

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA INVENTORY ON THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Name of the Element: Madahik: Etymologically translated from Manda – Coffins, Ik – to come Ritual commemorating the lives of ancestors through a feast during the Chawmos festival

Brief Description: Madahik, etymologically from the words Manda (coffins), and Ik (to come) is a ritual carried out in the honour of the souls of deceased ancestors. A night prior to Madahik, preparations for the ritual start. Walnut bread is made and preparation of food for the event begins. An air of quietness surrounds the atmosphere as it is believed that the souls of ancestors shall be visiting their clan members. People do not wear new clothes, nor wash their hair as it is felt that the day being dedicated to the deceased, only they may dress up in new clothes etc. In the evening around Sun down, people start gathering around the Hand (temple), and a basket of food and a Chilikotik (a 2 to 3 feet high fort made of Pinus Gerardiana (chilgoza) wood) is placed outside the temple. Within the Chilikotik a charpoy (Shin), a traditional ladder (Shidek), and a handloom (trukuzhe shin) are placed. Next to the Chilikotik a Sawew (a traditional basket used to store and distribute food) filled with offering of foods such as walnut bread/Ja'un , wheat pancakes/tasili , walnut pancakes/Bilili'au, fruits, Naswar/tobacco snuff, and any special thing particular ancestors may have been fond of are kept in the basket. With the Chilikotik and Sawew full of offerings placed outside the temple, people start gathering inside the temple holding small fire torches. A person lights the chilikotik ablaze which lights up the area outside the temple for the ancestors to visit. Every member of the village enters the temple and the doors are completely shut. A village elder or the Qazi calls loudly to the souls of the deceased – “O gad'a bas'ara ew zhuy zhi pi o para”, “oh elders, come eat and drink, then leave”. Two main openings of the temple i.e. the door and the ceiling opening/Kumbapur are closed. After waiting inside the temple for a period of ten to fifteen minutes, during which the souls of the deceased arrive outside the temple and eat the offerings placed for them and leave in a state of happiness, the doors of the temple are opened and everyone walks outside. By this time the chilikotik has completely burnt to ashes. The food placed in the Sawew for the souls of the deceased to feed on are eaten by young girls and boys who are yet to be considered adults (e.g. the girls who are yet to visit the Bashali). Some food placed inside the temple is eaten by adults of respective clan members such as the Bhumberdak and Rachikoshdari clans of the Krakal village-Bumburet. After this particular ritual, during the night the atmosphere of competition resumes and dancing and singing takes place among two groups divided by their clans who sing and dance in a spirit of rivalry.