

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA INVENTORY ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Name of the Element: Ghona Chanja: Kalasha ritual during the winter solstice festival (Chawmos) at the Indrein altar to give offerings to the visiting deity-Balumain

Brief Description: On 20th of December, during Chawmos, women make baskets on a rooftop whilst singing religious songs. The baskets are called Indrein Grionyak and are made of Holly Oak twigs, and are used for the offerings to be made to Balamain. Girls make Shaghai in the same vicinity which are chains of interlocked Holly Oak twigs. Elsewhere men make torches called Chanja out of Juniper twigs and use Holly Oak to tie them together.

The basket is filled with food to be offered to Balamain at the high altar called Indraine. At midnight men and women take the baskets and Shaghai up the mountain to the altar in light of their torches. The high altar is in Batrik.

"Bala" means Big and "main" means distributor. The name means the divine provider. Shaghai are swung over the trees at the altar. It is considered a good sign when they get stuck in the trees or mountain ridges. The food in the baskets and wine is offered to the fire at the altar, the men eat what is left. The high priest selected the previous year initiates the ceremonies. Prayers for the new year are made and animal sacrifices are made to pick the new priest.