science, Lasbela University Baluchistan.

cultural norms. Some of these norms are explained as below.

### **Panah**

The tradition of *panah* (asylum) has been an important element of *Pashtunwali*.<sup>3</sup> It was usually extended on the request of asylum seeker, particularly when he was under hot pursuit or under duress from somebody.<sup>4</sup> Once a person stepped into one's *Hujra* (*Pashto*: guest room) or house, he would be provided shelter, food, bedding and everything else as per the tradition of *Pashtunwali*.

This luxury would not be denied even to an arch enemy, and he would be protected at any cost. If a person, against whom *badal* (revenge) was pending, asks for asylum, then *badal* would be postponed till the enemy was in their *Panah*.<sup>5</sup> Olaf Caroe has rightly observed that "the denial of sanctuary is impossible for one who would observe *Pakhtun*; it cannot be refused even to an enemy...."<sup>6</sup>

In the tribal history there have been many instances where asylum has been provided in very critical circumstances. The

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<sup>3</sup> *Pashtunwali* establishes general principles to define culturally approved behaviour. It guides interaction among clans, tribes and families in accordance with commonly held norms and regulates all aspects of individual, social and political life. Therefore, *Pashtunwali* is considered a measuring rod to gauge socially approvable and condemnable behaviour. Moreover, it provides a strong ethical code to ensure solidarity in the tribal society. If someone deviates from this code of honour; he is treated as a criminal and his house is demolished. It is considered a *sharam* (*Pashto*: shame) in *Pakhtun* society, if someone does not follow its traits.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Sultan-i-Rome, *Pukhtu: The Pukhtun Code of Life*. Retrieved on February 17, 2017. From: <https://www.valleyswat.net/literature/papers/Pukhto.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ghulam Qadir Khan Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan, The Last Outpost* (Sweden: I-Aleph, 2014), 121-122.

<sup>6</sup> Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans: 550 BC-AD 1957* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1976), 351.

case of Mullah Akhunzada, who had provided asylum to Ajab Khan Afridi<sup>7</sup> has been a typical example in this regard.

An attack on the asylum-seeker would be tantamount to an attack on the host family and avenged accordingly.<sup>8</sup> The protection of asylum seeker was not limited only to the premises of the host house or *hujra*, rather his safe transfer to any place of his choice was also the responsibility of the host family. In the *Pushtun* tribal society this act was called *Badragah* (Pashto: escort). If the asylum seeker was ambushed by the enemy on the way, it was binding on the escorts to respond to the attack.<sup>9</sup> There have been several cases when innocent hosts died while defending their guests and visitors.

Since the past few decades the tradition of *Panah* has been exploited by many actors both local and non-local. During 1970s, the Core and Periphery centre made the best use of it, accommodating thousands of militants in Waziristan from all over the world in the name of Jihad against the USSR. The local tribesmen were made to believe that by providing shelter to these *Mujahideen* (holy warriors of Islam) they were actually serving the great cause of Islam. After the fall of Taliban' regime in Kabul, the militants' swift move towards Waziristan was due to the prevailing trend of *Panah* in this region. At the outset, hundreds of foreign militants were provided sanctuaries under the obligation of *Panah*, but this cultural trend of providing *Panah* has started diminishing. Several factors were responsible for this change.

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7 Ajab Khan Afridi belonged to Darra Adam Khel. After taking revenge upon the British by carrying off Miss Mollie Ellis (daughter of Col. Archibald Ellis), Afridi took refuge with a famous religious leader named Mullah Mahmood Akhunzada of Tirah Orakzai. The British Government put a lot of pressure on Mullah Akhunzada to hand over Ajab Khan and his accomplices but Mullah Mahmood refused to deliver them on the ground that they had taken shelter under his roof, and it was contrary to the Pathans code of behaviour (i.e. *Pakhtunwali*) to surrender them to the British Government.

8 Muhammad Afzal Shah Bokawee, *The Pakhtoons*, (Rawalpindi: Pap-Board Printers, 2006), 144.

9 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 68.

Firstly, unlike the decade of 1970s the foreign militants were declared terrorists by the core and periphery centre; therefore, getting support of the local tribes by simply showing the card of *Jihad* (holy war of Islam) was rather difficult for them. The militants, therefore, employed new strategies. The most effective strategy employed in this regard was to buy the local sympathies through showering money on the poor tribesmen. Most of the tribesmen providing shelter to the foreign militants, particularly Arabs and Uzbeks, were receiving handsome sum of money from them.<sup>10</sup> A tribesman from South Waziristan reported:

The amount of money paid by the foreign militants to the local tribesmen was beyond the latter expectations. Many influential families in Waziristan were striving for sheltering foreign militants as it was lucrative business. Arabs' militants were preferred in this regard as they were the most generous. Some of the tribesmen had even constructed secret compounds for militants within their houses.<sup>11</sup>

Apart, the foreign militants made lavish payments to the host families for the daily use items they needed. This not only paved way for militants to infiltrate in the tribal society but also led to the growing tendency of rent-seeking culture among the tribesmen, the hitherto unknown tradition in the tribal history of Waziristan.<sup>12</sup> Renting a house to asylum seeker and charging him for the provision of food items and other entertainments is not only against the tradition of *Panah* but also the blatant violation of all the norms of *Pashtunwali*.<sup>13</sup> These new tactics badly affected the time honoured tradition of *Panah* and the provision of cost-free services to the asylum seeker.

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10 Imtiaz Gul. 2009. *The Al Qaeda Connection: The Taliban and Terror in Pakistan's Tribal Areas* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 53.

11 Interview with Sailab Mehsud, Journalist from South Waziristan, Islamabad: (June 2016).

12 Interview with Sailab Mehsud.

13 Abdul Shakoor, *Pakhtuns and the War on Terror: A Cultural Perspective* (Ph.D thesis, Department of IR, University of Peshawar, 2012), 195.

Secondly, the militants' independent activities and their subsequent defiance of the government authority brought the host communities (providing shelter to the militants) in direct confrontation with the Pakistan military. Resultantly, military operations not only caused unprecedented displacement but also demolished most of the host communities both in North and South Waziristan. For a tribesman it has now become fairly difficult, if not impossible, to provide asylum to any person as it may invite the wrath of Pakistan government.

Thirdly, the fear of drone strikes has been another most important bar on this tradition. The local families of Waziristan, providing shelter to Al-Qaeda members and its associates, were frequently hit by the drone strikes. In terms of collateral damages, North Waziristan ranked first among the list of all the seven tribal agencies of FATA. The collateral damages caused by the drone strikes have forced many tribesmen to avoid sheltering the people.

Lastly, the widespread destruction and displacement caused by militancy in this region has made it very difficult for the tribesmen to follow the tradition of *Panah* anymore. *Panah* has lot of obligations on the part of host family. Amidst the scarcity of space and resources, fear of military and militants, the tribesmen are no longer able to fulfil the obligations required for extending *Panah*. In the words of Ghulam Qadir Khan Daur:

*Panah* is almost extinct from the culture of Waziristan. Fugitives that are wanted to the militants must be surrendered by the host family or the latter should risk its own expulsion. The only *Panah* is either to join the militants or leave the area. No third option is there. That's why many of us have left the area.<sup>14</sup>

As *Panah* culture has been dwindling, the other closely associated traditions also followed suit. Among these, *Melmastya* is worth mentioning here.

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14 Interview with Ghulam Qadir Khan Daur, Ex-Political Agent, Islamabad: (October 6, 2016).

## Melmastya

The tradition of *Melmastya* (Pashto: Hospitality) has been another most important trait of *Pashtun*'s culture. For a *Pashtun* tribesman it has been a matter of great pride to serve his guest according to his means and sometimes even beyond his resources.<sup>15</sup> The lavishness of *melmastya* would depend upon the financial condition of the host. A poor villager would slay a hen but a wealthy tribesman would slaughter a goat or sheep to serve his guest.

Moreover, the protection of the guest was considered obligatory to such an extent by the *Pashtun* tribesmen that a British administrator, who had no good opinion about the *Pashtuns*, had stated in his report that: "For gold, they will do almost anything except betray a guest."<sup>16</sup>

The concept of *melmastya* has never been confined to the friends, relatives or the guests acquainted with the host but also provided to the wayfarers. The latter would always get preferential treatment over the local guests as they were considered *tha Khudae melma* (Pashto: the Guest of God).<sup>17</sup>

Entertaining the guests has been one of the hallmarks of the *Pakhtun* social status. The greater was the number of guests one entertained, the more he would be respected in tribal society. For a *Pashtun* tribesman "*melmastya* has been more a matter of personal prestige and self-aggrandizement than of a charity or brotherly love"<sup>18</sup>. An important thing counted in *melmastya* has been the warmth with which the guest was received and not the foodstuff served. There

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15 Dauar, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 61.

16 J. W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), 65.

17 Pareshan Khattak, *Pakhtun kaon hai* (Peshawar: Pashto Academy, 1984), 76.

18 B. R. Kerr, "A Progressive Understanding of Pashtun Social Structures Amidst Current Conflict in FATA," *Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies* 3, no. 4 (2010): 23.

is famous *Pashtu* proverb: not to look at the food stuff I offered but see the warmth and joy in my eyes.

*Melmastya* continued to be the most widely practiced tradition in Waziristan even after the region interaction with the colonial and post-colonial administrations. The natives of the region did not accept any external influence in this regard. In the early 1970s, however, there happened some new developments. A large scale of young tribesmen migrated from Waziristan to the Middle East and urban cities of Pakistan in search of employments. Their exposure to the outside world and their awareness of the modern ways of life considerably changed their perceptions regarding this customary practice.<sup>19</sup>

During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan this tribal tradition was fully exploited by both external as well as internal forces for their vested imperial designs. Under a policy of 'social engineering,'<sup>20</sup> the natives of the region were made to realize that they were hosting the holy warriors of the Muslim world waging war against the USSR. They were depicted as brave, fearless and hospitable people who would sacrifice everything for the cause of Islam and for the support of their *Pashtun* brethren in Afghanistan. The benefits of such projection were directly pouched by the core and periphery centre without taking into consideration its side effects on Waziristan—the basic argument of theoretical framework used for the study.

The tradition of *melmastya* though had lost some of its novelties during the past few decades; it still served as an important cultural value even on the eve of Taliban into this region. With the rise of militancy in this region as a result of US invasion of Afghanistan, this tradition, however, underwent deep changes. Unlike the past there was no

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19 Robert. Nichols, *A History of Pashtun Migration (1775-2006)* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 94.

20 Christopher Hadnagy, *Social Engineering: The Art of Human Hacking* (Canada, Indiana: Wiley Publishing Inc., 2011), 11.

convergence between the players of the 'new great game'. The so-called *Mujahideen* of the yesterday were declared terrorists by the core and periphery centres. It was also declared that any act of providing hospitality to the militants by the native tribesmen would be strictly monitored and as such punished by the national and international centres. Given the strained situation it became relatively difficult for the militants to prop-up on the *Pashtun* cultural trait of hospitality, as has been the case in the past. For the militants it was a matter of do or die, therefore, they applied some new and hitherto unknown strategies in this regard.

To win over the local sympathies, the first thing they did was, to shower money on the *Pashtun* tribesmen. The offers they made to the tribesmen were beyond the latter's expectations. Given the prevalent poverty in the tribal periphery, this strategy worked well. The proverbial saying, 'money makes the mare go' aptly attests to the new strategy of the Taliban. This became a striking source of earning for the tribesmen who would have no regard for this cultural tradition of the region any more.<sup>21</sup>

Another strategy they employed was the excessive use of power. Any tribesmen who declined hospitality to the militants or preventing others to do so, was target killing. This created widespread panic in the region. Tribesmen had no option but to provide hospitality under great duress. This kind of forced hospitality was the first ever experience in Waziristan, making the tribesmen toothless on their own homeland.

Apart from the militants, the drone strikes have also played equal role in the deterioration of *melmastya*. The lingering fear of drone strike and the stringent conditions set by the Pakistan military have made it almost impossible for the tribesmen to entertain the guests, particularly the

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21 Shakoov, *Pakhtuns and the War on Terror: A Cultural Perspective*, 3.

strangers.<sup>22</sup> The strangers have to go through a painful process of registration on the military check posts before their entry into Waziristan. Many parts of the North and South Waziristan have become virtually no-go areas for the dwellers of the region, let alone the strangers. In such precarious conditions the practice of *melmastya* has become almost extinct. This tradition was not alone of such kind; there were other traditions of almost similar nature like *badal* that went through deep changes due to war on terror.

### **Badal**

*Khudaya marr me po aghee ke che marr ye kare we* (Pashtu proverb)

Translation: O God! Let me be killed by a person who knows the manner of killing.

The term *badal* (Pashto: Revenge), literally means 'exchange' or 'retaliation' and thus implies seeking justice or taking revenge against the wrong done. *Badal* has been one of the most important commandments of *Pashtunwali*, and it was to be taken not only by the person who had received damages of any kind but also by other members of his family and sometime even by the sub-tribe. In case of murder, generally that person would be murdered in *badal* who was considered as the most influential and worthy in the family of the offender, called the *sarsaray* (the leading figure), so as to give greater loss to the offender's family.<sup>23</sup>

There was no time limit for *badal*. Hence, a famous Pashtu saying has been that '*Pashtun che sal kaalah pas badal wakhli no hum tadi kawi*', meaning that when the *Pashtun* takes revenge after a hundred years, he still makes a hurry. *Badal* has always been exacted at the same coin without committing any excess in this regard.<sup>24</sup> Those unable or

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22 Interview with Ayaz Wazir, former Ambassador of Pakistan, Islamabad: February 7, 2016.

23 Rome, *Pukhtu: The Pukhtun Code of Life*, 2

24 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 104.

unwilling to have their revenge according to the demands of *Pashtunwali* would lose their prestige in the community. In fact they would render themselves liable to *Paighor* (Pashto: Taunting).<sup>25</sup>

*Badal* could be evaded only in exceptional circumstances, like *Nanawaty* (Pashto: entering the enemy house). In such case, if a wrong was done to somebody, the wrong-doer, accompanied by the village elders, would visit the aggrieved party, admit the guilt, express shame and unlikeness for, put himself at the mercy of the aggrieved party and seek pardon. A lamb was slain at the door of the aggrieved party as a sign of repentance. This act of confession made by the accused was to be wholeheartedly accepted by the wrongdoer.<sup>26</sup>

Despite causing unending bloodshed, *badal* still has some positive effects. But this positive side has been largely ignored by some writers.<sup>27</sup> *Badal*, in this sense, has been retribution towards greater justice. Everyone knew that *badal* would never be forgotten or forgiven, so, no matter how much arms or fighting force a family had, it was advised not to use it indiscriminately. From a mere taunt to the grievous of crimes, *badal* has been a debt which has to be paid. There has been a famous saying: *Per de kwandeyanawrakezhi* (Pashto: All debt has to be repaid, even that of a widow).

Having deterrent value, *badal* would help in maintaining peace and order, and respect for human dignity in the absence of any governmental machinery e.g. the law enforcing agencies and courts. The credit of peaceful Waziristan before the advent of militancy in this region largely owe to the tradition of *badal*. The declassified record of the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON)

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25 J. W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 66.

26 Shakoor, *Pakhtuns and the War on Terror*, 36.

27 C. Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908: With a Survey of Policy Since 1849* (London: Curzon Press, 1975), 49.

indicates that the crime rate in the territory of Peshawar Police Station was more than that of whole tribal areas of Pakistan.<sup>28</sup>

With the advent of militancy in this region, the fear of *badal* became extinct. The involvement of the non-state actors and their disregard for the local tradition caused crucial changes in the pattern of *badal*—a hitherto most strictly observed principle of *Pashtunwali*.

The tribal *Pashtuns* had their own way of fighting, including the killing and post-killing treatment with their enemies. Human dignity was upheld in all such cases. Even during the pitch battle there would be brief ceasefires to collect the dead bodies of both the sides and bury it according to the local tradition. Firing at person's face or desecrating the dead bodies were considered socially disapproved behaviours in Waziristan. Tribesmen would respect the dead, paid regular homage to their grave praying for their forgiveness and happiness in the hereafter. Their manner of war has even forced their staunch enemies to call them a 'worthy enemy'.<sup>29</sup> Commenting on their manner of war a local tribesman reported:

While taking revenge from enemy, the people of Waziristan would strictly observe the settled principles of *Pashtunwali*. Fair dealing would be ensured even with the deadliest of enemies. Immoral acts like deceit and treachery in dealing with one's enemy would be considered against the concept of honour and a person committing such act was considered coward. Revenge would be deferred in case the assassin was on their soil or accompanied by women and children or any other person not belonging to his family. If all these conditions were found fulfilled, they would take revenge but still make sure that the dead body has neither been desecrated nor

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28 See File no.26/CF/76 Government of Pakistan, Cabinet Division, *Crimes rate in FATA: An Official Report*. National Documentation Center (NDC), Islamabad.

29 Shakoor, *Pakhtuns and the War on Terror*, 197.

dumped on the roadside. They would even inform the assassin family that they have settled the old score.<sup>30</sup>

These principles have been seriously violated by the militants. They beheaded tribesmen on different occasions, and made their videos to create panic among the local people. The desecration of dead bodies and dumping them on the roadside with a note that the person is killed for spying against the Taliban, are all the imported 'values' hitherto unknown in Waziristan.<sup>31</sup> Their conduct has not only been the blatant violation of the basic human rights but it also strongly contradicts the cultural values of the *Pashtun's* tribesmen. Referring to the new changes a tribesman from North Waziristan reported:

The slaughtering of people is totally alien to our tribal culture. It has been a Central Asians tradition. None can find such precedence throughout in our tribal history as laid by Taliban. We have never made the use of knife to cut the throats of our enemies. We would just use bullet to kill in case *badal* was pending.<sup>32</sup>

Tribal disputes in Waziristan were previously regulated by the *Riwaj* (Pashto: customary law). Every crime had a fix penalty and all the grown up were well acquainted with it. Apart from accidental cases, assassination of a tribesman would take place after solid justification for it. They would strictly observe the proverbial saying: *Awal mey parh ka bya mey marh ka*. (Pashto: First defeat my argument then you can kill me). This indigenous system of crimes regulation by the tribal customary law, however, is no more there in Waziristan. Unlike the past, people are now killed by faceless enemies. The actual cause of assassination is not known to either party. Ghulam Qadir Khan Daur explained this point as:

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30 Interview with Mir Badsha—an aged tribesman from NWA, Bannu, November 13, 2016.

31 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 351.

32 Interview with Aslam Khan—a tribal malike from South Waziristan, Wana, October 18, 2016.

The man with the knife and the one under it are both reciting *Allah o Akbar*, both think they are innocent. The man with the knife doesn't know why he is killing and the one below doesn't know why he is being killed? They don't know each other and have never come across each other in their lives.<sup>33</sup>

The above statement clearly reflects the absence of any moral justification for the killing of tribesmen. This differentiates the Taliban's pattern of killing from the traditional way of *badal* previously followed by the local tribesmen.

Another most important change differentiating *Taliban's* action of killing from that of the traditional pattern of *badal* has been the indiscriminate killing of women and children by the militants. Previously in all tribal hostilities, blood feuds and even in prolonged tribal vendetta women and children were especially exempted. It was considered below the dignity of *Pashtun* to fire at woman. In this regard, a famous *Pashto* proverb would be strictly observed; —*tha kali woza khu da narkha ma uzaa* (*Pashto*: you can leave the village but you would not be allowed to violate the set standards).

In Waziristan women of those families having enmities would guard their houses all the night, as enemies, under no circumstances, could fire at them. They would come out of the houses to inspect the area, and ensure that no one was hiding to attack their men.<sup>34</sup>

According to the tribal custom, they were at liberty to supply food, water, and ammunition to their men engaged in firing at a hill top or entrenchment outside the village. According to L. White King during the prosecution of feuds, it was generally understood that women and children under the age of 12 were exempted from reprisal and were free to pursue their ordinary avocations without interference.<sup>35</sup> Commenting on

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33 Interview with Ghulam Qadir Khan Daur—Ex-Political Agent, Islamabad, October 6, 2016.

34 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 73.

35 L. White King, *Orakzai Country & Clans* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1984), 67.

the tribal way of war J. W. Spain remarked that in the blood feuds it was the first aim of each party to gain possession of the water supply of its opponents and if it was under fire of the enemy, women who were theoretically never fired at, had to undertake the dangerous task of bringing water to the beleaguered garrison.<sup>36</sup>

This view was substantiated by a local tribesman who said:

In all bloody feuds whether between families or clans or tribes, children and women are spared. It is considered cowardly and unmanly act to raise hands on them. Many irritated women have been observed publicly abusing the armed tribesmen, without having any single reciprocal word from the latter, as it would go against the code of Pashtunwali.<sup>37</sup>

This tradition of respecting women during tribal feuds started vanishing by the rising militancy in this region. This was followed by the disappearance of some other associated traditions of such kind like *Tigah*—an effective instrument upholding peace in the tribal periphery.

### **Tigah**

Literally means digging or putting a stone between the warring factions, *Tigah* (Pashto: Ceasefire) has been one of the most effective tools, which is used to end hostilities and upholding peace in Waziristan. The word ‘stone’ was used symbolically since no actual stone was put at the time of ending the warfare. When hostilities broke out between two rival factions and firing started from the surrounding hills and the trenches, village elders or the tribal *Jirga* urgently convened for this purpose would intervene to prevent bloodshed and restore peace.<sup>38</sup>

The *Jirga* members with white flags in their hands would go into the middle of the warring parties even amidst the heavy

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36 Spain, *The Pathan Borderland*, 73.

37 Interview with Fareedullah—Producer, Radio Pakistan, Miranshah NWA, Islamabad, September 16, 2016.

38 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 67.

firing. They were often accompanied by the women with their own symbolic gestures, either without their veils on their heads or with the Holy Book in their hands. The intervening persons were pretty sure that they could neither be disrespected nor fired at by the warring parties.<sup>39</sup> The warring parties on the other hand were bound by this cultural tradition to ceasefire or otherwise risk their expulsion from the community or at least face the social defamation.

The objective of the underlying *Tigah* was to restore normal conditions by holding the feelings of the enmity in abeyance, cooling down tempers and providing opportunity to the warring parties to settle their disputes cordially through tribal elders on the principles of justice and fairplay. The rival parties strictly adhered to the terms of the truce and the breach of such terms would be punished with a heavy fine. If the guilty party declined to pay the fine, the *Jirga* would proceed to recover it forcibly. The *Jirga* might go to any extent and it may include the burning of the houses of the guilty party or its expulsion from the locality. This task was accomplished with the help of a tribal *Lashkar* composed of armed tribesmen.<sup>40</sup> With the absence of any government machinery and administrative control, this locally developed social mechanism was the only source sustaining peace in the tribal society.

This practice remained intact in Waziristan even after the Taliban's intrusion in the region. This is quite unfortunate that the new system, based on power struggle among the competing forces, have no room for any traditional mechanism; having the ability to lead the tribal society towards peace and stability. Their disregard for the local traditions has forced the tribal elders to keep themselves away from such hostilities. The institutions of *Jirga* and

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39 Ali Gohar, *Who Learns from Whom? Pukhtoon Traditions in Modern Perspective* (Peshawar: Abasin Printing Services, 2010), 66-67.

40 Gohar, *Who Learns from Whom?*, 67.

*Lashkar*—the two essential agencies of the *Tigah*<sup>41</sup>—were already redundant. Without these auxiliary institutions, this traditional mechanism of *Tigah* was doomed to failure.

To restore peace to the region, the Pakistan Army signed several peace deals with the militants' commanders both in North and South Waziristan, but none of them lasted for more than few months. The mode and motives of these deals were quite different from those of the traditional *Tigah*, therefore, they were not respected by the warring parties. Both the parties used these deals as a breathing space to regain their lost energies and reorganize themselves against each other.<sup>42</sup> During their cross-firing they have never shown any soft corner or a sign of respect for the local population particularly the women—the most sensitive issue of the tribal areas. The indiscriminate killing of the women during their infighting has been hitherto unknown tradition in the tribal culture.

### **Cultural Entertainments**

Waziristan had fewer but unique cultural entertainments like marriage festivities, entertainment games, music and dancing parties etc.<sup>43</sup> Music served as an integral part of these activities. *Dhol* (Pashto: Drum), *Bansary* (Pashto: Flute), *Sarinda* (Pashto: Violin) and *Pikanry* (Pashto: Clarinet) remained the part and parcel of their traditional music. Hardly a marriage festival in Waziristan would go without the display of music, particularly of the drum and clarinet. Marriage ceremonies would continue for days and enjoyed by all belonging to the community especially by the members of the bridegroom. The groom's family would arrange a feast for the whole village and the guests coming

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41 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 66.

42 Ismail Khan, "Peace Deal: Back to Square One!," *Dawn*, September 6, 2006.

43 Molana Dr. Taj Muhammad, *The Pashtuns of Waziristan and the Custom Based Waziri Law from Shariah Perspective* (Islamabad: Mithaq Enterprises, 2005), 316.

from abroad.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the wedding, women would sing folk songs narrating the stories of love, beauty, chivalry and history of the forefathers.

In all the wedding ceremonies the most important occasion was that of the mixed dancing. It would often take place within the house of the bridegroom where both the young boys and girls of the family and that of the relatives would dance together in front of the drummer.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from marriage ceremonies the most common source of entertainment in Waziristan has been the musical nights arranged in *Hujra* (Pashto: village community centre) where folk artists and music lovers would sing and perform on folk musical instruments such as *Rabab* (Pashto: guitar like instrument), *Mangay* (Pashto: pitcher), *Shpelay* (Pashto: flute) etc.<sup>46</sup> The art of music was not only confined to the artists, rather most of the elders in Waziristan were qualified musicians. There were local singers who entertained people by singing local songs called *Looghaat*. These legendary figures through the art of their singing ruled over the hearts and minds of the people. People would walk miles to attend such parties without any fear of its being attacked or the idea of its being against religion.<sup>47</sup>

With the Afghan War, however, the dynamics of power started shifting from the relatively secular section to the most conservative segment of the tribal society. Amidst the changing power structures some of the aforementioned cultural values like mixed dancing became almost extinct in this region.

Despite these challenges, most of the aforesaid cultural entertainment still remained the part and parcel of the tribal

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44 Laiq Shah Darpakhel, *Waziristan* (Lahore: Al-Matbatul Arabia, 1993), 356.

45 Muhammad, *The Pashtuns of Waziristan and the Custom Based Waziri Law from Shariah Perspective*, 317.

46 Darpakhel, *Waziristan*, 274.

47 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 78.

culture. With the emergence of Taliban, however, the cultural entertainments started shrinking very rapidly. Now hardly any area would be there where artistic expression such as open air performance, ceremonies and festivals could take place without the risk of participant's lives.<sup>48</sup>

The wedding ceremonies that used to continue for days are now end in hours without any music programme and aerial firing. The birth of a child is no more celebrated according to the tribal customs. Religious festivals like *Eid* have simply become formalities, and meeting of family members on such occasions has almost become impossible, as all the members have been scattered over the different parts of the country as a result of the military operations. The tribal customs and the ways of the forefathers of which tribesmen were proud have been declared by the militants as the ways of infidels.<sup>49</sup>

The Pashtu folk songs that used to define tolerance and cooperation etc. now stand for violence. It has given way to the militant centric poetry which can be best reflected from the song of a Pashtun singer Nazia Iqbal: *Khudkasha damaka yama* (Pashto: I am but a suicide explosion).

In some areas, especially Miram Shah and Mirali Tehsils, video and CD stores and barbershops were attacked to create a fearful climate. Consequently, most of the local singers, drummers and musicians have either abandoned their professions or forced to leave Waziristan.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion

A comparative analysis of the aforesaid cultural values in the pre- and post-9/11 era reveals that they have been deeply affected by war on terror in this region. Unlike the

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48 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 83.

49 Daur, *Cheegha: The Call from Waziristan*, 45.

50 International Crises Group Working to Prevent Conflict Worldwide, "Pakistan Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants", *Asia Report* no. 125, December 11, 2006, 22.

evolutionary changes that have some positive impacts on society, the current changes in Waziristan have been more abrupt and of arbitrary kind, therefore, causing greater rupture in the tribal culture. It not only perverted the form of existing cultural traditions but replaced it by align culture totally unacceptable to the tribesmen. Hence, the existing cultural values could no more serve the geo-strategic and geo-political interests of the core and periphery centres, therefore, they became sandwiched among the players of the new great game. The scars of new developments though are deeper for the tribal culture, its political impacts, however, cannot be overlooked either.