

Cultural Knowledge Transmission and Oral History: A Study among the Sadozai Tribe of Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

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Abstract

Oral history is a vital means of preserving indigenous knowledge, collective memory, and cultural identity in tribal societies where written historical records are limited. This study investigated the role of oral history in the transmission of cultural knowledge among the Sadozai tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan. A qualitative ethnographic research design was employed, and data were collected from 30 purposively selected households through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Participants included tribal elders (30.0%), household heads (40.0%), religious scholars (13.3%), and other knowledgeable community members (16.7%). Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns of cultural transmission and historical memory. The findings revealed that 100% of participants identified storytelling as the principal mechanism for preserving genealogy, migration history, and tribal identity. Furthermore, 96% highlighted the tribe's contribution to the 1947 liberation movement, while 94% acknowledged the leadership of Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan. Historical migration from Afghanistan (93%) and Pashtun ancestry (91%) remained central to collective identity. Despite substantial cultural assimilation, 95% of respondents reported the predominance of the Pahari language, 92% associated language change with long-term settlement in Kashmir, and 87% linked it to intermarriage with Kashmiri families. Nevertheless, traditional institutions, including the Loya Jirga, respect for elders, kinship solidarity, and genealogical traditions, continue to reinforce tribal cohesion. Cultural knowledge is transmitted through vertical, horizontal, and oblique pathways, primarily during family gatherings, weddings, funerals, and community assemblies. The study concludes that oral history remains a resilient mechanism for safeguarding the Sadozai tribe's intangible cultural heritage and recommends systematic documentation of oral narratives to ensure their preservation for future generations.

Keywords: Oral history; cultural transmission; indigenous knowledge; Sadozai tribe; Azad Jammu and Kashmir; collective memory.

Introduction

Human societies preserve their collective identity through the continuous transmission of cultural knowledge, historical narratives, values, customs, and social practices across generations (Drona et al., 2025). In communities where written historical records are scarce or absent, oral history functions as one of the most significant mechanisms for safeguarding collective memory and cultural continuity. Oral traditions not only document historical events but also preserve indigenous knowledge systems, genealogies, moral values, social institutions, and cultural identities that

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shape the worldview of communities. Consequently, oral history has become an important methodological and theoretical approach in anthropology, sociology, history, and heritage studies for understanding how societies remember, interpret, and reconstruct their past.

The Sadozai tribe represents one of the historically significant Pashtun tribal groups whose descendants are now concentrated in several districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), including Sudhnoti, Poonch, Kotli, and Tahlian. Historically, the tribe traces its ancestry to Sado Khan, a prominent tribal leader of Kandahar, Afghanistan, and is widely recognised for its role in the political and military history of Afghanistan and Kashmir (Ahmed et al., 2003; Snedden et al., 2013). Following migration from Afghanistan, members of the tribe settled in the Kashmir region, where they gradually became associated with the Sudhan community while preserving many elements of their Pashtun cultural heritage (William et al., 2009). Throughout the history of Azad Kashmir, the Sadozai tribe has played a prominent role in regional political movements and the struggle for freedom, making its historical narratives an essential component of local collective memory (Lamb et al., 2003). Despite centuries of migration and settlement, the Sadozai community has continued to preserve its historical identity through oral traditions. Family elders, tribal leaders, religious scholars, and community storytellers serve as custodians of historical memory by transmitting narratives concerning genealogy, migration, tribal conflicts, customary laws, cultural practices, and collective experiences to younger generations. These oral accounts not only strengthen social cohesion but also reinforce cultural identity and tribal solidarity in changing socio-cultural environments (Downey et al., 2015). Such processes demonstrate the resilience of oral traditions as repositories of historical knowledge despite increasing modernisation, urbanisation, and digital communication.

Oral history has evolved beyond the simple recording of memories into an interdisciplinary research methodology that captures lived experiences, community perspectives, and indigenous knowledge often overlooked by conventional historical documentation. According to Ritchie (2010), oral history involves systematically collecting, preserving, and interpreting firsthand accounts through recorded interviews. Similarly, Nyhan and Flinn (2016) emphasise that oral history provides access to personal memories that enrich historical understanding by incorporating voices traditionally excluded from written archives. Consequently, oral narratives are increasingly recognised as valuable historical evidence that complements documentary sources while preserving intangible cultural heritage. The transmission of cultural knowledge is a dynamic social process through which communities reproduce their beliefs, customs, language, rituals, and values across generations. Richerson and Boyd (2005) describe cultural transmission as the mechanism by which individuals acquire culturally shared knowledge through observation, imitation, teaching, and social interaction. Cultural transmission enables societies to maintain continuity while simultaneously adapting to changing social conditions. However, migration, educational transformation, globalisation, media expansion, and cultural assimilation have significantly influenced the preservation and transformation of indigenous knowledge systems (Basuchoudhary & Cotting, 2014; Truskanov & Prat, 2018). These changes raise important questions regarding how traditional communities negotiate cultural continuity amid rapidly evolving socio-economic contexts.

Although previous studies have documented the historical development of Pashtun tribes and the political history of Kashmir, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding how oral history facilitates the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge among the Sa-

dozai tribe in Azad Kashmir. Existing literature largely focuses on historical events, migration patterns, or political contributions while overlooking the lived experiences, storytelling traditions, cultural memories, and indigenous mechanisms through which historical knowledge is preserved and transmitted within families and communities. This gap limits our understanding of how tribal identity and collective memory continue to evolve within contemporary Kashmiri society. Therefore, the present study investigates the role of oral history in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge among the Sadozai tribe of Azad Kashmir. Specifically, the study explores the historical narratives, mechanisms of cultural transmission, intergenerational learning practices, and the influence of social and cultural change on the preservation of tribal identity. By documenting community perspectives and indigenous historical knowledge, the research contributes to anthropological scholarship on oral traditions, cultural continuity, and intangible cultural heritage while providing valuable insights into the historical identity of one of the prominent tribal communities of Azad Kashmir.

Literature Review

Oral History as a Source of Indigenous Knowledge

Oral history has emerged as an essential methodological approach for documenting historical experiences, particularly among indigenous and tribal societies where written documentation remains limited. Unlike conventional historical records that primarily reflect political or institutional perspectives, oral history captures the lived experiences, memories, interpretations, and identities of ordinary people (Ritchie, 2010). Through recorded interviews and community narratives, oral history preserves historical information that might otherwise disappear with the passing of older generations. Nyhan and Flinn (2016) argue that oral history bridges the gap between official historical documentation and community memory by preserving multiple perspectives of historical events. Indigenous communities rely extensively on storytelling, songs, genealogies, myths, rituals, and folklore to preserve their collective memory and reinforce cultural identity. Consequently, oral history has become increasingly recognised as an indispensable tool for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Cultural Transmission and Intergenerational Learning

Cultural transmission refers to the processes through which knowledge, beliefs, customs, language, values, and behavioural norms are transferred across generations. Reyes-García et al. (2016) explain that cultural transmission occurs through vertical transmission (parents to children), horizontal transmission (peers), and oblique transmission (elders or community leaders). These mechanisms enable societies to preserve cultural continuity while adapting to changing environmental and social conditions. Anthropologists recognise storytelling as one of the most effective mechanisms of cultural transmission because it simultaneously communicates historical knowledge, moral values, and social expectations. Tribal elders function as cultural custodians whose narratives strengthen group identity, reinforce kinship relationships, and transmit collective memories that define community membership.

Oral Tradition and Tribal Identity

Tribal societies throughout South Asia have historically relied upon oral traditions to maintain genealogical records, migration histories, customary laws, and collective memories (KC et al.,

2025). Oral narratives strengthen tribal identity by connecting present generations with their ancestral past and reinforcing shared historical consciousness. Genealogical narratives not only establish descent but also legitimise social organisation, leadership, inheritance, and customary authority. Studies of Pashtun tribes have demonstrated that oral traditions remain central to maintaining tribal cohesion despite migration and geographical dispersal. These traditions preserve historical accounts of migration, warfare, alliances, and political leadership while reinforcing collective identity through repeated storytelling during family gatherings, religious occasions, and community ceremonies.

Cultural Assimilation and Preservation of Identity

Migration inevitably exposes communities to new cultural environments that influence language, customs, traditions, and social practices. Basuchoudhary and Cotting (2014) describe cultural assimilation as a process through which minority communities gradually adopt elements of the dominant culture while retaining aspects of their original identity. Assimilation is rarely complete; instead, communities often negotiate between preserving inherited traditions and adapting to changing social realities. Among tribal societies, oral history frequently serves as a mechanism of cultural resilience. By continuously recounting ancestral narratives, migration stories, and genealogies, communities preserve their distinct cultural identity even while adopting linguistic, economic, or social characteristics of neighbouring populations.

Oral History in South Asian Tribal Communities

South Asia possesses remarkable cultural diversity characterised by numerous indigenous and tribal communities whose histories have traditionally been preserved through oral narratives (Claus et al., 2020). Anthropological studies across Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Afghanistan demonstrate that oral traditions remain essential sources of historical knowledge where archival documentation is limited (Mathur et al., 2000). Within Pakistan, oral traditions play a particularly significant role among tribal populations inhabiting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. These narratives preserve information concerning migration, tribal conflicts, customary laws, kinship systems, and historical alliances. However, comparatively little empirical research has examined how oral traditions continue to function within Pashtun-descended tribes settled outside their ancestral homeland, particularly the Sadozai community of Azad Kashmir.

The Sadozai Tribe and Historical Memory

Historical literature identifies the Sadozai tribe as an important branch of the Pashtun tribal confederation with ancestral roots in Kandahar, Afghanistan (Ahmed et al., 2003). Following migration into Kashmir, the tribe gradually established settlements throughout present-day Azad Jammu and Kashmir while maintaining strong genealogical traditions linking them to their Afghan ancestry (William et al., 2009; Snedden et al., 2013). Historical accounts also acknowledge the tribe's contributions to regional political developments and the freedom movement of Azad Kashmir (Lamb et al., 2003). Despite these historical contributions, existing scholarship has primarily concentrated on political history, genealogy, and migration rather than examining the mechanisms through which historical knowledge is transmitted across generations. Little attention has been devoted to documenting community narratives, storytelling practices, or the role of elders in preserving tribal memory.

Research Gap

The existing literature provides substantial information regarding Pashtun history, oral traditions, and theories of cultural transmission. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding how oral history contributes to the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge among the Sadozai tribe of Azad Kashmir. Previous research has largely overlooked the community's lived experiences, indigenous storytelling practices, and intergenerational mechanisms of cultural continuity. Moreover, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the impact of modernisation, migration, education, and cultural assimilation on the preservation of Sadozai historical memory. The present study addresses this gap by examining oral history as a living cultural practice through which the Sadozai tribe maintains its historical identity, transmits indigenous knowledge, and negotiates cultural continuity in contemporary Azad Kashmir. This research contributes to the broader fields of anthropology, oral history, indigenous studies, and intangible cultural heritage by providing a detailed community-based analysis of cultural knowledge transmission.

Materials and methods

Study Area

The study was conducted among the Sadozai tribe residing in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Pakistan (Figure 1). Members of the tribe are predominantly settled in the districts of Sudhnoti, Poonch, Kotli, and the surrounding localities, where they have maintained their socio-cultural identity despite prolonged interaction with neighbouring Kashmiri communities. The study area was selected because the Sadozai tribe possesses a rich oral tradition concerning its origin, migration, genealogy, cultural practices, and historical contributions to the region.

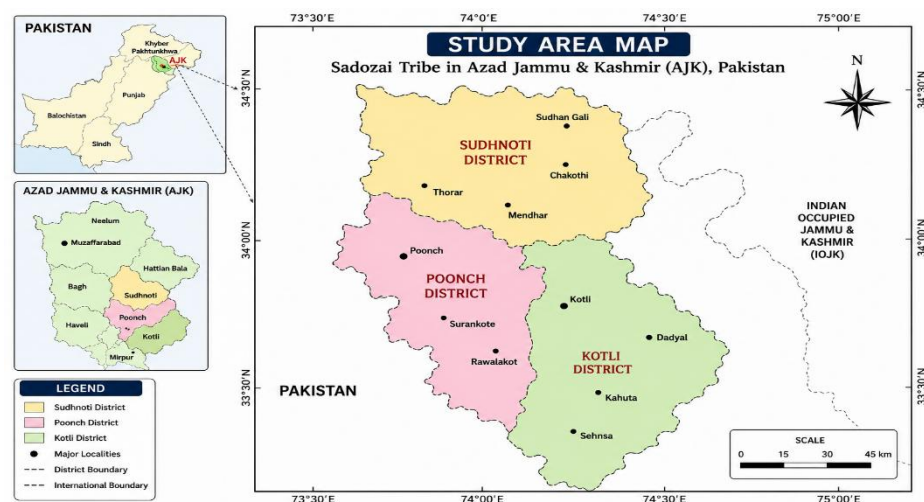


Figure 1. Map of the study area.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative ethnographic research design, which is particularly appropriate for exploring indigenous knowledge systems, oral traditions, collective memory, and cultural

transmission (Quezada-Sarmiento et al., 2026). Ethnographic inquiry enables researchers to understand cultural meanings from the perspectives of community members through prolonged interaction and contextual interpretation. The study was grounded within anthropological research traditions that emphasize lived experiences, oral narratives, and indigenous knowledge as valuable sources of historical evidence.

Sampling Strategy and Participants

A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify knowledgeable participants capable of providing authentic information regarding the oral history and cultural traditions of the Sadozai tribe (Gonzales et al., 2025). Thirty households were selected from different family lineages within the tribe. Priority was given to elderly community members, tribal elders, family heads, and individuals recognised locally for their knowledge of tribal genealogy, historical events, and customary practices. Their long-term involvement in community affairs and familiarity with ancestral narratives made them key informants for documenting the tribe's oral history.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews using an interview guide designed around the objectives of the study (Galletta et al., 2013). The guide included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to narrate historical events, migration stories, tribal genealogy, cultural practices, language use, customary institutions, and mechanisms of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language to facilitate open communication and were carried out in informal settings, including participants' homes and community gathering places. This approach enabled respondents to recount their experiences freely while allowing the researcher to probe emerging themes and clarify ambiguities during the interviews. Field observations were also undertaken to document cultural practices, family interactions, traditional gatherings, and community institutions that supported the preservation and transmission of oral history.

Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and field notes were carefully reviewed several times to identify recurring concepts and patterns related to the research objectives. Similar responses were grouped into thematic categories, including tribal origin, genealogy, migration history, cultural assimilation, language change, social organisation, and mechanisms of cultural transmission. The themes were interpreted within the broader anthropological framework of oral history and cultural transmission to understand how historical knowledge and cultural identity are maintained across generations.

Trustworthiness of the Data

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, several qualitative validation techniques were employed. Information obtained from one participant was cross-checked with narratives provided by other respondents to ensure consistency of historical accounts. Data were collected from participants representing different households and age groups, allowing multiple perspectives on shared historical experiences. In addition, field observations were used to complement interview data and strengthen the interpretation of cultural practices.

4.7. Conceptual Framework

The study was informed by the theory of cultural transmission proposed by Richerson and Boyd (2005), which explains the intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge through three principal pathways:

Vertical transmission (from parents or grandparents to children);

Horizontal transmission (among members of the same generation); and

Oblique transmission (from respected elders or unrelated adults to younger generations).

These three pathways served as the analytical framework for examining how the Sadozai tribe preserves and disseminates its oral history, collective memory, cultural values, and historical identity.

Results

Participant Characteristics

Thirty households belonging to the Sadozai tribe participated in the study (Table 1). Participants included tribal elders, household heads, religious scholars, and knowledgeable community members who possessed extensive knowledge regarding the tribe's genealogy, oral history, and cultural traditions. Elderly participants (aged above 55 years) were particularly valuable because they served as the principal custodians of tribal memory and historical narratives.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics and participant profile of the Sadozai tribe involved in the oral history and cultural knowledge transmission study.

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	24	80.0
	Female	6	20.0
Age	35–50 years	8	26.7
	51–65 years	13	43.3
	>65 years	9	30.0
Role	Tribal elder	9	30.0
	Household head	12	40.0
	Religious scholar	4	13.3
	Community member	5	16.7

Historical Origin of the Sadozai Tribe

Nearly all participants described the origin of the tribe through oral genealogies that connected their ancestry to Pashtun tribes originating from Kandahar, Afghanistan. According to community narratives, the tribe traces its lineage to Sado, whose descendants later migrated into Kashmir (Figure 2). Several respondents also narrated religious traditions linking their ancestors to ancient tribes inhabiting the region between present-day Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent. Although these narratives are primarily preserved through oral memory rather than documentary

evidence, they continue to reinforce collective identity and social cohesion. One elderly participant explained:

"Our elders always taught us that we belong to the descendants of Sado Khan. Every generation has preserved this history and passed it to the next generation."

These narratives demonstrate that genealogy remains one of the strongest foundations of tribal identity and historical continuity.

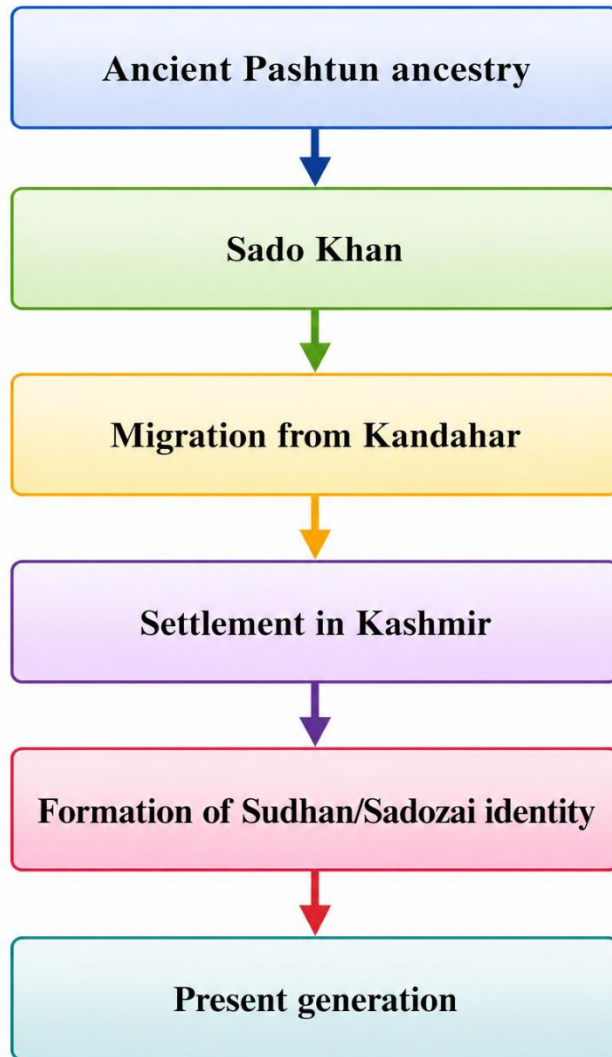


Figure 2. Traditional oral genealogy of the Sadozai tribe depicting the ancestral lineage from Kandahar, Afghanistan, and the historical migration to Kashmir based on community narratives.

Etymology and Tribal Identity

Most participants explained that the present-day term Sudhan evolved from the earlier designation "Sudhanwatiyan," which referred to the settlement inhabited predominantly by members of the tribe. Over time, linguistic changes simplified the name while preserving its historical significance. Participants further reported that leadership titles such as Malik, Khan, and Sardar became associated with influential families and reflected the traditional administrative organisation of the tribe. The findings indicate that tribal nomenclature functions not merely as a geographical identifier but also as an important symbol of collective identity.

Historical Contributions to the Freedom Movement

Almost every participant highlighted the tribe's contribution during the 1947 liberation movement of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Participants consistently identified Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan as one of the most influential leaders who mobilised resistance against Maharaja Hari Singh. One participant stated:

"Without the sacrifices of our elders, Azad Kashmir would never have achieved freedom."

Many respondents described bravery, sacrifice, and political leadership as defining characteristics of the Sadozai identity (Table 2). These narratives continue to strengthen intergenerational feelings of pride and patriotism.

Table 2. Community responses regarding the role of the Sadozai tribe in the 1947 liberation movement of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Historical theme	Participants mentioning (%)
Migration from Afghanistan	93
Genealogy of Sado Khan	90
Freedom movement	96
Role of Sardar Ibrahim Khan	94
Pashtun ancestry	91

Cultural Assimilation and Identity Preservation

Participants unanimously agreed that the Sadozai tribe has experienced considerable cultural assimilation following centuries of residence in Kashmir. Language, clothing styles, housing patterns, and everyday customs largely resemble those of neighbouring Kashmiri communities (Figure 3). Nevertheless, several cultural practices continue to distinguish the tribe. Participants identified the following as preserved Pashtun traditions:

- Jirga system
- Wearing of the turban by tribal leaders
- Respect for elders
- Parda (female modesty)
- Strong kinship solidarity

One respondent commented:

"Our language changed, our dress changed, but our traditions never disappeared."

These findings illustrate selective cultural adaptation rather than complete cultural assimilation.

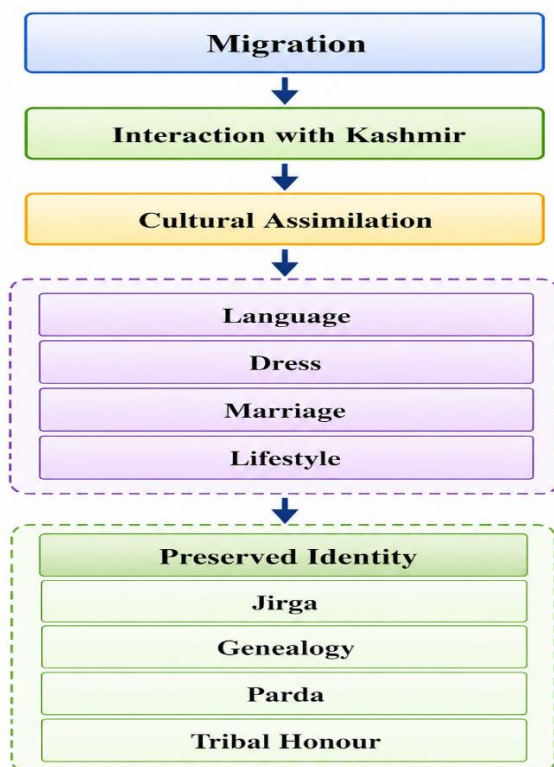


Figure 3. Schematic representation of cultural change among the Sadozai tribe, highlighting the adoption of Kashmiri cultural traits alongside the retention of selected Pashtun traditions.

Language Shift and Cultural Adaptation

Approximately two-thirds (Table 3) of participants attributed the disappearance of the Pashto language to historical marriages between Pashtun men and Kashmiri women. Participants believed that children gradually adopted their mothers' native language (Pahari), resulting in the gradual replacement of Pashto within the tribe. Despite linguistic assimilation, respondents emphasised that oral narratives continued to preserve memories of Pashtun ancestry.

Table 3. Factors responsible for language assimilation

Factor	Participant response (%)
Marriage with Kashmiri women	87
Settlement in Kashmir	92
Use of Pahari language	95
Decline of Pashto	84
Cultural integration	89

Marriage Practices and Social Organisation

Participants explained that early generations practised exogamy after migration into Kashmir because few Pashtun women accompanied the migrating groups. However, nearly all respondents reported that contemporary marriage practices have shifted towards endogamy to strengthen tribal identity and maintain genealogical continuity. The tribe continues to follow a patriarchal joint-family system in which senior male members occupy leadership positions within the household.

Mechanisms of Oral History Transmission

Analysis of interview data revealed three principal pathways of cultural transmission, and the results are presented in Figure 4.

Vertical transmission

Parents and grandparents educate younger family members regarding genealogy, migration history, and tribal customs.

Horizontal transmission

Knowledge is exchanged among siblings, cousins, and peers during everyday interactions.

Oblique transmission

Respected tribal elders, religious scholars and community leaders transfer historical knowledge to younger generations through storytelling and communal gatherings.

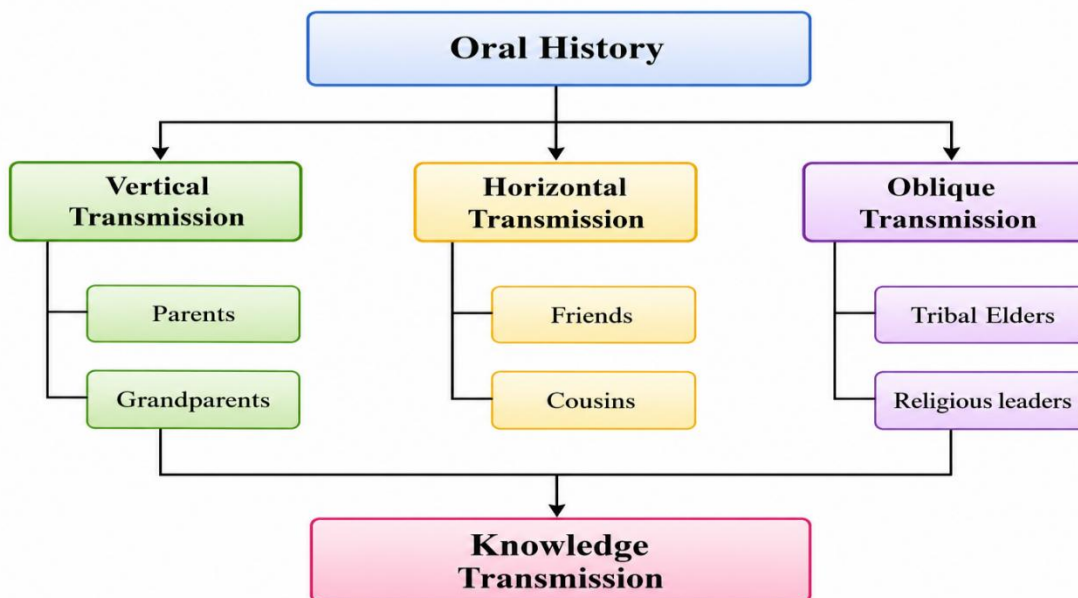


Figure 4. Participants' responses illustrating the primary mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of oral history and cultural heritage among the Sadozai tribe.

Storytelling as the Primary Mode of Cultural Transmission

Storytelling emerged as the most frequently reported mechanism for preserving collective memory. Nearly every participant recalled listening to stories narrated by grandparents concerning

- tribal migration,
- bravery,
- freedom movement,
- genealogy,
- relations with neighbouring communities.

One elderly participant remarked:

"When children gather after dinner, we tell them where our ancestors came from and how they defended this land."

These stories reinforce moral values, courage, respect for elders and tribal identity.

Family Gatherings as Cultural Learning Spaces

Participants reported that family gatherings serve as informal educational settings where younger members learn about family history and tribal heritage. Historical events are often discussed during weddings, religious festivals and visits by extended family members. Such interactions strengthen intergenerational communication and preserve collective memory.

Loya Jirga as a Cultural Institution

The Loya Jirga remains one of the most respected traditional institutions. Participants explained that the gathering brings together influential elders to resolve disputes according to customary law. Beyond conflict resolution, respondents noted that these meetings frequently include discussions of ancestral achievements, tribal history and customary values. Thus, the Jirga functions simultaneously as a judicial, political and educational institution.

Weddings and Funerals as Sites of Historical Memory

Participants consistently described weddings and funerals as important occasions for transmitting historical knowledge. Elders often recount stories about family genealogy, community struggles, and heroic ancestors while younger participants listen and ask questions. These communal events reinforce kinship ties and ensure that oral traditions continue across generations. The results are presented in Figure 5.

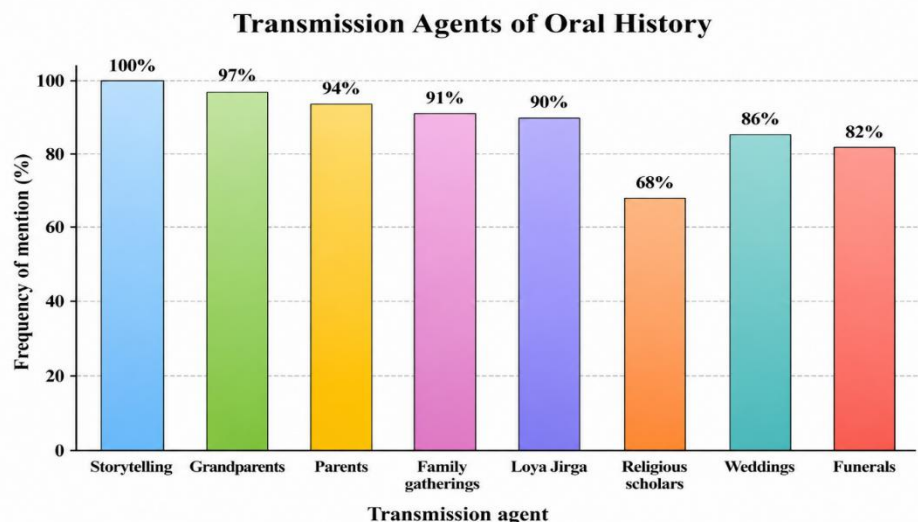


Figure 5. Community gatherings as mechanisms for the transmission of genealogy, historical narratives, and cultural traditions across generations.

Discussion

The present study examined the role of oral history in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge among the Sadozai tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The findings demonstrate that oral traditions remain the primary means through which the community preserves its historical memory, genealogical knowledge, cultural identity, and indigenous institutions despite centuries of migration, cultural interaction, and social transformation. The persistence of these oral traditions highlights the resilience of intangible cultural heritage in maintaining collective identity among tribal communities (Zabulis et al., 2025). One of the most significant findings of this study is that the historical identity of the Sadozai tribe continues to be preserved through oral genealogies that trace ancestral origins to the Pashtun region of Kandahar, Afghanistan. Participants consistently identified genealogy as the foundation of tribal identity and social cohesion. Genealogical narratives not only establish kinship relationships but also reinforce legitimacy, belonging, and continuity across generations. Similar observations have been reported among other Pashtun tribes, where lineage serves as the principal basis for tribal organisation and social structure (Tainter et al., 2011). The continued reliance on oral genealogies indicates that collective memory remains deeply embedded within everyday social life, compensating for the limited availability of written historical records.

The study further revealed that oral narratives concerning migration and settlement constitute a central component of cultural memory. Community members described migration from Afghanistan to Kashmir as a defining historical event that shaped both their identity and subsequent cultural adaptation. Migration narratives function not only as historical accounts but also as symbolic representations of resilience, survival, and collective achievement. Similar findings have been documented in anthropological studies of displaced and migrant communities, where migration stories strengthen social cohesion and provide a shared understanding of community origins (Hariyati et al., 2024). These narratives enable successive generations to contextualise their present identity within a broader historical framework. Another important finding concerns the role

of oral history in preserving memories of the 1947 liberation movement of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Participants repeatedly referred to the contributions of Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and other tribal leaders whose actions have become embedded in community memory. These accounts illustrate that oral history extends beyond family genealogy to include political history and collective experiences of conflict. Ritchie (2010) argued that oral history provides access to personal perspectives often overlooked in official historical records, allowing communities to preserve experiences that are absent from documentary archives (Yow et al., 2014). The present findings support this perspective by demonstrating that oral testimonies serve as valuable historical resources for understanding local interpretations of regional political events (De'Ath et al., 2024).

The findings also indicate that the Sadozai tribe has experienced considerable cultural assimilation following centuries of residence in Kashmir. Participants acknowledged substantial changes in language, dress, marriage customs, and daily lifestyles, reflecting prolonged interaction with neighbouring Kashmiri communities. Nevertheless, several traditional institutions, including the Jirga system, respect for tribal elders, genealogical consciousness, tribal honour, and the practice of *parda*, continue to distinguish the community from surrounding populations. This pattern illustrates selective cultural adaptation rather than complete assimilation. Tapper et al. (2012) similarly observed that minority communities often adopt aspects of dominant cultures while simultaneously preserving distinctive cultural practices that reinforce ethnic identity (Hager et al., 2012). The coexistence of assimilation and cultural preservation observed among the Sadozai tribe demonstrates that cultural change is a dynamic process involving both continuity and adaptation.

Language shift emerged as another important aspect of cultural transformation. Participants attributed the replacement of Pashto by Pahari to historical intermarriages between Pashtun men and Kashmiri women following migration into Kashmir. Although linguistic assimilation has reduced the everyday use of the ancestral language, oral narratives continue to preserve memories of Pashtun ancestry and historical identity. These findings support previous research indicating that language loss does not necessarily imply the disappearance of ethnic identity, particularly when other cultural institutions remain strong (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). In the case of the Sadozai tribe, oral traditions appear to compensate for linguistic change by maintaining historical consciousness through storytelling and collective memory. A notable contribution of this study is the identification of multiple pathways of cultural transmission operating simultaneously within the community. The findings demonstrate that historical knowledge is transmitted vertically through parents and grandparents, horizontally among members of the same generation, and obliquely through respected elders, religious scholars, and tribal leaders. These findings closely correspond with the theoretical framework proposed by Reyes-García et al. (2016), who identified vertical, horizontal, and oblique transmission as the principal mechanisms through which cultural knowledge is maintained within human societies. The coexistence of these pathways suggests that cultural continuity among the Sadozai tribe depends upon a complex social network rather than a single mechanism of knowledge transfer.

Among the identified mechanisms, storytelling emerged as the most influential means of transmitting historical knowledge. Elderly participants described storytelling as an integral component of family life through which younger generations learn about migration, genealogy, bravery, moral values, and historical struggles. These findings reinforce the anthropological understand-

ing that storytelling functions simultaneously as education, entertainment, moral instruction, and historical preservation. Nyhan and Flinn (2016) similarly argued that oral narratives preserve community memory by linking historical experiences with contemporary social identity (Smyth et al., 2023). Within the Sadozai tribe, storytelling therefore represents both an educational practice and a cultural institution that strengthens intergenerational relationships. The current research also demonstrates that family gatherings, weddings, funerals, and tribal assemblies function as important social contexts for the transmission of cultural knowledge. Unlike formal educational settings, these occasions facilitate spontaneous discussions of historical events, ancestral achievements, and tribal customs. Such findings support anthropological perspectives that learning within traditional societies is largely embedded in everyday social interaction rather than institutional education. The continued importance of these communal events suggests that social participation remains fundamental to preserving collective memory and reinforcing tribal solidarity.

Particularly noteworthy is the enduring significance of the Loya Jirga as both a judicial and educational institution. While primarily established to resolve community disputes, participants emphasised that Jirga meetings also provide opportunities for recalling historical precedents, ancestral wisdom, and customary law. Consequently, the Jirga functions not only as a mechanism of governance but also as a forum for preserving oral traditions and reinforcing cultural values. Similar observations have been reported in studies of Pashtun tribal societies, where customary institutions continue to shape social organisation despite increasing state intervention and modern legal systems (Jamal et al., 2024). The findings of the current project further suggest that oral history contributes substantially to the construction of collective identity among younger generations. Through repeated exposure to stories of migration, sacrifice, bravery, and leadership, young members of the community internalise values associated with honour, solidarity, courage, and respect for elders. Oral traditions therefore perform an important socialisation function by transmitting both historical knowledge and behavioural expectations. This observation aligns with theories of cultural learning, which emphasise that cultural knowledge is transmitted together with the norms and values necessary for maintaining social cohesion (Jordan et al., 2014).

The ongoing study contributes to anthropological scholarship by documenting an under-researched tribal community whose historical narratives have largely remained outside formal academic discourse. Existing literature concerning the Sadozai tribe has predominantly focused on political history, genealogy, or regional conflicts, whereas relatively little attention has been given to the mechanisms through which oral traditions preserve historical knowledge. By documenting community narratives and indigenous systems of cultural transmission, this study expands understanding of intangible cultural heritage within Azad Jammu and Kashmir and contributes to broader discussions concerning the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations. The research was conducted among thirty households within selected settlements of the Sadozai tribe, and therefore the findings may not represent the diversity of experiences across all Sadozai communities residing in different regions of Pakistan or Afghanistan. Furthermore, because the study relied primarily on oral testimonies, some historical narratives may reflect collective memory rather than verifiable historical documentation. Future research could adopt mixed-method approaches by integrating archival records, genealogical documents, historical maps, and comparative studies involving other Pashtun tribes. Longitudinal investigations examining the influence of digital media, formal education, migration, and urbanisation on oral traditions would also provide valuable insights into the

future sustainability of indigenous cultural knowledge. Overall, the findings demonstrate that oral history remains a dynamic and resilient cultural institution within the Sadozai tribe. Although the community has experienced significant linguistic and cultural assimilation following migration into Kashmir, storytelling, genealogical narratives, family interactions, ceremonial gatherings, and the *Loya Jirga* continue to preserve historical memory and reinforce tribal identity. These findings underscore the continuing importance of oral traditions as repositories of indigenous knowledge and highlight their critical role in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of tribal societies in contemporary South Asia.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The oral histories, genealogies, and cultural traditions of the Sadozai tribe should be systematically documented through audio-visual recordings and written archives to preserve this valuable indigenous heritage.
- ii. Community-based storytelling programmes and cultural events should be encouraged to strengthen intergenerational transmission of historical knowledge.
- iii. Educational institutions and cultural organisations should collaborate with tribal elders to promote awareness of the Sadozai tribe's history and cultural identity.
- iv. Future research should include comparative studies with other Pashtun and indigenous communities to better understand patterns of oral history and cultural transmission.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of oral history in the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge among the Sadozai tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The findings demonstrate that oral history remains the cornerstone of cultural continuity, enabling the community to preserve its historical narratives, genealogical heritage, traditional values, and collective identity across generations. In the absence of extensive written records, storytelling and oral narratives have served as reliable means of maintaining the tribe's historical memory and strengthening a shared sense of belonging. The study further revealed that, although the Sadozai tribe has undergone significant cultural assimilation following its settlement in Kashmir—particularly in terms of language, dress, and certain social practices—it has successfully retained key elements of its Pashtun heritage. Cultural institutions such as the *Loya Jirga*, respect for tribal elders, the preservation of genealogical records, and traditional concepts of honour and *parda* continue to play an important role in sustaining the tribe's distinct identity. The findings also showed that cultural knowledge is transmitted through multiple pathways, including storytelling, family gatherings, weddings, funerals, and interactions with tribal elders, reflecting the complementary roles of vertical, horizontal, and oblique cultural transmission. From an anthropological perspective, this research highlights oral history as more than a record of past events; it is a dynamic social process through which communities preserve indigenous knowledge, reinforce cultural values, and promote intergenerational learning. The study also addresses an important gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence on the oral traditions and cultural transmission practices of the Sadozai tribe, a community that has received limited scholarly attention. By documenting these traditions, the research contributes to the broader understanding of intangible cultural heritage, collective memory, and identity formation among tribal societies. Overall, the study under-

scores the importance of preserving oral traditions as an invaluable cultural resource in the face of modernisation, urbanisation, and changing social dynamics.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

The current work was approved by the ethical committee, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, under ethical approval number 2018/00018 ANTHRO.

Consent to Publish: Not applicable.

Author declaration: All authors agree to publish the work in its current form.

Clinical Trial Number: Not applicable

Author's Contribution

Qirat Naz conceived and designed the study, conducted data collection, performed data analysis, interpreted the findings, and drafted the manuscript. She also contributed to the study design, supervised the research, critically reviewed the manuscript, and approved the final version. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Availability of Data and Materials

All relevant data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this manuscript. Additional data may be made available upon reasonable request from the corresponding authors.

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