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Stitching Stories, Singing Roots: Pashtun Cultural Revival in Diaspora

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2025

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Design

at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

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2025

Abstract

Pashto, the second most spoken language in Pakistan and the national language of Afghanistan, is an essential marker of Pashtun identity. However, in the Pashtun diaspora, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand, cultural and linguistic disconnection is increasingly evident among the second generation. This research responds to the concerns of cultural erosion by integrating Pashto calligraphy and tappay (folk poetry) on embroidered velvet fabric by fusing traditional embroidery techniques with digital fabrication methods such as laser engraving. In doing so, this study seeks to create a contemporary platform for Pashtun cultural expression.

Central to this research is **Pukhtunwali**, the informal Pashtun code of conduct that governs social and moral values. Pukhtunwali encompasses principles such as bravery, love, spirituality, nationalism, hospitality, resilience, and women's empowerment, making it a significant framework for cultural identity. During two workshops conducted as part of this project, 43 tappay and 9 Pukhtunwali codes were shared with eight participants. From these, 23 tappay were identified as most reflective of the code of Pukhtunwali. The workshops were designed to create an immersive cultural experience, featuring Pashto music in the background and the serving of traditional food, fostering a sense of community and cultural nostalgia.

Through two interactive Pashtun community workshops in Palmerston North, this project engages the Pashtun diaspora in cultural dialogue, gathering insights into their perceptions of identity, language, and heritage. The workshops explored stylized Pashto calligraphy and embroidery techniques as a means of cultural preservation. These community workshops were inspired by the concept of relational aesthetics suggested by Bourriaud and also by the work of Māori designer Dr. Johnson Witehira, a New Zealand artist, whose work is considered as pioneering in preserving Māori language. Thus, based on the concept of relational aesthetics and the work of Dr. Witehira, this research positions design as an active tool for cultural reclamation.

This study updates traditional artistic practices using modern design methods. It helps explore how diaspora identity, cultural traditions, and indigenous art can stay relevant in the contemporary world. This thesis not only highlights the significance of Pashto calligraphy and tappay but also demonstrates how art and design can bridge generational and cultural divides, fostering a renewed sense of belonging within the Pashtun community in New Zealand.

Keywords: Pashtun diaspora, Pukhtunwali, cultural preservation, Pashto calligraphy, tappay, textile design, laser engraving, embroidery, relational aesthetics.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my incredible supervisors Lisa Munnelly and Angela Kilford for their continuous guidance, support, and understanding of the challenges I faced throughout this journey. Their encouragement has been invaluable in helping me complete this work. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Deb Cumming, Postgraduate Programme Coordinator, for her thorough and unwavering support during every stage of this process.

I am sincerely grateful to the technical team who made the practical aspects of this project possible. Special thanks to Ashley and Amy in the Textile Studio for facilitating me in setting up embroidery files, and to Eva and Ryan at the FabLab for their consistent help with the laser machine. Thanks to Ollie from the 3D workshop for helping me create copper patina coins and achieve the desired results in a short time. It has been a privilege to work with such skilled and supportive individuals.

My sincere appreciation also goes to my friend Ayesha for generously giving her time to help me navigate the software; she spent countless days guiding me through the technical challenges. Thanks, are also due to Mehnaz for kindly lending me her camera and capturing the beautiful moments of the workshops. I am thankful to Zainaa and Amna for their helpful tips on using Adobe Illustrator, which greatly supported my design process. A heartfelt thank you to my amazing friend Hina, who was a constant cheerleader throughout this journey and never stopped encouraging me to keep going.

A heartfelt thank you to all the Pashtun diaspora workshop participants who took time from their busy schedules to attend the two-day weekend workshop. Their wholehearted participation was the cornerstone of this project, and without them, this would not have been possible.

I am especially thankful to my family back home in Pakistan, who have been continuously alert and responsive whenever I needed old photographs or materials. Their timely support and prayers carried me through this academic journey. I am also grateful to my neighbour Jocelyn who reminded me often that I was in her prayers—these small yet powerful gestures gave me strength.

Finally, I extend my love and appreciation to my amazing and supportive husband, Fawad, whose constant encouragement and belief in my abilities gave me the strength to pursue this journey. It was his vision and faith that helped me overcome my initial reluctance to begin my studies. His patience and unwavering support have been the steady foundation behind every step of this work. I am deeply grateful to my daughters, Zareesh and Heela, it was through them that I found the motivation to choose this topic, which is so closely connected to identity, heritage, and future generations. A special thanks to Zareesh for helping care for Heela and for diplomatically handling her AM reluctance syndrome. Together, my family has been my greatest source of strength and inspiration.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Noam Chomsky, a professor and well-known American linguist, is considered by many to be known as the “father of modern linguistics” because his work has had a transformative effect in his field (Robertson 21). Noam Chomsky says:

“A language is not just words. It’s a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It’s all embodied in a language.” (Chomsky qtd. In Kettman)

This quote is a true reflection of the second-generation Pashtun/ Pukhtun¹ diaspora living not only in Aotearoa New Zealand but across the World, who are losing connection with Pashto, which is not just a language but an important carrier of their cultural identity and history. This research responds to this concern by attempting to preserve Pashtun culture and re-connect second generation Pashtuns with their cultural roots through artistic engagement with Pashto tappay (folk songs) and stylised calligraphy applied to textiles using both traditional and modern digital tools. More specifically, this research examines the following research question:

Research Question: How can the cultural heritage and native language of the Pashtun diaspora in New Zealand be revived through the integration of tappay, calligraphy, and regional embroidery patterns into modern textile design?

Aim: This research aims to preserve the richness of Pashtun cultural heritage and the Pashto language in New Zealand by embedding Pashto tappay (folk songs) into textiles.

Objectives:

1. Examine the fundamental principles and values embedded in the Pashtun/ Pukhtun code of conduct known as Pashtunwali/ Pukhtunwali / Pashtu.
2. Collate expressive tappay that embody various elements of Pashtunwali.
3. Visually represent selected tappay on textile surfaces by experimenting with contemporary approaches and creative innovations in stylised Pashto calligraphic expression

¹ This thesis interchangeably uses words Pashtun and Pukhtun, and also Pukhtunwali and Pashtunwali.

4. Conduct two community workshops in Manawatu as a methodological tool to engage the Pashtun diaspora, creating a collaborative space for dialogue around identity, language, and cultural memory.
5. Fuse traditional textile expertise with modern digital fabrication technologies.

These objectives aimed to preserve Pashtun cultural heritage by creating shared grounds for Pashtun diaspora in New Zealand to celebrate their own culture using the design of an artifact (Shawl) which is based on traditional embroidery techniques, tappay, and stylised Pashto calligraphy.

1.1 Motivation and Background

The primary motivation for this research is informed by my personal background. I am a Pashtun who has been living in New Zealand for over ten years. I often feel the need to stay connected to my cultural roots. Over my time in Aotearoa, I met many other members of the Pashtun diaspora that share my sentiments. Being a mother of two daughters further fuels my desire to remain connected with my cultural values and for them to embrace our native cultural values.

I joined my husband in New Zealand in 2014. In 2015, we welcomed our first daughter, Zareesh. When she was 15 months old i.e., about to start speaking, we visited Pakistan and stayed there for over six months. Thus, she started speaking our native language (Pashto/Pukhto). Though some of our family members were worried about her potential cultural disconnect, I felt confident of her culture connection because she was already acquiring her mother tongue. Upon her return to New Zealand, Zareesh was already bilingual having proficiency in Pashtu and some understanding of Urdu, the national language of Pakistan. Furthermore, Zareesh became friend with one of our Urdu speaking Pakistani neighbours in Auckland, which further strengthened her Urdu language skills. Thus, by the age of three, Zareesh was much fluent in Pashto and had reasonable fluency in Urdu. However, I noticed that many school-aged second-generation Pakistani children were not able to speak their native language. In my conversations with their parents, it became clear that their greatest concern was this loss of language and cultural connection.

By now, Zareesh began attending kindergarten and started improving her English. My husband completed his studies in the meantime and secured a full-time job in Palmerston North, prompting our move from Auckland to Palmy in late 2018. The Pakistan diaspora in Palmerston

North was a diverse group of people including students, working professionals with kids, and even retired professionals having grandchildren. Many children across these families struggled with their mother tongues, and their parents had serious concerns about their children being detached from their cultural values and language.

Since the Pakistani community in Palmerston North was diverse, we became friends with some native Pashto and Urdu speaking families. These developments proved to be beneficial for Zareesh's linguistic skills, and she further developed her fluency in English, Pashto, and Urdu. Hence, I became convinced that the issue is not with the children, but rather with parents, who do not consistently speak their native languages in their homes. This misunderstanding was shaped by Zareesh's trilingual fluency and even her curiosity about learning Māori. During our early years in Palmerston North, we welcomed our second daughter, we hoped our younger daughter, Heela, would follow her footsteps.

Upon returning to New Zealand, Heela began developing her speech, but preferred English despite us speaking Pashto at our home. This reminded me of my immediate family's concerns during our first visit to Pakistan i.e., whether they would ever be able to connect with Zareesh or whether she would be able to speak our native language. Furthermore, Heela's limited Urdu exposure meant she was unable to understand it at all. This was the time when I developed greater empathy towards other families facing similar challenges. In mid-2024, my mother visited us in New Zealand, and later the same year we visited Pakistan, where Heela showed a slight interest in Pashto. However, despite her curiosity, she struggled to speak the language due to the distinct sounds and phonemes, which are quite different from those in English.

When I began my formal review of Pashto literature and culture, I discovered a wealth of material i.e., poetry, stories and writings. However, I found a noticeable absence of vibrant and meaningful resources in areas such as textiles, embroidery, and elements crucial for passing our heritage to future generations. Traditional Pashtun attire continues to feature the same simple, minimalistic patterns, to the best of my knowledge with little innovation to date. This lack of evolution in our textile arts sparked my curiosity and motivated me to create new motifs and designs that are both distinctive to Pashtun culture and hold meaningful value for a broader audience.

As a mother, these shared concerns about maintaining cultural identity and language within the diaspora have inspired me to explore ways to help my daughters, and others, remain connected to our Pashtun heritage. This motivation forms the foundation of my research project.

1.2 Explanation of the Key Concepts

Pashto—also spelled Pashtu, Pukhtu, or Pushtu—is an Eastern Iranian language within the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. It serves as one of the two official languages of Afghanistan and is widely spoken in Pakistan, particularly in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. According to UNESCO, Pashto is spoken by approximately 45 to 55 million people worldwide, with about 25 million speakers in Pakistan, 11 to 15.4 million in Afghanistan, and a small population living in Iran. Figure 1.1 and 1.2 indicates the presence of Pashto speakers in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In addition, there is a Pashtun diaspora living across the globe, including around 3,000 Pashto speakers in New Zealand.



Figure 1.1: Linguistic map showing the distribution of Pashto speakers in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Benson and Siddiqui, 110.

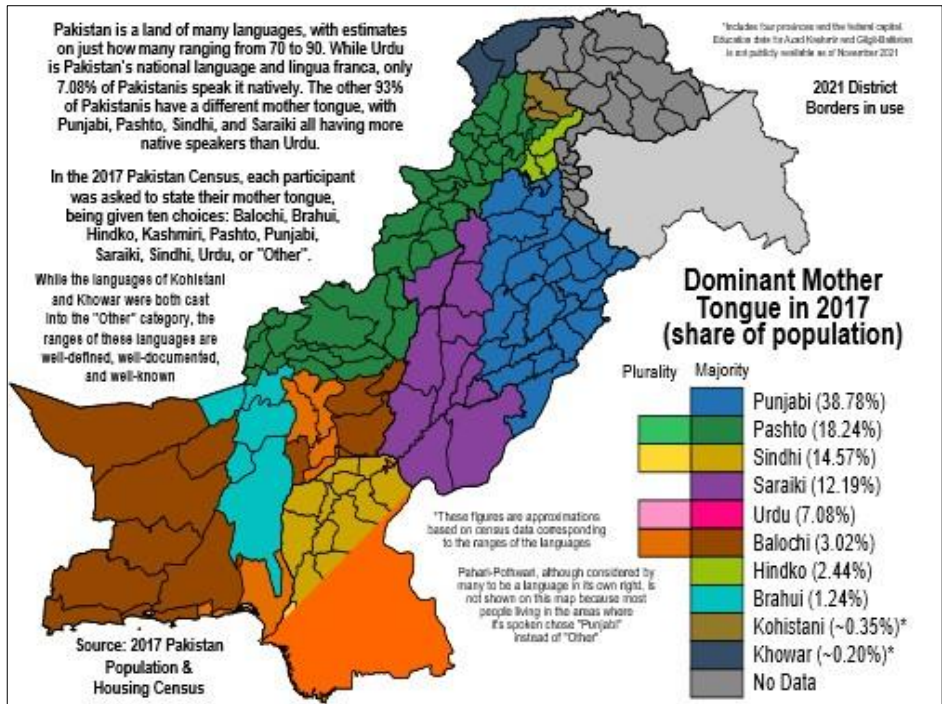


Figure 1.2: Linguistic map of Pakistan showing the distribution of Pashto speakers in the country. Source: Wikipedia.

Central to Pashtun identity is Pukhtunwali, an unwritten traditional code of conduct emphasizing values such as honour (*nang*), hospitality (*melmastia*), asylum (*nanawatai*), and justice (*badal*). As noted by Devasher (2022), Pashtun society upholds key principles including bravery, reconciliation, religious inclusiveness, and nationalism. In other words, Pukhtunwali is a traditional code of life followed by the Pashtun people. These cultural norms are also expressed through various art forms, notably in Pashto *tappa*—a genre of folk poetry that encapsulates the ethos of Pashtunwali.

1.3 An Overview of Pashtun Dress Code Through the Ages

The following series of photographs (Figure 1.3 to 1.7) were taken during my family visit to Balahisar Forte in Peshawar, Pakistan. The photos illustrate the significance and traditional designs of Pashtun dress worn across the Pashtun belt in Pakistan. These images provide insight into women's dress, men's headgears (*pagray*), and the distinctive jewellery and embellishments used in various regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Fig. 1.3: Photograph of cultural heritage of Orakzai Agency and Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, displayed in Balahisar Forte. These pictures depict that Shawl remained to be an integral part of the Pashtun women dress code. Personal photograph by author. December 2024.



Fig. 1.4: Photograph of traditional dress from the Waziristan region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, displayed at Balahisar Forte. Personal photograph by author. December 2024.



Figure 1.5: Photograph of traditional silver jewellery from various regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa displayed at Balahisar Forte. Personal photograph by author. December 2024.



Figure 1.6: Photograph of traditional silver jewellery from various regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa displayed at Balahisar Forte. Personal photograph by author. December 2024.

Figure 1.7: Photograph of traditional headgears (pagray) worn by men across various Pakhtun tribes displayed at Balahisar Forte. Personal photograph by author. December 2024.



It is pertinent to mention here that in the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, traditional headgears (pagray) are still commonly worn by men and serve as markers of tribal identity, distinguishing one group from another. Furthermore, shawl is still considered an integral part of the women dress code across all the Pashtun belt in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Pamir et al., 747).

1.4 Main Focus of this Research

The above sections indicate that Pukhtunwali is the code of life most important to the Pashtuns, this code of life has been expressed and highlighted in Pashto tappey. Furthermore, Pashtuns have a distinct dress code of which shawl is an integral part of the women dress code. Based on these important points, the key aim of this research is to design a shawl with corresponding

motifs representing key Pashtunwali values and embroidered onto the shawl, creating a tactile and visual narrative that bridges tradition with contemporary reflection and cultural symbolism. To highlight the diversity of *tappay*, I aim at gathering *tappay* from various sources representing various aspects of Pukhtunwali and presented them to Pashtun participants during a workshop. From these, the participants will select *tappay* which they feel are most relevant to the contemporary Pashtun life. They will then be asked to write them through calligraphy using unconventional tools. I further aim at fusing two techniques i.e., rasterizing *tappay*, and digital embroidery to create motifs representing Pukhtunwali code.

The next sections indicate the importance of the Pashtun dress code in our own family system.

1.5 Timeline of My Family Legacy: Pashtun Cultural and Contemporary Dresses

This series of photographs (Figure 1.8 to 1.12) present a personal timeline that reflects my family's legacy of preserving and adapting Pashtun dresses across generations. With increasing acculturation and the influence of Pakistan's national dress code, shalwar kameez for both men and women, there has been a noticeable shift in daily attire. Men often prefer shalwar kameez in everyday life, although western clothing such as pants and shirts have become more common in professional settings. However, there is one commonality across all these pictures, and that's the shawl being worn by the women members of my family across all the generations.

For women, shalwar kameez remains the favoured and culturally appropriate attire, particularly in Pashtun-majority areas like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In contrast, in non-Pashtun regions of Pakistan, it is socially acceptable for women to wear pants and tops without a scarf or head covering. However, in Pashtun culture, such attire is generally considered inappropriate. Despite these evolving trends, during festivals and special occasions, embellished shalwar kameez along with shawl remains a significant aspect of women's dress across Pakistan, symbolizing cultural pride and identity.

In recent years, even younger Pashtun girls have increasingly embraced traditional clothing for weddings and cultural festivals, viewing it as a meaningful expression of their heritage.



Figure 1.8: Photograph of the author with grandparents, Rawalpindi, 1989. Personal photograph.



Figure 1.9: Photograph of the author with parents and younger sister, Swat, 1992. Personal photograph.



Figure 1.10: Photograph of the author with family during a visit to Balahisar Forte, Peshawar, December 2024. Personal photograph



Figure 1.11: Photograph of the author with daughters in Kangra village, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, December 2024, where cultural traditions require women to cover their faces with a long shawl. Personal photograph.



Figure 1.12: Photograph of daughter wearing a scarf during a visit to the village, symbolizing early understanding of local cultural norms, where covering the head, and eventually the face, is expected as she grows. Kangra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, December 2024. Personal photograph.

1.6 My Family in New Zealand: Cultural Continuity Across Distance

The following photographs (Figure 1.13 to 1.15), taken on various occasions in New Zealand, reflect our continued commitment to preserving and expressing Pashtun cultural traditions while living thousands of miles away from our homeland. They represent a conscious effort to pass on these customs and values from one generation to the next, maintaining a strong cultural identity in the diaspora.

Figure 1.13: Family photographs on Eid 2023 and Eid 2024, respectively, showing all members dressed in traditional Pakistani shalwar kameez to celebrate the occasion. Personal photographs.



Figure 1.14: Photograph of Zareesh and Heela representing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the Pakistan Independence Day celebration in Palmerston North, August 2024. Personal photograph.

Figure 1.15: Photograph of Zareesh and Heela showcasing Pashtun cultural dress during the cultural dress parade at the Festivals of Culture in Palmerston North, February 2025. Personal photograph.



Chapter 2- Context Review

The Pashtun community has long been able to preserve its distinct cultural identity, despite external pressures from powerful kingdoms and modern states. This resilience is anchored in the deep pride Pashtuns take in their heritage and the strength of their cultural bonds. Central to this cultural identity is Pukhtunwali, the unwritten code of ethics that governs all aspects of Pashtun life. The code, which includes principles of hospitality, honour, social responsibility, religion, spirituality, bravery, and the empowerment of women, provides a framework for how Pashtuns live and interact with one another, helping them navigate the complexities of both traditional and modern influences.

2.1 Pukhtunwali

One of the core tenets of Pukhtunwali is Melmastia مَلْمَسْتِيَا, the principle of hospitality and protection for guests, which reflects the deep cultural value placed on kindness, honour, and respect for others. The adherence to this code has allowed the Pashtun people to maintain a unified identity, even in the face of external challenges. Despite the spread of modern ideologies and the pressures of globalization, the Pashtuns' commitment to their traditional values has ensured the survival of their culture and social structures (Pamir 744).

At the heart of Pukhtunwali is the concept of honour, which governs not only interpersonal relationships but also shapes the way the community views itself in relation to the broader world. This code of honour has also led to the development of a highly structured social system, where everyone is expected to uphold their reputation and the reputation of their family. The consequences of dishonour are severe, and this has contributed to the strong sense of responsibility that permeates Pashtun society (Benson 110).

One important aspect of Pukhtunwali is its role in cultural expression, particularly through oral traditions. Although Pukhtunwali has remained central to the Pashtun way of life, it is not a static code, and over time it has adapted to changing circumstances, integrating Islamic teachings where they align with its principles. For instance, when Pukhtunwali and Islamic law conflict, the latter has often taken precedence in matters like marriage, divorce, and inheritance (Boesen 231) because such matters are explicitly explained in the Holy Quran. However, the code of Pukhtunwali in general takes precedence in the day-to-day life of Pashtuns (McCarthy). This flexibility allows Pukhtunwali to endure and continue to serve as a foundation for the Pashtun way of life, even as the community faces new challenges in the modern world.

2.2 Nationalism

Safi (15) discusses how various authors define nationalism in different ways. Some view it as the ideology or narrative of a nation (Martinelli 4), while others see it as the force that shapes national identity. Additionally, some scholars describe nationalism as an "invented doctrine" (Smith 71). Smith (73) defines nationalism as *an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'*. This definition integrates both the ideological framework and the symbolic language of nationalism, reflecting broader collective sentiments and aspirations. Nationalism, Brubak (2) further explains, is like religion, and believed to evoke deep emotional connections, fostering a sense of faith, belonging, and reverence through collective rituals and symbolic practices.

To understand Muslim societies, it's essential to consider both religious context and its integration with local cultural practices. For Pukhtuns, Islam and Pukhtunwali, coexist without conflict, as seen in the physical presence of mosques and hujras² in their villages. Pukhtunwali maintains social unity across dialects and castes, while loyalty to Islam is also considered as an important part of Pukhtun pride.

However, for some nationalists the code of Pukhtunwali is even more important than the religious code and values. For example, Abdul Wali Khan (Late), a famous Pashtun nationalist leader, former head of Pashtun nationalist political party, the Awami National Party, and former leader of opposition in the Parliament of Pakistan, once said, "I am a Pashtun for 5,000 years, I am a Muslim for 1,400 years, and I am a Pakistani for only 40 years" (qtd. in McCarthy, para 11). This famous quote by Wali Khan indicates how nationalists rank the importance of the Pukhtunwali and Islamic codes.

Ullah and Din (9) argue that though Pukhtunwali upholds values like defending honour, which often involves violence. However, the Khudai Khidmatgar³ movement showed that non-violence could be integrated within the conventional Pashtun society, even if it conflicted with traditional Pukhtunwali values, indicating that there is some evolution in the code of Pukhtunwali over time. Ultimately, Pashtuns define their identity first as Pukhtun, then

² Hujra is a communal space for Pashtun men, fostering discussions, conflict resolution, and hospitality, reflecting Pashtunwali values (Khan et.al. 196)

³ Khudai Khidmatgar (1928-1948), meaning was a non-violent Pashtun movement led by Bacha Khan in British India, promoting independence, social reform, and peaceful resistance (Bala1321).

Muslim, and lastly as Pakistani, with Pukhtunwali taking precedence in shaping their worldview.

2.3 Tappa/Tappay (Plural)

Pashto literature is rich and diverse, nurtured over centuries through historical writings, religious texts, songs, memoirs, short stories, and novels. Among its most cherished forms is *Tappa* (plural: *Tappay*), a two-line folk poem integral to Pashtun cultural expression. Bartoletti (77) in *The Gospel in Afghan Pashto Poetry, Proverbs and Folklore*, describes it as the most beloved genre in Pashto poetry. Traditionally recited without instruments during weddings, funerals, and daily life, *Tappay* are also accompanied by the *rabab*, *mangay*, and flute. Their melodious verses span themes from romance and religion (*mazhab*) to spirituality (*roohaniyat*), joy, grief, and storytelling. As an oral tradition, *Tappa* preserves and transmits Pashtun values and experiences across generations, echoing bravery (*toorah*), love (*rogha*), social struggles (*toolanizh*), community challenges, grief, and hope (*mlaatard*) (Khan 196).

Professor Hanif Khalil (16) defines *Tappa* as a short, natural, and impactful literary form that vividly reflects Pashtun norms and traditions. Strongly associated with Pashtun women, it explores themes like romance, patriotism, kinship, and cultural practices, portraying daily life, rituals, hospitality, trade, and social customs. He emphasizes that *Tappa* has been passed down through generations via memory, preserving its emotional depth and relevance: “*It enlightened every aspect of life and demonstrated every angle of human emotions and sentiments.*” Whether sung by mothers weaning children, farmers in fields, or girls fetching water or bidding farewell.

Pashtun women have less space as per the code of Pukhtunwali, but women have challenged this notion or norms through *tappay*, even though they still have regard for the traditional code and cherish their love for their spouses. The spouse has praised them in *tappay*, but the reality is that they still don’t have equal space in society, and women have raised this in the *tappay*.

Zarsanga, a renowned Pashto folk singer, sang a song called “Shinwari lawangeen.” Its English translation is

*These floodwaters fail to scare me.
My courage will carry me across
Help me leave the darkness behind
That I may spread light across my homeland*

The song expresses both resilience and a desire to overcome the spatial restrictions imposed by patriarchal Pashtun society. It critiques traditional norms that confine women to the domestic sphere, limiting their access to public spaces. This work is significant for revealing the lived spatial experiences of Pashtun women and challenging the view of them as passive, voiceless victim. Rehman et al. (69) emphasize the song's role in highlighting spatial marginalization and its tool for Pashtun women empowerment.

On the other hand, Noor-ul-Amin Yousafzai, a renowned Pashto author and poet, in his interview,⁴ states that Tappay are a reaction to Pukhtunwali. He further explains that women express their pain through these verses, with 90% of Tappay being sung by women. This is because, at times, they do not agree with the societal norms and use Tappa as a form of expression. The role of tappay in preserving Pashtun identity cannot be understated. They not only function as a vehicle for cultural continuity but also offer a means for the Pashtun community to engage with contemporary issues. Despite the pressures of modernity, the themes explored in tappay continue to reflect core values such as honour, respect, and resilience, while also allowing room for critical reflection on the changing dynamics within Pashtun society.

Aziz et. al. (204) interviewed 39 Pashtun women revealed the role of Pashtun women (especially mothers, grandmothers, and mothers-in-law) in preserving, sustaining, and transmitting Pashtun value systems for the young generation (daughters). Traditionally, Pashtun women (especially mothers) have a significant role in the creation and promotion of Pashtun culture through folklore, proverbs, songs, dress code, arts, literature, and by cooking traditional cuisine, etc. The study reflected the perspective of Pashtun women, who were appreciative of and insightful about the meaning, history, and cultural composition of Pukhtunwali and their identity, but at the same time, were not ignorant of the contemporary emerging challenges faced by traditional Pashtun culture. Pashtun women highlighted that Pashtuns are *ghairatmand*⁵, they mind their words and commitments and never compromise on the basic principles. It is necessary to reconsider and revisit social heritage to better reflect on the changing notions and demands of the contemporary age.

⁴ Noor-ul-Amin Yousafzai was interviewed by Sohail Asghar Khan in his famous Pashto podcast series: [Extremism & Pashtun Society \(Part 1\)| Noor Ul Amin Yousafzai | Sohail Asghar Khan | KHANCAST - YouTube](#)

⁵ Pashtun honour, often referred to as 'ghairat,' governs social life and serves as the foundation of Pashtun society. (Rahila and Alam, 521)

2.4 Pashtun Diaspora

Pashtuns from Pakistan and Afghanistan flee to other foreign countries due to several reasons. Like many other immigrant communities, the Pashtun diaspora also faces multiple challenges in their host country, as Western culture, traditions, values, norms, and language are entirely different from those the Pashtuns have left behind. A key challenge that the Pashtun diaspora faces is bridging the gap between their second generation and their native culture. Sadat (329), ethnographic research focuses on Afghan immigrants in North America, Europe, and Australia examining the Afghan diaspora, finds that they maintain their cultural identity while forming a transnational identity, in that host country cultural influences shape their identity. Similarly, Hussain (4) argues that the younger generation within the South Asian community often speaks their mother tongue, but their level of proficiency in these languages is significantly lower than in English. The linguistic gap exists since most individuals are born and raised in New Zealand and can only read and write primarily in English or occasionally solely in English. As a result, the association with the mother tongue is weakened due to this linguistic barrier and hence is one of the key concerns of the first-generation immigrants. Jamal Shah, a renowned Pakistani actor and former Director General of the Pakistan National Council of Arts, explains that *“When you lose your culture, you’re faceless, you’re vulnerable”* (para 25). He, therefore, asserts that *“Pashtuns should cling to their culture and that will become their strength”* (para 26).

2.5 Calligraphy

The literature reviewed highlights a gap between the preservation of Pashto literature and its visual art forms. While Pashto has a wealth of oral stories and traditions passed down through generations, there is a notable lack of visual art, particularly in calligraphy. Unlike languages such as Urdu, Arabic, and Persian, which have well-established calligraphic traditions, there seems, to the best of my knowledge, little work showcasing Pashto writing in a stylized or decorative form.

Maulvi Zafar Hasan and Ziauddin were prominent scholars in Islamic calligraphy. Zafar Hasan contributed to the classification of calligraphic styles and the preservation of Islamic art, while Ziauddin focused on dividing calligraphy into angular and round scripts, particularly emphasizing the Kufic and Naskh styles.

In his book *Specimens of Calligraphy in the Delhi Museum* (1926), Zafar Hasan classified Muslim calligraphy into four main divisions: Kufic, Naskh, Nasta'liq, and Shikastah, although he viewed Shikastah as a variation of Nasta'liq.

On the other hand, Ziauddin, in his book *Moslem Calligraphy* (1936), divides calligraphy into angular and round scripts, recognizing Kufic and Naskh as the primary styles. While his classification is valid regarding letter shapes, the development of Kufic and Naskh by the Arabs and Nasta'liq by the Persians supports the idea of three major calligraphic styles overall, with other scripts often falling under these three broad categories.

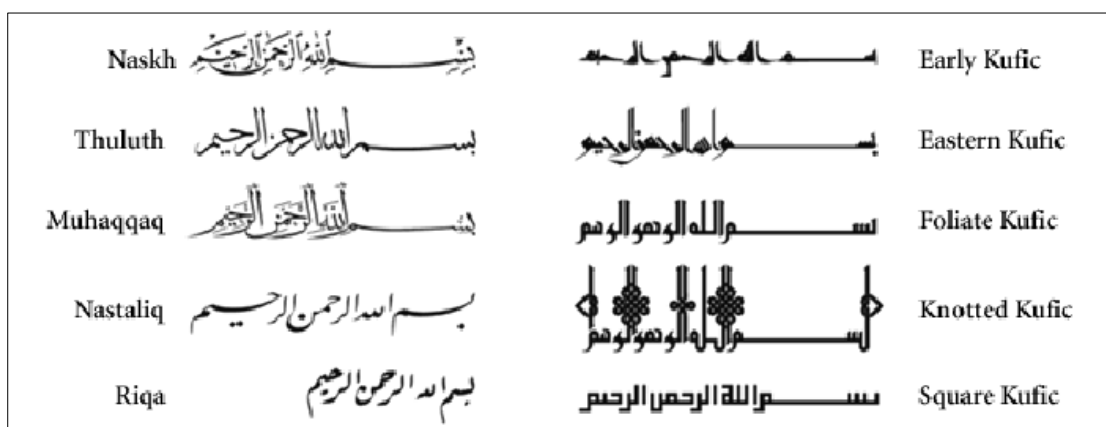


Figure 2.1: Different styles of Islamic Calligraphy

Calligraphy and writing in literature are another way of preserving cultural heritage. It has been used extensively to preserve history, sacred scripts, poetry, and artwork, to pass on to future generations. Therefore, I aim to combine the two modes together, i.e., use tappay and calligraphy to connect the second generation Pukhtuns with their culture. However, there is no formal writing style for Pashto.

Elkherbawy (159) underscores calligraphy's importance as a fundamental element in art and design, emphasizing its vital role across art forms and its deep historical ties to diverse civilizations. This research explores various tools and mediums for Pashto calligraphy. The initial experiments began with a paintbrush, but over time, a range of materials were tested, including hand-carved bamboo pens, thermocol, fresh and dried harakeke (New Zealand flax), cola pens, pipettes, and cork. The inspiration for these explorations comes from the book *Journey in Calligraphy* by Denise Lach. Denise Lach is a Swiss Calligrapher and educator known for experimental and textural approach to writing. According to Denise "I am fascinated with the weaving of words and the resulting structures". Her emphasis on playfulness, material experimentation, and graphic expression influences my research by

encouraging an exploratory approach to Pashto calligraphy where writing becomes tool for cultural and personal expression, not just communication. Following are some calligraphic expressions from Lach’s book.



2.6 Embroidery

Regional embroidery plays a pivotal role in preserving indigenous cultural traditions. The patterns, colours, motifs, and fabric choices, along with their connection to rituals and the environment, reflect the identity of a community. This skill is passed down through generations, maintaining a link to history and cultural roots. In Pashtun culture, there are no specific motifs, except for Swati embroidery (figure 2.2) and printed designs from Swabi (figure 2.3). Most other embroidery patterns consist of repeated geometric shapes arranged in sequence (figure 2.4).



Figure 2.2: Swati Rubies and Flowers Motifs by Akerman. September 2009



Figure 2.3: Swabi Chail Shinwari November 2018

Note: Swabi Chail-The dotted chaddar worn by women in Swabi district is considered as an emblem of respect as if fully covered the body. (Shinwari)



Figure 2.4: Photograph of Waziristan embroidery, personal photograph by author, May 2024

The photos of the Swat, Swabi and Waziristan regions showcase Pashtun embroidery, which predominantly features repeating geometric patterns, vibrant hand embroidery, mirror work, and gold and silver zari (metallic) threads, often complemented by metallic jewellery. Various

fabrics can be used, but linen, silk, and velvet are most combined in a single dress to create a luxurious appearance.

Ruiting Ji (133), explores the integration of Bian embroidery, a traditional Chinese craft rooted in Song dynasty culture and influence by painting and calligraphy into contemporary fashion in her study, the application of Bian embroidery in modern fashion design. Through the development of 36 stitches and refined colour compositions, Ruiting Ji demonstrates that cultural heritage can be preserved while fostering modern creativity, positioning textile arts as a powerful medium for cultural storytelling. In the above-mentioned study, Ji explores Bian embroidery, a traditional Chinese craft from the Song Dynasty, and its integration into contemporary fashion (figure 2.5). Her research underscores the balance between heritage preservation and modern design, emphasizing textile arts as a medium for cultural storytelling.

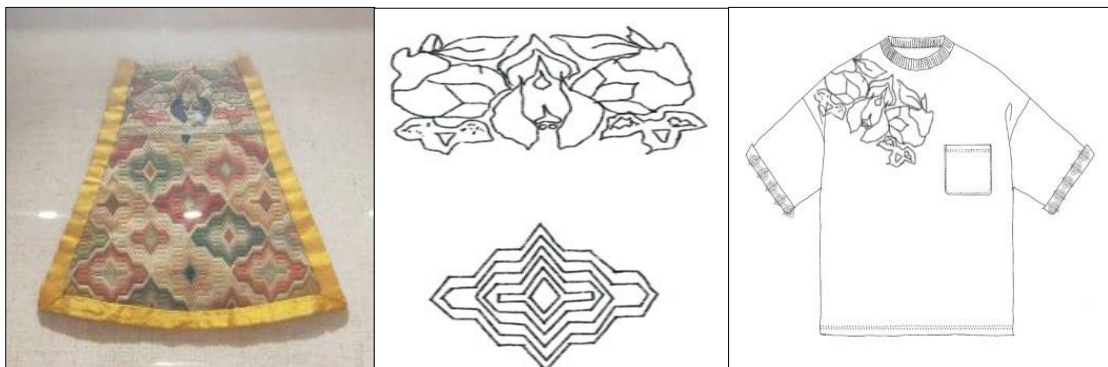


Figure 2.5: Ji Ruiting, Image extract of Bian Embroidery and application in modern fashion design

Wu and Kyungsun (115) explore the geometric patterns in Jinnan embroidery, featuring motifs like clouds and persimmons. Citing Tian Zibing's *History of Chinese Patterns*, they emphasize the universal role of geometric designs in primitive decoration across cultures. These patterns persist due to their aesthetic appeal and deep ties to human cognition, linking cultural heritage with artistic expression. Characters are often directly embroidered into patterns, carrying cultural significance in everyday life. For example, the character 囍 (pronounced "xi") represents happiness and is used in wedding customs. Other characters like 福 (pronounced "fu," meaning blessing), 禄 (pronounced "lu," meaning promotion), and 壽 (pronounced "shou," symbolizing longevity) also carry auspicious meanings, as shown in Figure 2.6. Craftsmanship is evident as artisans creatively combine characters and patterns to form intricate, meaningful designs (Wu and Kyungsun 115).



Figure 2.6: Character patterns (‘福’ on the left and ‘壽’ on the right)
Image Source: https://www.sohu.com/a/317046436_782283

2.7 Model of Creative Practice

The dastarkhwan (دسترخوان), a cloth spread used for serving food (figure 2.7), and the Afghani carpet (figure 2.8) are powerful cultural artifacts that embody the Pashtun code of hospitality. Both items are traditionally central to communal gatherings and represent generosity, warmth, and respect for guests. In Pashtun households, the act of laying down the dastarkhwan and inviting others to share a meal reflects not only cultural etiquette but also a deeper spiritual and ethical commitment to hosting. Similarly, the Afghani carpet, often handmade and rich with symbolic patterns, serves both a functional and aesthetic role in creating a welcoming space. By referencing these elements in the motif development process, this research draws a parallel between the visual symbolism of Islamic geometry and the lived, tactile expressions of hospitality in Pashtun material culture.

Yameen, a public historian, explains that in many homes, the dastarkhwan symbolizes core ideas of South Asian Muslim commensality indicating the practice of eating together in a group, especially the concept of 'barkat,' meaning abundance in both material and immaterial forms. Barkat is reflected in a large family, a plentiful harvest, or spiritual generosity. On the dastarkhwan (دسترخوان), it is seen in the sharing of food and the material used, whether cloth or plastic, spread to accommodate all present. When placed on the floor, it fosters humility and vulnerability, key elements of community. Shared meals create pleasure through collective satisfaction and spiritual connection.



Figure 2.7: Photograph of Dastarkhwan (دسترخوان), Pakistan, 25 June 2024. Personal photograph by author.

Islamic influence in the region has shaped textiles and art, including those of Pukhtun society, where geometric shapes play a significant role. The colours used in these textiles are also inspired by Islamic architecture. Afghan rugs, renowned worldwide for their intricate geometric patterns and exquisite colours, reflect this artistic tradition. Arify (64), describes how the evolution of Afghan rugs began with single-color designs or four-square patterns. Over the centuries, geometric shapes emerged, becoming fundamental elements of Afghan rug-making. These shapes are often combined to form floral or intricate designs, though they primarily retain their geometric nature. Even today, this characteristic remains evident. The geometric shapes and patterns are distributed across the rug's surface in a non-uniform manner, either arranged side by side or connected linearly.



Figure 2.8: Photograph of Afghani Carpets, Pakistan, 25 November 2024. Personal photograph by author.

2.8 Evolution of Islamic Geometric Pattern

According to Abdullahi and Embi (244) all Islamic geometric patterns (IGPs) originate from the symmetrical subdivisions of circles, structured upon templates of circle grids. Some scholars suggest that the circle symbolizes the unity of Islam, representing the concept of One God and the significance of Mecca, the spiritual centre toward which all Muslims face during prayer. Akkach (149), explains that according to this perspective, the circle and its centre serve as the origin point for all Islamic patterns, embodying the faith's emphasis on unity and the centrality of Mecca in Islamic practice.







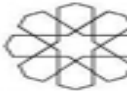
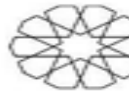
6-point Geometrical pattern	8-point Geometrical pattern	10-point Geometrical pattern
 Hexagon	 Octagon	 Decagon
 6-point Star	 8-point Star	 10-point Star
—	 8-fold Rosette	 10-fold Rosette

Figure 2.9: First level of IGPs classification. From Abdullahi and Embi, 2013.

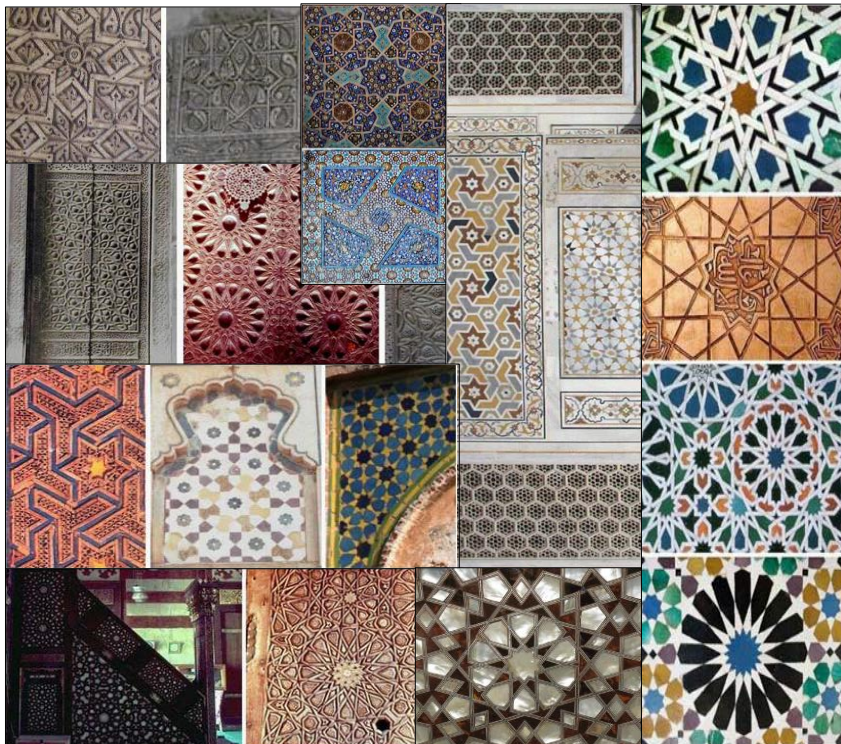


Figure 2.10: Collage showing the evolution of Islamic geometric patterns by dynasty and region. Adapted from Carol Bier, *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, and Abdullahi and Embi, 2013.

Chapter 3- Methodology

The methodology employed in this study combines community engagement principles with strategies proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud a French curator, art critic and theorist known for his extensive writing on changing dynamics of art in the context of social interaction and cultural exchange. Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* argues that artwork is made of social exchanges, which is a collective production process,⁶ entirely different from other tangible objects made by human activities. According to Bourriaud, art provokes debate, participation, and a transparent dialogue between the artwork and its audience, thus, incorporating human efforts and intentions. He further emphasized that art works beyond a customary monetary structure, serving as a distinctive form of trade that cannot only be measured in monetary terms. Bourriaud highlights the creator's role in crafting the connection between the art object and its attendees, spotlighting how the expression predominantly promotes ties between people and society via visual encounter (41-42). Dohmen (39) suggests that only the artist is accountable for the repercussions of the outcome; attendees are free to choose how to respond. What is significant about the work is the moment of conviviality. Bourriaud stated in his book (83) "*to my eye, this would be mistaking the object of the practice. for the purpose is not conviviality, but the product of this conviviality, otherwise put a complex form that combines a formal structure, object made available to visitors, and fleeting image issuing from collective behaviour*".

In addition to Bourriaud, my research methodology is inspired by Dr. Johnson Witehira, a New Zealand-based artist, designer, and researcher focusing on Māori and Pakeha cultures. Witehira is committed to re-establishing Māori visual culture within the Māori community.

He states, "*My Kaupapa (mission) both as an artist and designer is to bring Māori visual culture back into the lives of Māori. This is done through careful consideration of how indigenous culture, design, and technology intersect. I want to put Māori back in the driver's seat, so we are active participants in creating the tools and the world we want to live in*".

Johnson Witehira's work is aligned with my project, as it provides a model for integrating traditional cultural practices with contemporary artistic expressions. Witehira is dedicated to revitalizing Māori visual culture and ensuring its ongoing relevance within the Māori community. His approach involves blending traditional Māori art with modern design and

⁶ Relational Aesthetics book written by Bourriaud published in 1998

technology, thus, preserving cultural heritage while adapting it to contemporary contexts. Witehira emphasises cultural authenticity in design and secondly, cultural sensitivity in application (figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1: Witehira, Johnson. Photographs of design development and final posters for a Māori typeface.2011. <https://www.typeroom.eu/content/whakarare-maori-typeface>. Accessed July 2024.

This aligns with my project’s goal of reconnecting the Pashtun diaspora in Aotearoa with their cultural roots through workshops that incorporate traditional elements such as tappay (folk songs) and embroidery into modern artistic practices like stylized calligraphy. By engaging participants in hands-on activities that merge cultural traditions with contemporary methods, I aim to foster a sense of cultural continuity and community empowerment. Inspired by Whitehira’s emphasis on community involvement and the active role of participants in cultural preservation, my objective is to create participatory spaces where Pashtun traditions can be explored and celebrate. His work underscores the importance of maintaining cultural significance while innovating within modern contexts a principle central to my workshops. Through those alignment, I aim to bridge cultural heritage with contemporary life, ensuring that traditional practices remain vibrant and meaningful within diaspora.

In summary, the transformative power of arts suggests that art bridges communities with their lost cultural values and fosters connection amongst its audience. Based on this premise, my research methodology endeavours to create spaces where shared memories, cultural expressions, and human connections converge to foster social cohesion and collective empowerment. Based on this aim, I arranged two community workshops of Pashtun diaspora living in Aotearoa. The workshops served as a vibrant tapestry where shared experiences of food, music, and ideas intertwine echoing Bourriard’s concept of art as a relational practice that fosters social exchange, where the workshops become spaces for connection through shared food

3.1 Research Design

A total of eight Pashtun/Pakhtun women from the regions of Manawatū, Hawke's Bay, and Hāwera participated in both workshops. I personally know these women who all belong to Pakistani Pashtun families. We share same language and cultural traditions. The group represented a diverse age range, from 30 to 69 years. Their shared experiences of living away from their cultural homeland provided rich insights into the challenges and adaptations involved in preserving their cultural identity in the diaspora. The participants engaged in hands-on activities such as exploring tappay (folk songs) and converting them into stylized calligraphy and delving into regional embroidery, thereby, blurring the boundaries between art and everyday life.

3.2 Workshop invites

I personally called each of the participants and had a detailed conversation with them over the phone regarding the workshop's timing, duration, and content. All participants expressed their willingness and enthusiasm to be part of the workshop. I also informed them that I would be adding them to a WhatsApp group (figure 3.2), where all relevant information and photos related to the workshop would be shared. During these calls, I explained that the participant information sheet (Appendix 1), consent form (Appendix 2), and workshop Runsheet (Appendix 3) would be provided on the day of the workshop. We would go through the consent form and information sheet together to ensure everyone was fully informed and comfortable before participating. The research received a low-risk ethics approval, allowing community engagement activities to proceed in accordance with Massey university guidelines.



Figure 3.2: Screenshot of WhatsApp group invite, used to connect all participants for ongoing updates and collaboration. September 2024.

3.3 Workshop 1-- Calligraphy

Round 1: Meet and Greet

The participants were warmly welcomed (figure 3.3). After arriving and settling in, the consent form and information sheet were explained in detail to ensure participants understood all aspects of the process, including filming, photography, and audio recording (3.4). It was also clarified that their quotations might be included throughout the thesis.



Figure 3.3: Participants during the meet-and-greet session. Photo by author, September 2024.



Figure 3.4: Explaining the consent form and information sheet to participants during the workshop. Photo by author, September 2024.

The workshop's first activity centred on a memory-sharing exercise, featuring a collection of images depicting traditional objects, places, foods, and childhood memories displayed on a memory-sharing board to encourage participant engagement and recall (figure 3.5). Most of the photos were authentic, taken by me during my time living in Pakistan, while the food images showcased dishes I personally prepared in New Zealand. Only a small number of visuals were sourced from the internet. Even though the participants were familiar with one another, the activity sought to revive their connection to their Pashtun heritage and deepen their sense of cultural identity. This approach reflects the concept of memory work as described by Kuhn (284), where remembering is not about uncovering an absolute truth but engaging with memories as material for interpretation and reflection. In this way, the exercise became a deliberate and active process of reconstructing the participants' connection to their past. This objective was successfully met, as participants responded with enthusiasm and thoroughly enjoyed the session



Figure 3.5: Participants engaging in the memory-sharing activity, reflecting on personal and cultural memories prompted by traditional images. Photo by author, September 2024.

Initially, it was planned that participants would use sticky notes on a board to break the ice and facilitate idea clustering, brainstorming individual thoughts that would later be organized into categories. However, once the workshop began, it became evident that participants felt more comfortable writing their responses directly rather than using sticky notes. Anticipating this possibility, a questionnaire sheet had already been prepared, with designated space provided after each question for written responses. The transition from sticky notes to the questionnaire sheets was made smoothly, allowing participants to comfortably record their thoughts, which were successfully collected for further analysis.

Among the items displayed were the surma dani (a small container used to store surma or kohl), and Mangay منگي an earthen pitcher traditionally used to collect and store cool drinking water

from streams. Other objects included laltein لالتين a vintage lantern, a pedestal fan, and Beestaro Bakas بسترو بکس an iron trunk commonly given to brides as part of their dowry to store quilts and seasonal clothing, protecting them from insects and mold. An Afghani Qaleen/Carpet افغاني قالين, an essential item found in most Pashtun households, was also featured. Symbolic representations of festivity were captured through the inclusion of nakreezay ناکریزی (henna) and colourful bangles, both of which hold cultural significance during celebratory occasions. Large, round, hand-stitched floor cushions called mootakay typically part of a bride's dowry were also highlighted, reflecting domestic traditions of homemaking. The shamiana/Tamboo تمبو, a colourful canopy tent once widely used for gatherings before the popular shift to modern marquees in the early 2000s, resonated deeply with participants. Many shared personal stories and emotional memories associated with such traditional setups.

Additional visual references included a Swati motif سواتی کلاز (a common embroidery design), a map of Pakistan, and a Rabab رباب (a traditional string instrument closely associated with Pashtun musical heritage). Currency notes from the 1990s were also shown, sparking collective reminiscence. Landmarks of cultural and historical significance were featured, such as Chowk Yadgar چوک یادگار (a prominent intersection in Peshawar), Bab-e-Khyber باب خیبر (the iconic gateway between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan), and Islamia College Peshawar (part of the University of Peshawar). Many participants had studied at Peshawar University پېشاور پوهنتون and enthusiastically recalled their student experiences upon seeing the image. Images of traditional food items elicited particularly strong reactions. These included qehwa قهوه (green tea), chapli kabab چپلی کباب (a signature dish of Peshawar), seekh kabab سببخ کباب, chicken karahi چکن کڑاہی, and Kachalo pera کچالو پره an irresistible street food of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Participants expressed deep longing for these dishes, associating them with family gatherings and street-side vendors. Sweet delicacies such as Ghunzakhe غونزاکھی a traditional pastry given to married daughters and sisters upon returning to their marital homes, and Mardan pera مردان پره, a confection originating from Mardan, were also included. The display concluded with an image of gurr گره (raw cane sugar), locally produced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from sugarcane juice, further grounding the imagery in local agricultural and culinary practices. The participants thoroughly enjoyed the visual display and felt a strong connection to the images. Many shared personal memories and stories sparked by the photographs, making the memory-sharing board an effective medium for cultural reconnection and dialogue (figure 3.6 and 3.7).



Figure 3.6: Participants deeply engaged in the memory-sharing activity, continuing their discussion into the tea break. Tea was served as part of Pashtun hospitality, reflecting the cultural tradition of welcoming and honouring guests. Photo by author, September 2024.



Fig. 3.7: The session paused momentarily in response to the call for prayer (Azan اذان). Photo by author, September 2024.

After the Azan (prayer) break, traditional Pashtun/Pakhtun food, prepared by me, was served on a *dastarkhwan* دسترخوان (a cloth spread on the floor for communal dining) (figure 3.8). In Pashtun culture, *chana mewa pulao* (a pilaf made with chickpeas and raisins) and *zarda* (sweet yellow rice cooked with dried dates, dried coconut, and assorted nuts) are typically prepared for special occasions. Another dish included in the meal was *chana dal* (split chickpeas or Bengal gram), which was served in a bowl. In Pakistan, these dishes are traditionally presented together on a large wooden tray known as *khwancha* خوانچه. This arrangement, commonly

referred to as the *khwancha* system, is typically used during wedding ceremonies and is designed to serve approximately four people.



Figure 3.8: Traditional lunch replicating Khwancha served on a traditional dastarkhwan, reflecting Pashtun cultural hospitality practices. Photograph by author, September 2024.

All the participants thoroughly enjoyed the food and believed it to be an authentic representation of Pashtun cuisine. In line with the values of Pashtun hospitality, and drawing inspiration from Rirkrit Tiravanija, who is known for transforming gallery spaces into communal environments that encourage cooking, eating, and conversation, the food was served with love and sincerity. Altoé offers a close reading of *Untitled (Free)*, a performance-installation by Tiravanija in which he transformed New York art galleries into functioning kitchens and served Thai curry to visitors, thereby promoting an aesthetic experience grounded

in conviviality (Altoé 81). She also discusses FOOD, an artist-run restaurant founded in New York City in the 1970s, as a pioneering initiative that merged culinary practice with artistic expression, transforming a familiar, everyday space into a gallery-like environment (Altoé 81).

Round 2: Exploring Pashtunwali Codes and Selecting Tappay

Pukhtunwali was discussed in detail during the session. Each participant recorded their responses on a questionnaire, reflecting their perspective on Pukhtunwali. They expressed agreement with some codes and disagreement with others, particularly in the context of living in New Zealand in today's world, where certain aspects of Pukhtunwali are not viewed as relevant for preservation. The participants explored the significance of Pukhtunwali, highlighting codes such as love for religion, hospitality, hope, resilience, and women's empowerment and voices as their favourites. These are aspects they strongly wish to preserve for future generations. Another key discussion centred around the selection of tappay. A selection of 43 tappay, related to 8 codes of Pukhtunwali, was provided to the participants. Among these, they selected 22 tappay. The tappay were pre-printed on paper to make it easier for participants to select (please see Appendix 4). The participants thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the tappay, with many sharing that they had never encountered these deep-rooted tappay before. For some this experience was their first exposure to meaningful tappay. They appreciated the cultural significance and took the tappay with them to share with their family members.

Sharing Fabric Samples

In the third round of the workshop, before starting the writing exercise, fabric samples featuring Pashto letters and tappay were showcased to the participants (figure 3.9). These samples were screen-printed on silk, organza, cotton, and poly-cotton, while some were laser-etched on velvet, pink denim, and suede. This demonstration provided the participants with a rough idea of how the final product would appear on fabric.



Figure 3.9: Studio creation. Photograph by the author, September 2024.

Participants were encouraged to practice writing Pashto letters first, followed by writing tappay using various unconventional tools provided, please see figure 3.10. Initially, there was some reluctance among the participants to write Pashto, as only three of them had learned to write the language in school back in Pakistan. One participant Hina mentioned, "I don't know how to read and write Pashto, but I will try to write." Despite this, Pashto music played in the background, and soon all participants became fully immersed in the writing activity.



Figure 3.10: Unconventional calligraphy tools-harakeke, dry harakeke, bamboo, buds, feathers, cola pen, pipettes, etc.—set up for experimental mark-making. Photograph by the author, September 2024.

India ink was used throughout the calligraphy activity as it provides a clear and precise result. A range of tools was provided to the participants to explore various techniques in calligraphy. These included hand-carved bamboo pens, calligraphy pens with different nibs, fresh and dried harakeke, feathers, a traveling roll-on bottle filled with India ink, sponge brushes, twigs, paint brushes of different sizes, pipettes, markers, and Styrofoam. These materials allowed participants to experiment with different styles and tools, encouraging creative exploration in their calligraphy practice. Figure 3.11 depicts the experimentation of participants with the tools.



Figure 3.11: Hands-on experimentation with unconventional tools to write Pashto. Photograph by the author, September 2024.

After practicing Pashto letters and writing their favourite tappay, participants were once again served tea. The session was concluded with feedback, where nearly all participants expressed their satisfaction with the discussions on memory sharing and Pashto writing. Feedback from the participants showed that they valued how the workshop provided them with the opportunity to read and write in their native language while living far from their homeland. They shared that, back home, language preservation is often overlooked because it is part of daily life, but for them, living abroad, they strongly feel the importance of such workshops for future generations. Many participants remarked that, at the start of the workshop, they were uncertain about how a six-hour session would unfold, but now they were eager to explore more. Additionally, the agenda for the next embroidery workshop was briefly discussed.

3.4 Workshop 2-- Embroidery

Workshop 2, focused on regional embroidery, took place the following weekend. Participants were highly enthusiastic about joining the workshop. The embroidery station was set up in a traditional manner, with seating arranged on the floor to create an authentic ambiance. Traditional music played throughout the session, with participants selecting songs and tappay that resonated with them.

The materials provided included embroidery hoops, threads, sequins, scissors, and various types of fabrics. Some fabrics were screen-printed or laser-etched, but participants preferred to use plain fabrics and write the words from their selected tappay on them.

During the workshop, participants engaged in embroidery, immersing themselves in the traditional craft while sharing memories and personal stories from their childhood as depicted in Figures 3.12A and 3.12B. Behramand, one of the participants, brought a shirt she had embroidered 30 years ago, before moving to New Zealand. She had not practiced embroidery since then. Fatima was overjoyed to reconnect with the craft and expressed her excitement about taking her new sample home to share with her daughters. Aiman from Hastings/Hawke's Bay resumed embroidery after several years and was equally enthusiastic about the experience.

For Hina, it was her first time doing embroidery, and despite her strong cultural background, she had never had the chance to learn before. She was keen to participate and picked up a few basic stitches during the session. Demonstrating and learning embroidery became a shared experience for all, with participants describing the activity as therapeutic and meditative, offering a calming space to focus on a single task.



Figure 3.12A: Collage of workshop moments showcasing participants engaged in embroidery—sharing stories, learning stitches, and reviving traditional Pashtun craft Photograph by the author, September 2024.



Figure 3.12B: Collage of workshop moments showcasing participants engaged in embroidery—sharing stories, learning stitches, and reviving traditional Pashtun craft
Photograph by the author, September 202

In addition to the hands-on practice, the group discussed how Pashtun motifs are traditionally geometric, often featuring subtle floral elements. The workshop fostered a strong sense of cultural connection and creative exchange. During the workshop, we discussed that traditional Pashtun dresses are known for their contrasting colours, geometric patterns, and silver jewellery, a style that has remained consistent over generations, please see figure 3.13.



Figure 3.13: Collage of Pakhtun New Zealanders dressed in traditional Waziristan dress, Auckland. Photograph by the author, May 2024.



Figure 3.14: During the embroidery session, participants enjoyed tea and homemade Pakistani street food (dahi bhalla & samosa), with shared treats like cakes, donuts, and juices adding to the warm, communal atmosphere. Photograph by the author, September 2024

The workshop created a lively atmosphere where participants enjoyed the music, embroidery, and food simultaneously (figure 3.14). Casual discussions took place around traditional embroidery patterns, colours, stitches, and embellishments.



Figure 3.15: Participants proudly displaying their completed embroidery samples, a testament to their creativity, collaboration, and shared joy throughout the workshop. Photograph by the author, September 2024.



Figure 3.16: A joyful display of sequins marks the end of the workshop. Photograph by the author, September 2024.

The workshop was ended with a thank you to all participants for their time, effort and enthusiasm in taking part in the workshop. Their active engagement and valuable contributions were essential to the success of this study.

Participants Feedback:

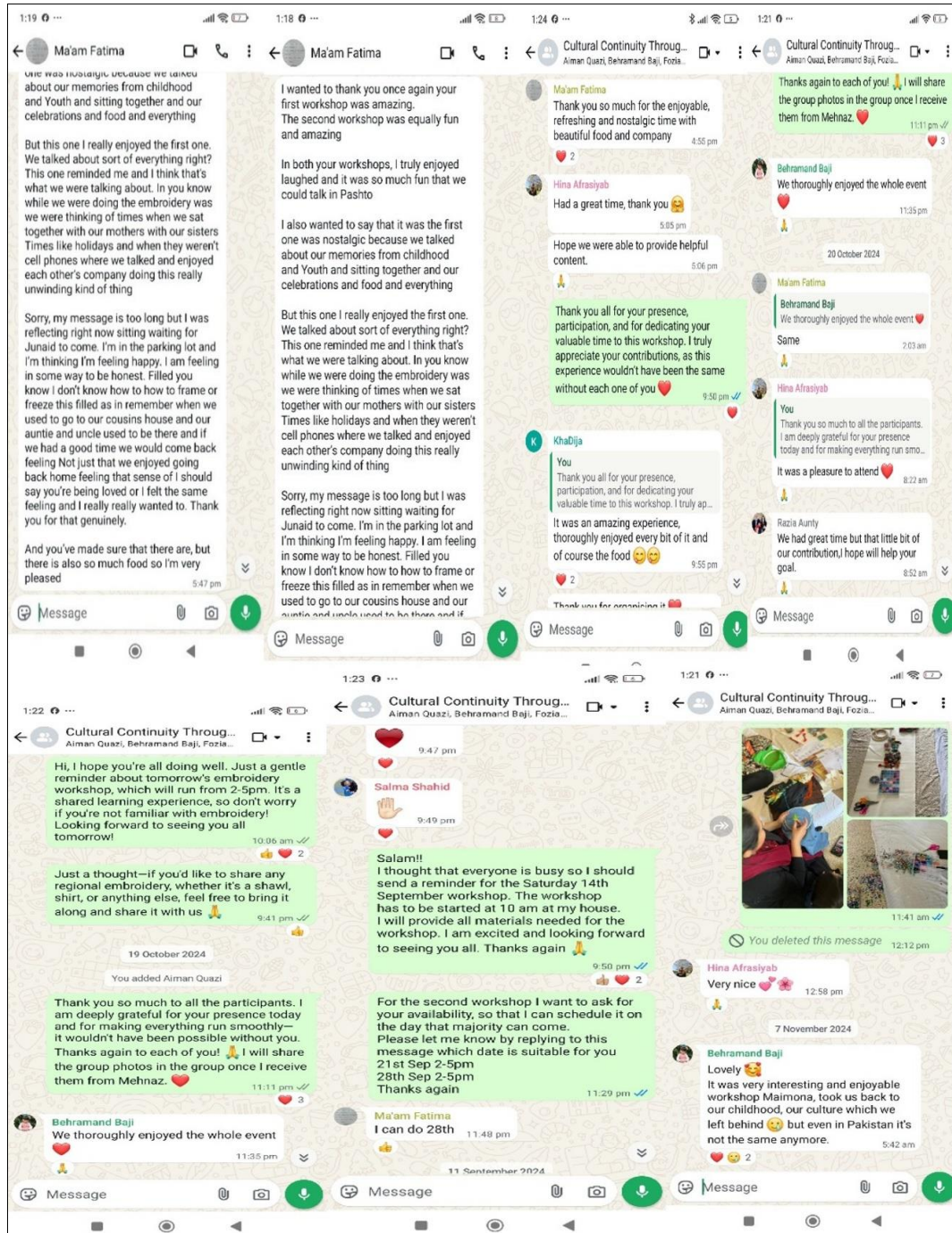


Figure 3.15: Workshop feedback. WhatsApp group message screenshot, September & October 2024.

Chapter 4- Discussion and Design Process

Since this study is inspired by the work of Nicolas Bourriaud and Johnson Wittehra as referenced before, to whom art is a collective process, created as a result of social interactions and dialogue. Based on this concept, before initiating my design work, I conducted two workshops to understand the collective values of the Pashtuns living in Aotearoa New Zealand. This chapter starts with exhibiting the initial experimentation process. Followed by explaining the process of social interaction and dialogue which happened in the workshops, and which eventually led to the creation of the design of the *Shawl*. The chapter then explains the design process inspired and shaped by the discussions in the workshop. The chapter closes with limitations of this study.

4.1 Initial Experimentation

Initial experimentation involved screen printing Pashto letters onto various fabrics including cotton, polycotton, chiffon, organza, and rayon. However, the results were not visually appealing. Since the letters were either hand-painted with Indian ink or drawn using a chisel marker, this led to distortion and bleeding of the text during the printing process. This affected the aesthetic quality of the designs. Figure 4.1 and 4.2 depicts the outcomes of the initial experiments. After my personal reflections, the literature review, and insights gained from the workshops, clarity around my concept began to emerge, leading me to proceed with further experimentation.



Figure 4.1: Pashto word depicted in three different styles alongside a *tappa*, screen printed on cotton fabric. Photograph by the author, April 2024.



Figure 4.2: The same *tappa*, screen printed with a background design on pure cotton fabric. Photograph by the author, April 2024.

In response, I decided to digitize all calligraphy originally created through different mediums by vectorizing it in Adobe Illustrator. The vectorized calligraphy was then laser etched onto fabric samples. Several types of velvet were tested, but one consistent issue was fraying. Over time, all velvet samples began to deteriorate. Figure 4.3 to 4.6 depicts this process.



Figure 4.3: A *tappa* written with a cola pen and sprayed with water to create a textured effect, then laser-etched onto velvet. The resulting visual impact was striking. Photograph by the author, May 2024.



Figure 4.4: Sample of velvet that frayed and began to rip after a few days, highlighting the material's unsuitability for long-term use. Photograph by the author, May 2024.



Figure 4.5: Sample of pink-coloured denim used for testing—visually appealing but ultimately unsatisfactory in terms of quality and durability. Photograph by the author, May 2024.



Figure 4.6: Fabric samples including denim, suede, velvet, and upholstery velvet tested for digital embroidery and laser etching. Velvet proved the most aesthetically pleasing but presented significant technical challenges. Photograph by the author, November 2024

To cope with this challenge, I tried to source a velvet suitable for the process. However, the main difficulty was sourcing velvet that would not burn during laser processing and that was also non-elastic. Most velvets available were elastic, and not only did they fray quickly over

time, but they also did not perform well on the digital embroidery machine. I experimented with multiple types of velvet sourced both locally and from Pakistan, but none worked. Despite adjusting the laser machine's speed and power levels, the velvet continued to burn, making it unsuitable for consistent output.

I sourced several types of velvet from Pakistan and conducted laser tests on them, but they all failed completely, even at very low settings. Fortunately, I found a piece of turquoise velvet in my mother's treasured trunk, fabric she had bought for me when I got engaged in 2009, and after conducting multiple tests on it, I selected it for embroidery and laser etching. Figure 4.7 and 4.8 shows the results of the successful experiment while table 4.1 provides detail of the various settings of the laser machine.



Figure 4.7: Various fabric samples tested: suitable for embroidery but unsuitable for laser etching except the turquoise one. Photograph by the author, February 2025.



Figure 4.8: Different laser power percentages and speeds tested on velvet fabric using rasterizing technique, showing varied outcomes in laser etching and embroidery quality. Photograph by the author, February 2025.

Table 4.1: Laser Machine Settings			
Fabric	Velvet		
Technique	Rasterizing/ Laser Etching		
Template	2mm wool felt (light)		
Power (%)	Speed (%)	Line Thickness (pt)	Result
15	100	4	Fail
10	100	4	Pass
15	100	3	Fail
5	100	4	Fail (Invisible)
5	100	6	Fail (Invisible)
5	80	6	Fail (Invisible)
8	100	4	Very light result

4.2 Workshop Discussion and Dialogue

To break the ice and encourage the participants to kick start the conversation, I shared some photos of traditional food, cultural events, notable places of Peshawar city, and some other traditional household items, and then the participants were asked to share their views or memories in relation to the pictures. The participants recalled and shared the memories of their childhoods and early adulthoods. They commonly recalled traditional foods such as Chapli Kabab, Sekh Kabab, Kachalo Chat, and Qehwa, which evoke strong memories of family and celebration. Cultural events such as Eid and weddings, along with practices like Mehndi (henna), also featured prominently. Significant places and markets including Saddar Bazar, Islamia College, and Bab-e-Khyber grounded their memories in specific cultural locations. Everyday traditional objects containing Qaleens (rugs), lanterns, surma containers, and embroidered shawls, symbolize heritage and daily life. Overall, these elements connect to deep feelings of home and childhood. Thus, the initial exercise proved a success, and the participants became involved in the exercise.

As a next and more formal step, the participants were asked about their perception of culture and cultural preservation. Participants defined cultural preservation as maintaining and passing down the values, traditions, and ways of life of their ancestors. This includes preserving language, food, music, art, hospitality, traditional clothing, and social systems such as the jirga and joint family structures. To them, it also involves respect for elders, bravery, and cultural practices like pardah (modesty) and hospitality. Many emphasized upon the importance of connecting future generations to these cultural elements to prevent loss over time.

To understand more contemporary cultural values, I asked them that what which aspects of culture would they like the most to preserve and how to preserve them? In response, the participants expressed a strong desire to preserve language, traditional clothing, music, hospitality, food, and cultural values such as respect, family structure, and religion. Many highlighted the importance of maintaining Pukhtunwali practices and collective cultural essence. One participant particularly mentioned that “in some ways we keep Pukhtunwali at times above religion”. Thus, they were keen to preserve the most visible aspects of culture such as language, clothing, music, and food.

The participants further asserted that they would like to pass down traditions and language to the next generation through everyday practice and storytelling. They suggested speaking the native language, maintaining traditional food, music, and dress, and actively connecting with

cultural roots by visiting their homeland or engaging with community members. Socializing with children about cultural values and involving them in festivals were also seen as vital ways to keep culture alive. Furthermore, one participant mentioned that preserving language is a critical part of preserving culture. Language is a treasure which should be respected and preserved. It is a core part of one's identity.

To contextualize this discussion, I asked them about their views regarding the code of Pukhtunwali. The participants described Pukhtunwali as a complex code embodying values such as bravery, hospitality, honesty, loyalty, integrity, and respect. It also includes social customs like gift-giving, jirga (council) systems, and brotherhood. Some highlighted the lighter side of Pukhtunwali, including storytelling, humour, and light-hearted social interactions. However, participants also acknowledged the presence of internalized misogyny, patriarchy, and male dominance within the system, alongside cultural practices like the pardah and jirga. One participant had an interesting viewpoint *“For me, Pukhtunwali is bravery, hospitality, and openness to others. However, part of Pukhtunwali also involves rigidity, especially in relationships and values, such as rigidity toward women. Patriarchy is very strong, and internalized misogyny is present.”*

Overall, the code embodies both the strengths and challenges of Pashtun identity and social expectations. Furthermore, the participants were critical of certain aspects of the code, which can be taken as a further indication that the code is evolving over time.

To take this interesting and critical discussion further, I asked the participants regarding which aspects of Pukhtunwali they believe are still relevant, especially while living in New Zealand? Participants highlighted hospitality as the most enduring and relevant aspect of Pukhtunwali in contemporary life. Because hospitality is closely linked with generosity, openness, and community spirit, where people stand by and support each other.

One participant asked other whether they agree that Pashtuns are open and tend to overshare. She shared her observation from her workplace that non-Pashtun and New Zealanders are actually more reserved and speak cautiously. She questioned whether oversharing is truly a good thing. Another participant responded that, no matter what, this openness is ingrained in our nature, it's in our blood to give space to others and share freely. Everyone agreed with this sentiment. Ultimately, the consensus was that Pashtuns stand by others with simplicity and sincerity.

At this point, I shared all the selected tappay with them, and asked them about their view on tappay, and using them as a tool to connect the current generation with their traditions and Pukhtunwali. The participants were truly overwhelmed upon reading the tappay. Initially, they only recalled the tappay as love songs commonly heard in music. However, after reading the tappay along with explanations, they were deeply moved by the depth and meaning contained within them. All participants expressed a desire to take copies of the tappa sheets with them. One participant added that these tappay carry profound messages, which must be conveyed to our future generations. I then asked the participants to rank the tappey based on their views regarding the contemporary Pashtun values which are more relevant in New Zealand and in general. I used the most highly ranked tappey for rasterization on the shawl.

At the end the participants concluded that tappa is a traditional poetic and musical form deeply rooted in folklore that conveys meaningful messages and emotions, especially beyond just love songs., therefore, can be a strong tool for reconnecting the second-generation expatriate Pashtuns to their cultural values (Pukhtunwali).

In the second round of the workshop, I asked the participants to write Pashto alphabets using unconventional tools such as bamboo sticks, pipette, markers etc. Initially, the participants were reluctant because they said they never wrote Pashto in their schools or colleges. However, when they started writing, they started enjoying it, most of them started with writing their names. The participants were very fascinated, and they were of the view that this is the first time they are writing something in their native language and that too in New Zealand. One of the participants even mentioned that we should have brought our kids to this part of the workshop. The tools which were most used by the participants were later used as tools for calligraphy applied to the shawl.

Workshop 2 was aimed to discuss and practice regional embroidery techniques. Because the Pashtun traditional embroidery is very simple and scant, largely based on geometric shapes. Since the participants were from various parts of the Pashtun belt, the idea was to discuss and identify the common embroidery motifs and colour pattern which is most prominent in their respective regions. However, it came to the surface that the designs are random geometric or simple floral patterns embellished with silver jewellery. The participants were then asked to practice some embroidery techniques. Some of them had experienced some techniques years ago while others were doing it for the first time, therefore, the participants collaborated with each other to create some basic patterns. Based on this collective process, I created the copper

patina coins for the embellishment of the shawl. Also, the colour pattern for the shawl embroidery was created based on the participants' attires' colours across the two workshops.

4.3 Preserving Tradition-- Velvet and Pashtun Weddings

Velvet has been selected for the project because in Pashtun Culture, velvet holds great significance, especially during special occasions such as wedding ceremonies. Upholstered velvet is commonly used for cushion covers, and it is customary for the bride—whether from the groom's or bride's side—to have a velvet dress adorned with embroidery. Figure 4.9 shows pictures of my sister's wedding with all my family members including me wearing velvet.

In line with this tradition, my mother had purchased a piece of velvet fabric for me, which she wanted me to use during my wedding ceremony. However, I could not use it as I joined my husband in New Zealand without having many events. It is pertinent to mention here that velvet typically has dark green, maroon, deep blue, or dark purple shades. However, my mother was particularly excited about this particular shade of fabric because it was strikingly different from the conventional colours.

Every time I visited Pakistan since I moved to New Zealand, my mother would remind me to embroider the fabric and use it for a custom-made dress for myself. I would always refuse, explaining that I would rarely wear it in New Zealand and that fashion trends have changed since then, so I did not want to waste such a precious fabric. However, during my visit to Pakistan in late 2024, she surprisingly did not remind me about the velvet.

Meanwhile, I had purchased samples of other velvets to test at the FabLab, but these fabrics failed the laser tests. During a conversation with my mother, she suddenly reminded me of the special piece of velvet, which had been lying in her cupboard for the past fifteen years waiting for me to decide how I want to use it. I asked her to send it for the project, and she sent it all the way from Pakistan. Fortunately, and to my pleasant surprise, it performed excellently on both the laser machine and embroidery equipment, producing amazing results.



Figure 4.9: Photograph of me, my mother, and my aunts wearing embroidered velvet dresses with shaw, an integral part of Pashtun women's attire at my sister's wedding, February 2018

4.4 Shawl as a Symbol of Modesty, Identity, and Cultural Pride

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the shawl holds deep meaning, symbolizing modesty, honour, and social responsibility. Another important aspect is the influence of Islam, where the Quran instructs both men and women to dress modestly. Since the shawl is considered a symbol of modesty for women, wearing a shawl or chaddar helps meet both societal and Islamic

expectations, especially in more conservative areas, where the society has more strict code in practice.

Beyond its religious and social functions, the shawl also serves as a strong symbol of identity for Pashtun women, particularly those living in the diaspora. It acts as a marker that connects them to their cultural roots, and collective pride. This cultural importance was evident in the photos of Pashtun women from my family taken both in Pakistan and New Zealand, as well as images from workshop participants, where women consistently preferred to put on shawls. Based on these insights, I chose to create a shawl incorporating tappay, laser-etched, alongside embroidered motifs to honour this tradition.

4.5 Culturally Grounded Colour Palette

The colour palette was developed through observation of workshop participants, who predominantly wore traditional Pakistani attire, alongside the array of food served during the sessions. Photographic documentation from the workshop provided visual references that informed the creation of this culturally inspired palette. Figures 4.10A and 4.10B below depicts this process of palette creation.



Figure 4.10A: Collage of photos from the workshops and the colour pallet of the design, the pallet is based on the colours in the photos. November 2024



Figure 4.10B: Collage of photos from the workshops and the colour pallet of the design, the pallet is based on the colours in the photos. November 202

4.6 Exploring Pashto Letters and Design Process

As mentioned earlier, our culture features some very basic embroidery designs, often comprising either five-petalled flowers or simple geometric patterns (photos of Waziristan, swat and Orakzai dresses). Figure 4.11 and 4.12 shows these basic patterns.

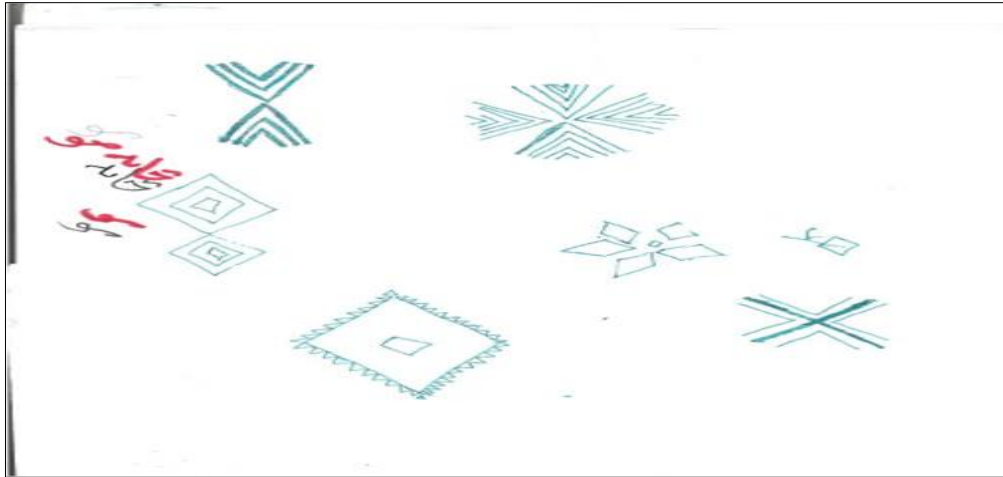


Figure 4.11: Initial embroidery motifs derived from regional dress pattern. Photograph by author, July 2024

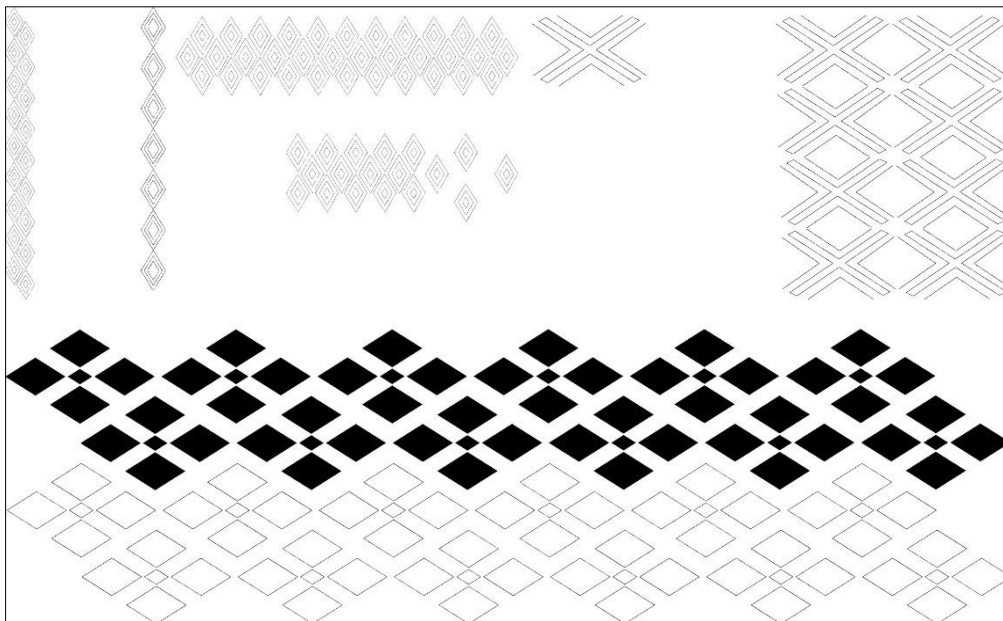


Figure 4.12: Embroidery patterns inspired by regional dress, digitized using adobe illustrator. Photograph by author, July 2024.

After experimenting with different design approaches, I began playing around with Pashto letters in an attempt to create a motif derived from the script, as depicted in Figure 4.13.

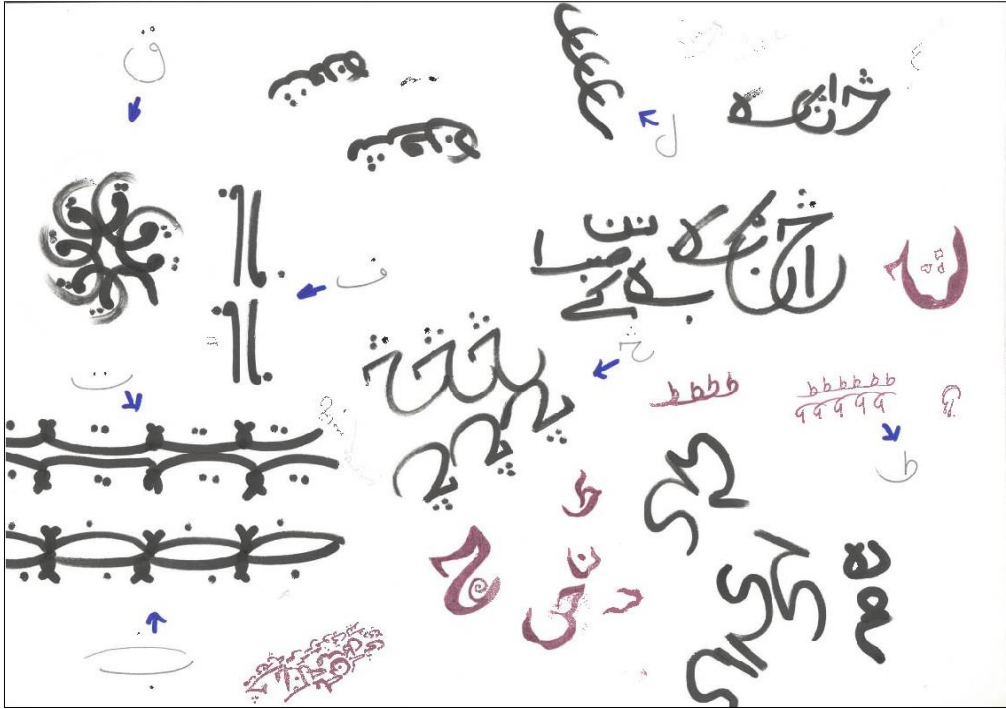


Figure 4.13: Formation of a unique motif by connecting Pashto letters. Photograph by author, July 2024

However, I was not entirely satisfied with the outcome. This led me to consider the possibility of forming motifs from whole words instead of individual letters.

This raised the question: what word should I choose? In English, letters stand independently when forming a word for example, *tappay*. In contrast, Pashto, like Arabic, Persian and Urdu, uses a script in which letters are joined together and change shape depending on their position in the word. For instance, the word *tappay* تپه in Pashto is composed of the letters پ، ت، and ټ, which visually transform as they connect. From this realization, I decided to design a motif for each code of *Pukhtunwali* using its corresponding Pashto word. In figure 4.14 below are the motifs I developed for this purpose.

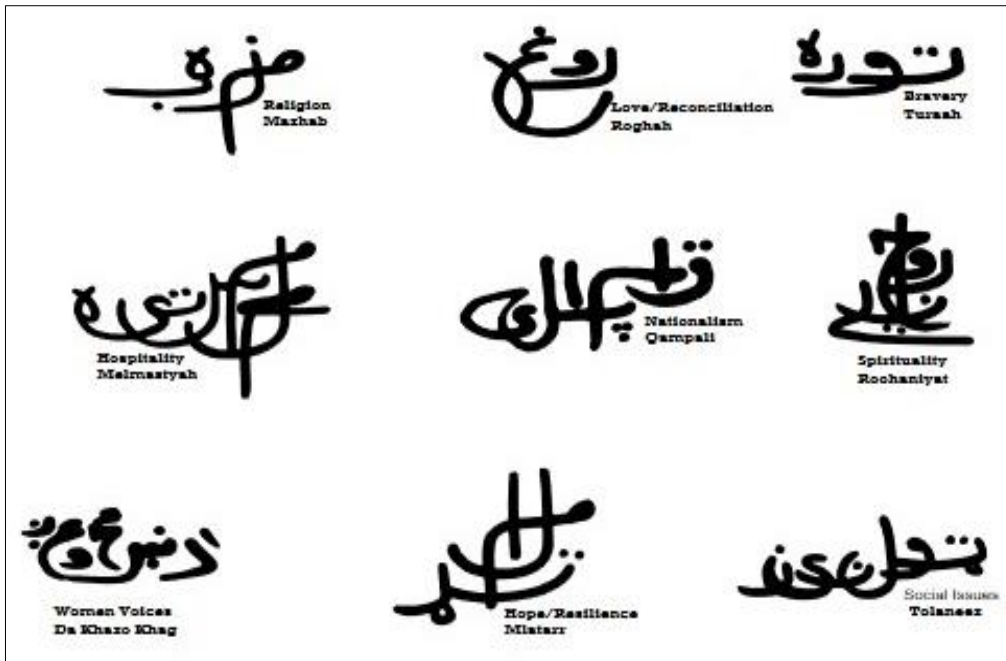


Figure 4.14: All the Pukhtunwali codes written with acrylic marker. Photograph by author, September 2024

These designs were then vectorized and arranged into repeating motifs using mirror effects and repetition in Adobe illustrator. All motifs were coloured according to the chosen palette. Finally, they were resized according to the 2.5 metre shawl. Figure 4.15 to 4.23 depicts this process.

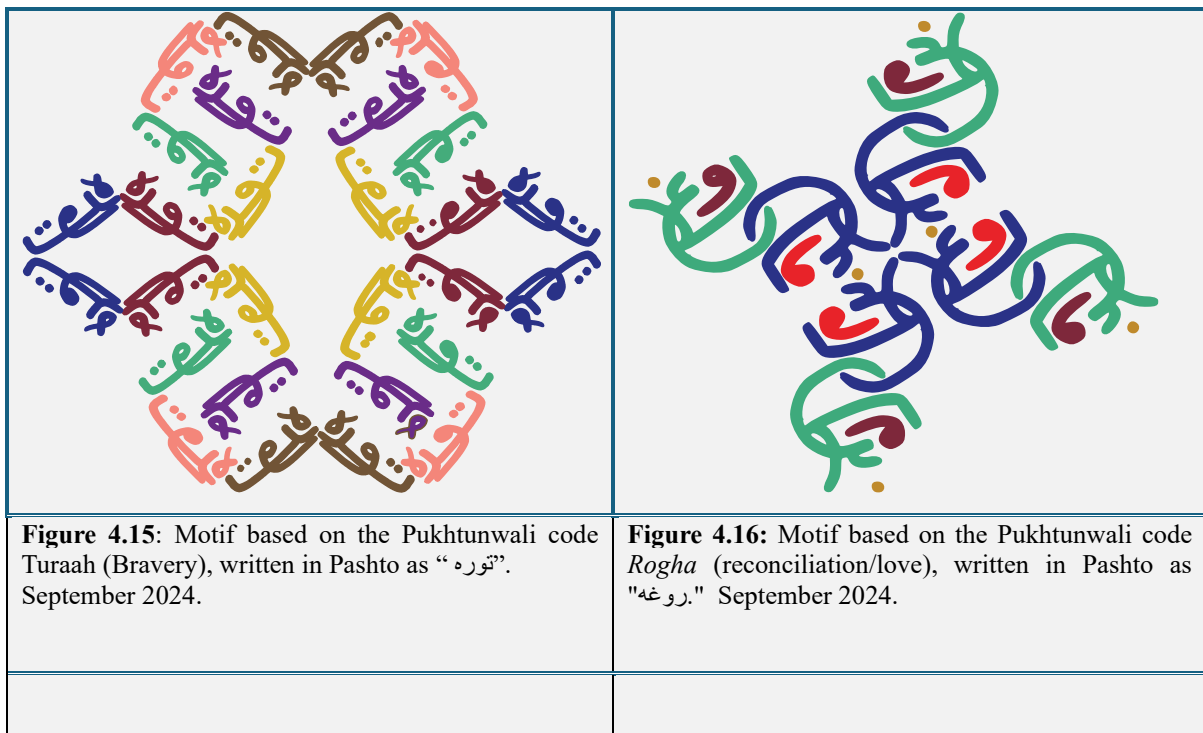




Figure 4.17: Motif based on the Pukhtunwali code *Mazhab* (religion/religious inclusiveness), written in Pashto as "مذهب." September 2024.



Figure 4.18: Motif based on the Pukhtunwali code *Rohaniyat* (spirituality), written in Pashto as "روحانيت." Created September 2024.

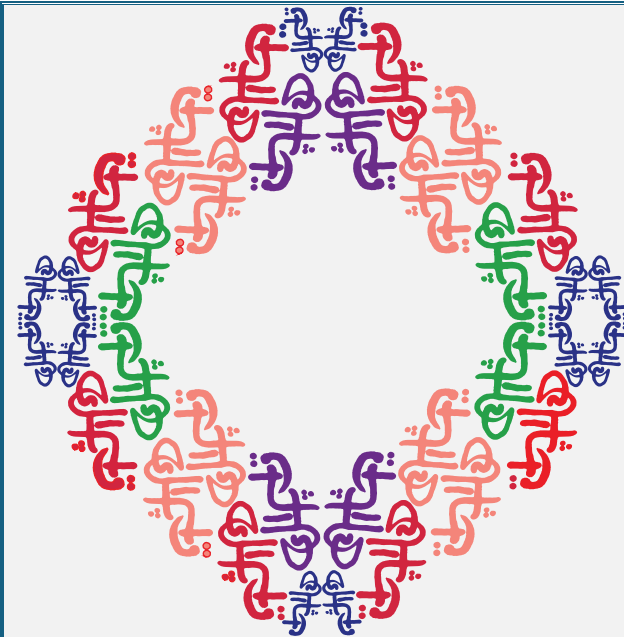


Figure 4.19: Motif based on the Pukhtunwali code *Qaampali* (nationalism), written in Pashto as "قاديالي." Created September 2024.

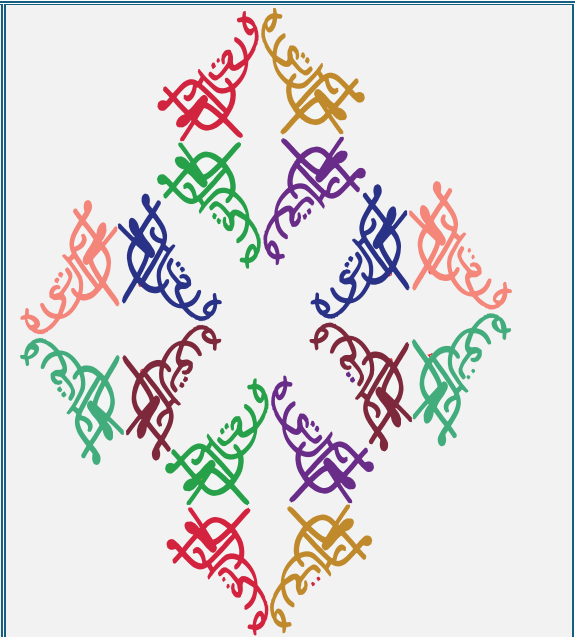
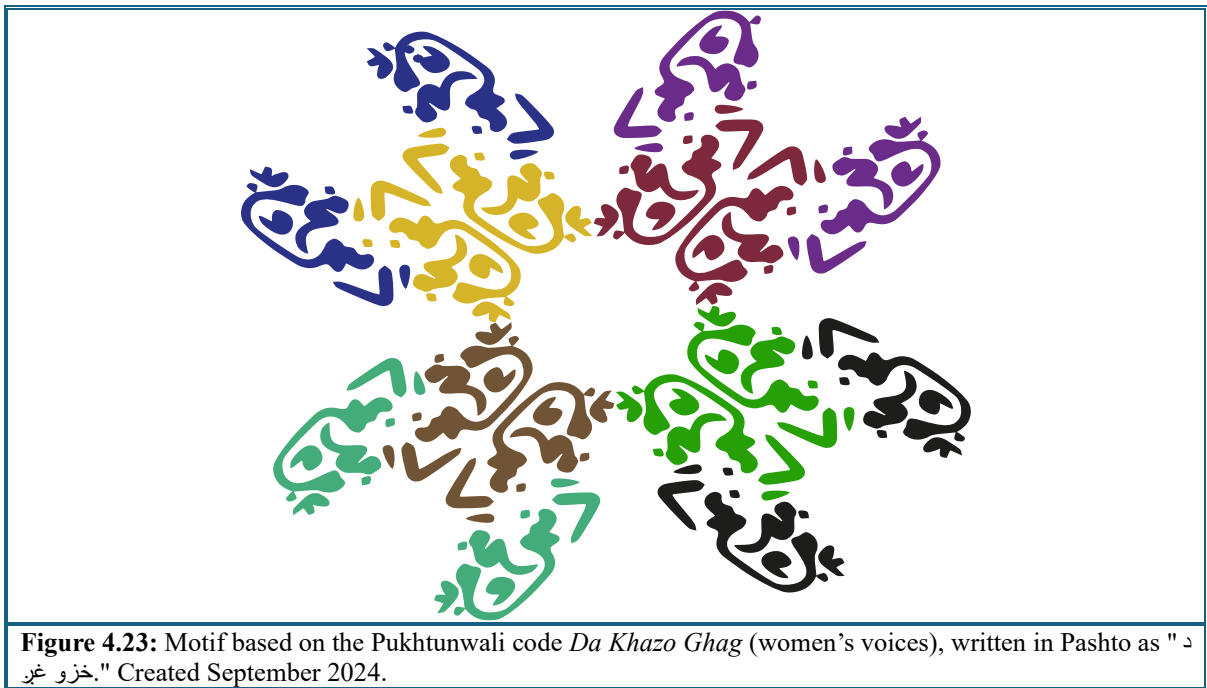
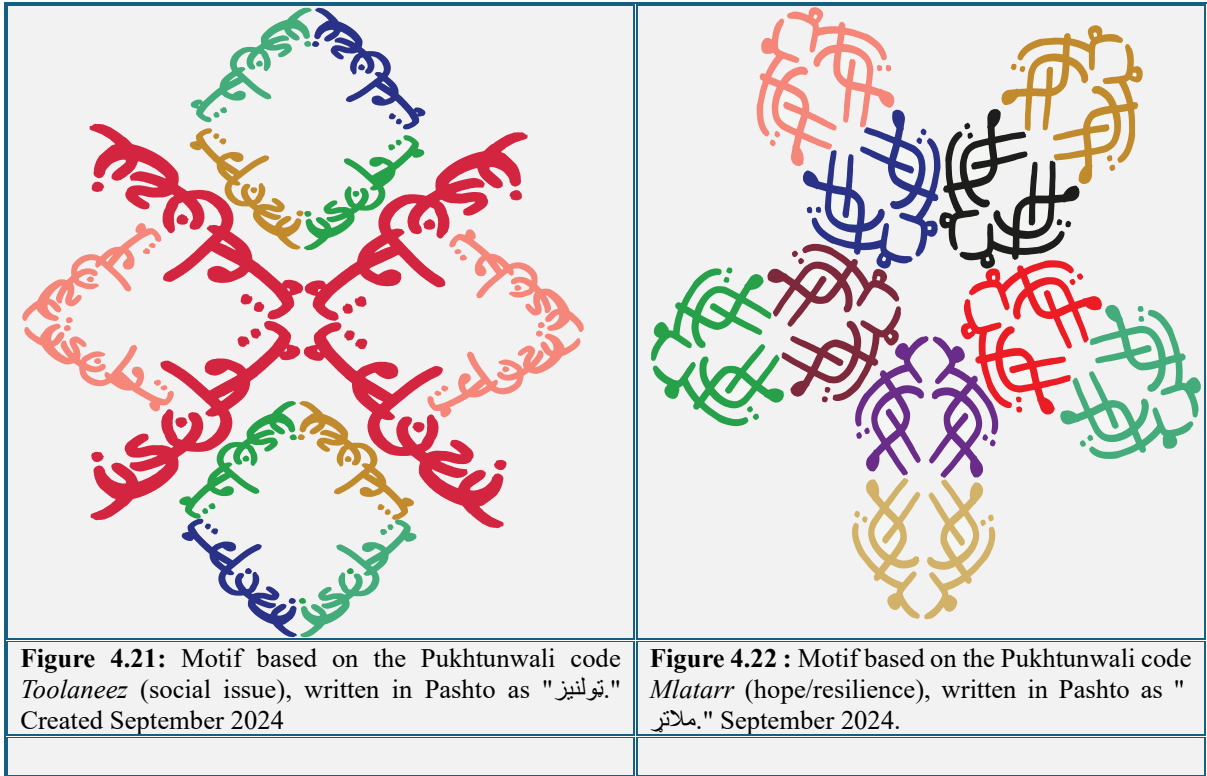


Figure 4.20: Motif based on the Pukhtunwali code *Melmastya* (hospitality), written in Pashto as "ميلمستيا." Created September 2024.



4.7 Transforming Folk Expression

For the Tappay, I selected the ones that my wonderful participants rated during the workshop. They chose various mediums such as cola pens, pipettes, dry harakeke, fresh harakeke, and markers. As shows in the figures below (from 4.24 to 4.32)

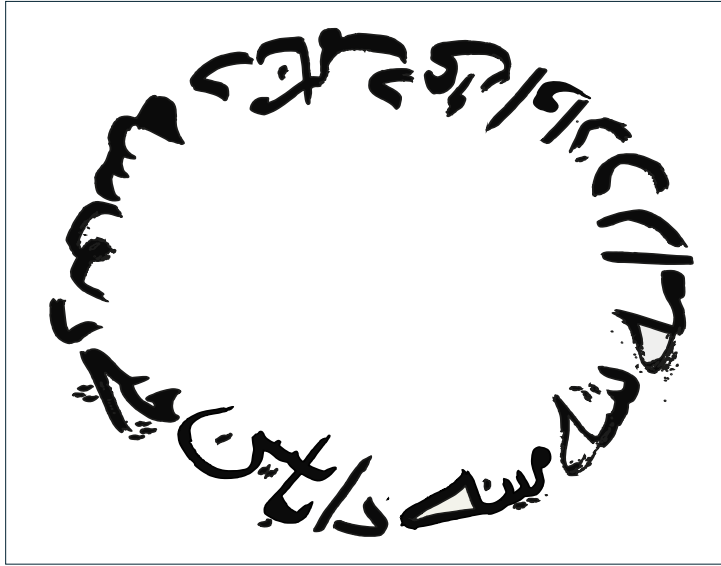


Figure 4.24: Bravery Tappa, written in New Zealand flax (harakeke) and cut vertically. October 2024.

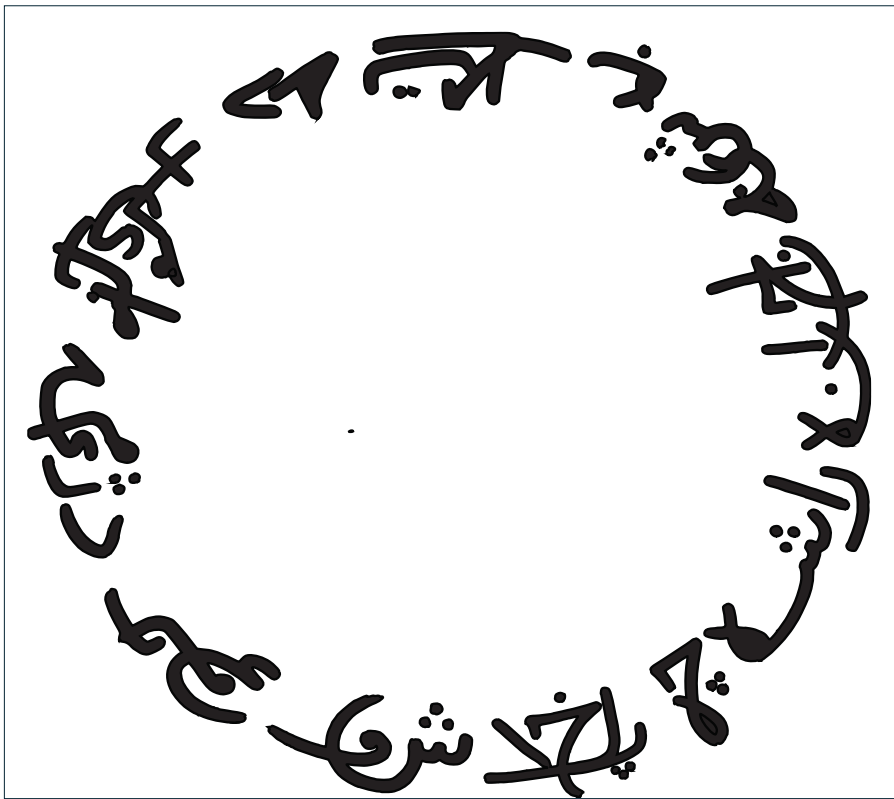


Figure 4.25: Love Tappa, written with acrylic marker. Created October 2024.

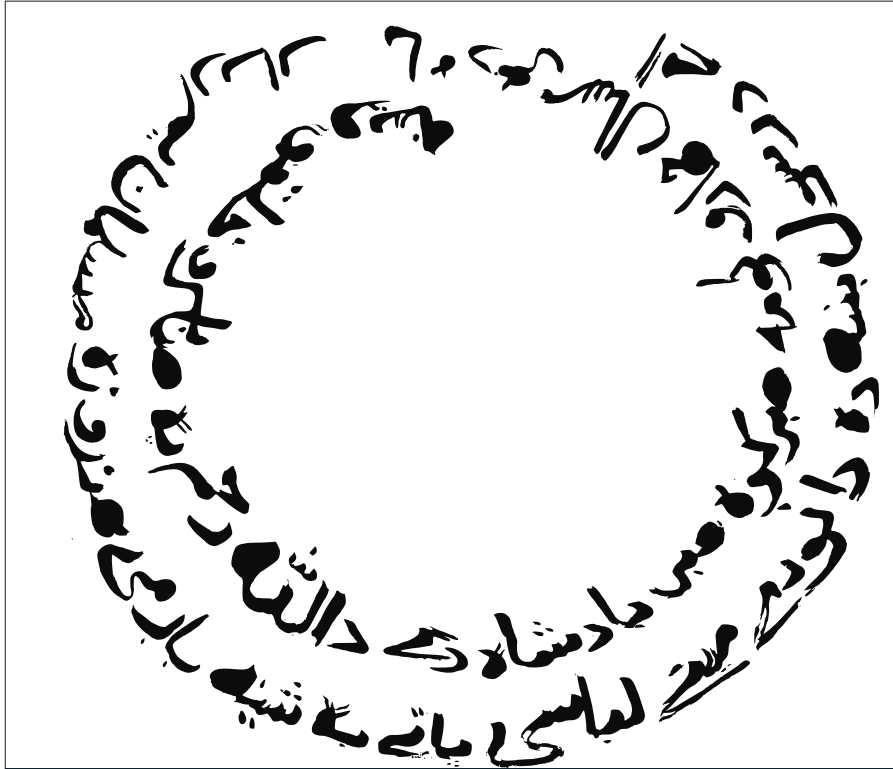


Figure 4.26: Religion Tappa, written with dried harakeke. Created October 2024.

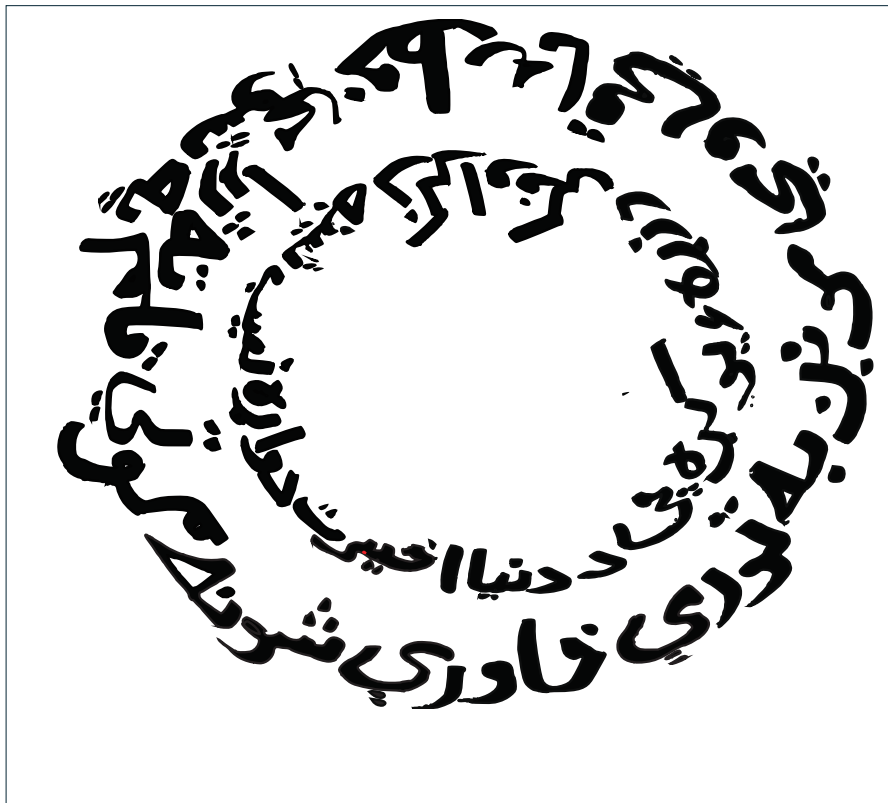


Figure 27: Spirituality Tappa, written with a handmade, custom-made cola pen. Created October 2024.



Figure 4.28: Nationalism Tappa, written with broad dried harakeke. October 2024.

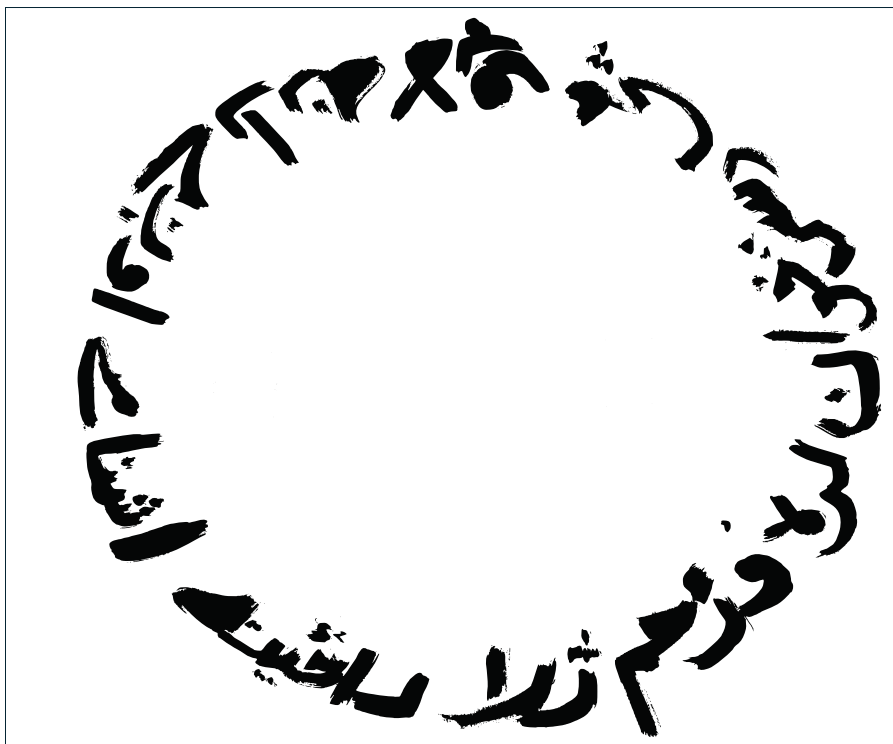


Figure 4.29: Hospitality Tappa, written with New Zealand flax (harakeke) cut in half. October 2024.

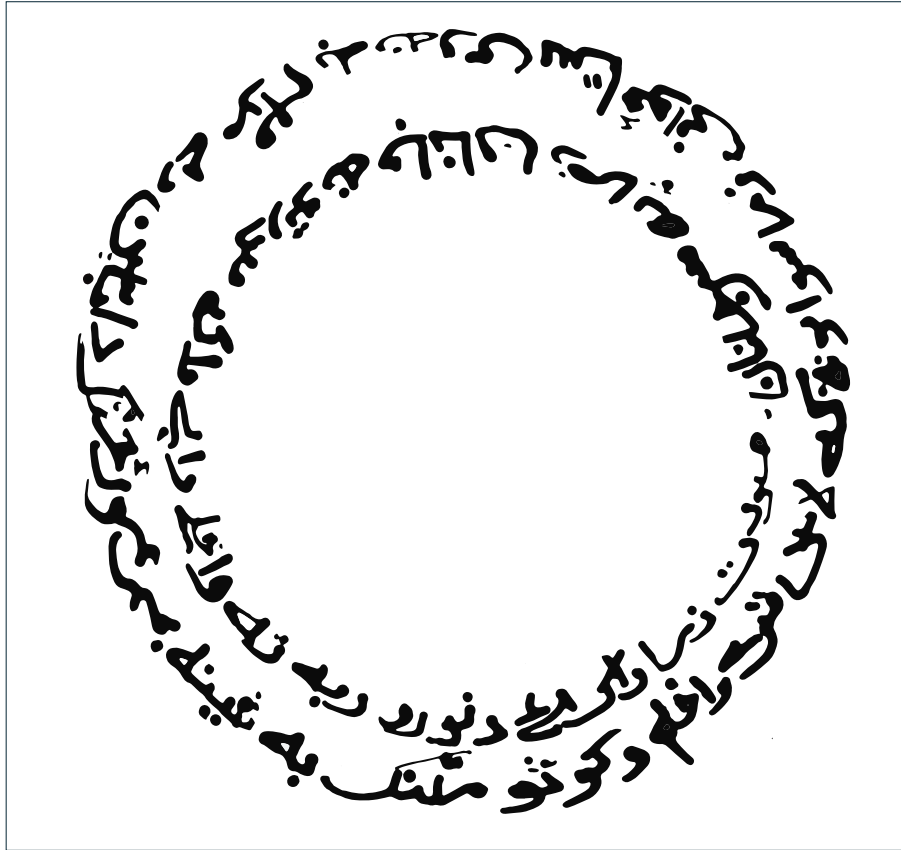


Figure 4.32: Women's voices Tappa, written with a pipette. Created October 2024.

4.8 Shawl Placement

I wrote the *Tappay* in a circular composition to symbolize the connection and continuity experienced during the workshop. Each selected *Tappa* was placed alongside its corresponding Pukhtunwali code motif, with the motif positioned centrally to clearly frame the relationship. Every code was represented by a unique motif.

Initially, I included all selected *Tappay* on the shawl, but this distorted the scale and disrupted the composition as shown in figure 4.33.



Figure 4.33: Initial shawl arrangement including all *Tappay*. March 2025.

With reluctance, I reduced the number to one *Tappa* per code when motifs were large, allowing proper sizing and balance without overcrowding.

The *Tappa* associated with the code *Rogha* (love/reconciliation) was highly favoured by participants. Though initially including four *Tappay* under this theme, I retained only the strongest to preserve clarity and elegance.

For the shawl's border, I extracted key words from the most popular *Tappa*:

جانانہ راشہ چي پخلا شو،
عمر د ژمی ماز پگر دے تیر به شینہ

Translation: *My beloved, let's reconcile, for life is as brief as winter afternoons*

I highlighted the words جانانه (beloved), پخلا (reconcile), عمر (life), ژمی (winter), and مازپگر (afternoon). These powerful words were converted into motifs and incorporated into the border design as shown in figures 4.34 to 4.37.

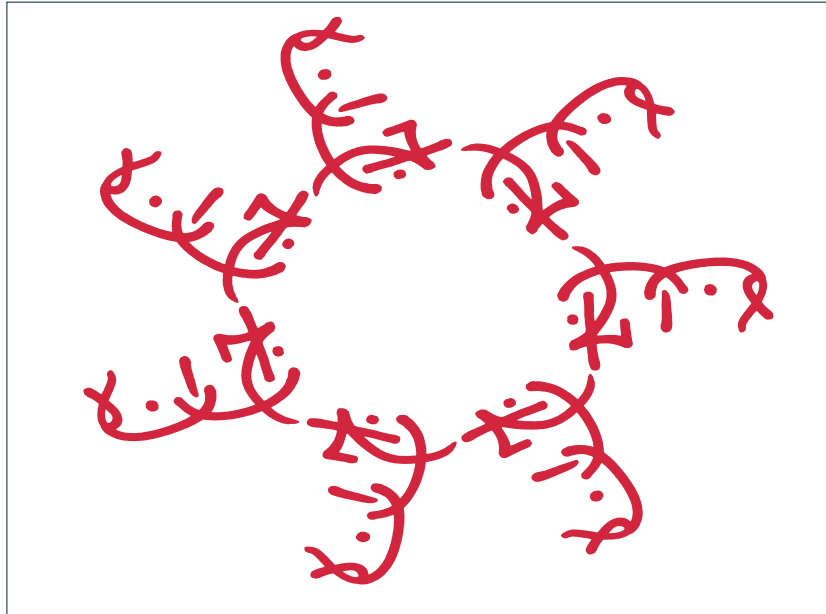


Figure 4.34: The word Janana (Beloved) written in Pashto as word جانانه . October 2024.

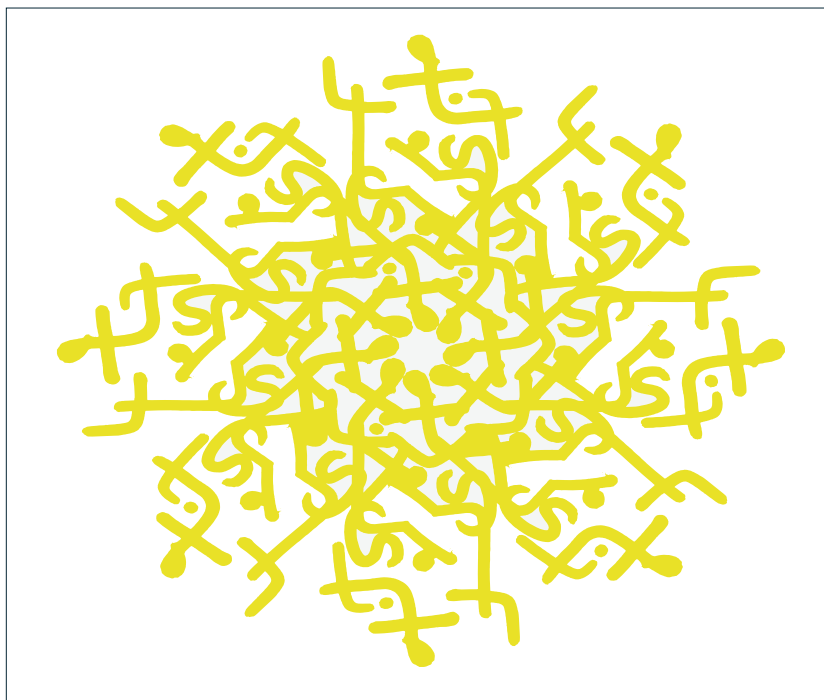


Figure 4.35: The word Mazigar (Afternoon) written in Pashto as مازپگر . October 2024.

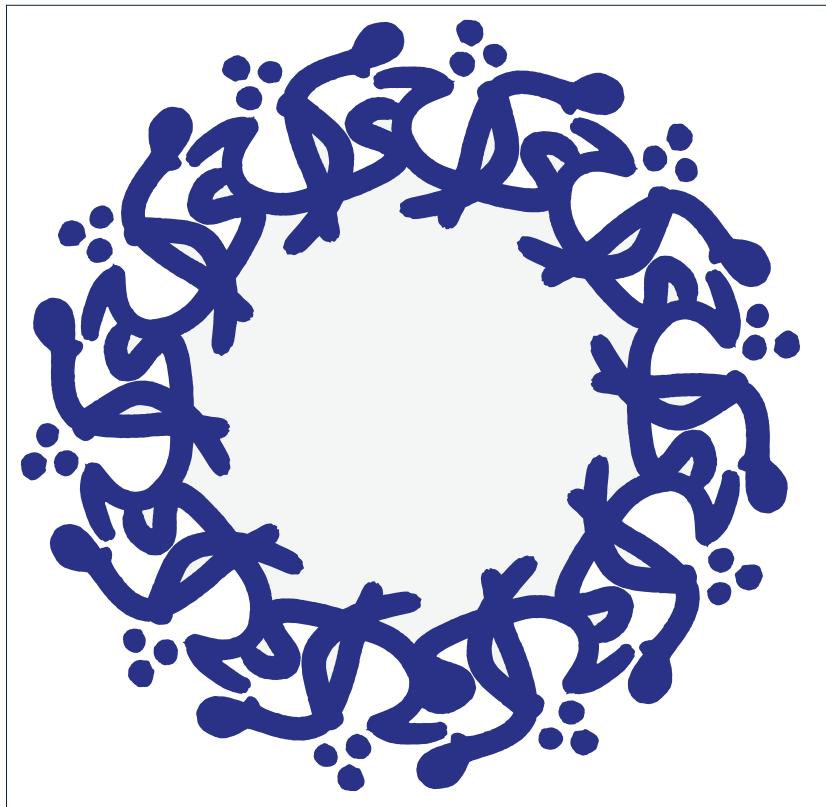


Figure 4.36: The word Zhami (Winter) written in Pashto as ژمی. October 2024

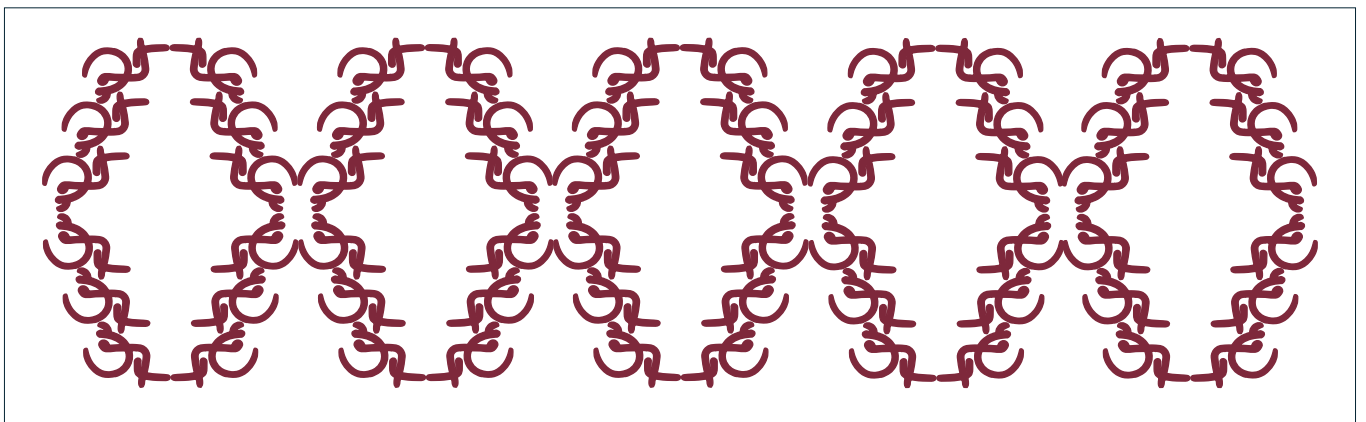


Figure 4.36: Border created using the word Umer (Life) written in Pashto as عمر. October 2024.

After finalizing the motif placement, I noticed areas of empty space on the shawl. To address this, I reintroduced the excluded *Tappay* by writing them with marker as thin strips, arranged in a criss-cross pattern and subtly layered into the background. This solution added rhythm and continuity to the overall design while honouring the participants' contributions. I also experimented with various arrangements of the motifs and strips to ensure visual balance, flow, and cultural coherence. (Appendix 5 Shawl Placements)

4.9 Shawl Embellishments

In Pashtun culture, silver jewellery traditionally adorns garments and serves as a prominent visual feature. Guided by my supervisors, I explored the possibility of creating a piece of jewellery myself to incorporate into the shawl. This led to the decision to experiment with copper patina as an alternative material. The challenge then became how to achieve a convincing patina effect on a shiny copper sheet. I initially tested various household substances, such as bleach, baking soda, vinegar, salt, black pepper, lemon juice, Harpic, and even drain opener but the results only yielded a patchy surface, lacking the aged patina look I intended.



Figure 4.37: Copper sheet treated for patina effect, prepared for punching into coins. May 2025

Eventually, I turned to ammonia, a common household cleaner, for its potential to achieve the desired effect. To enhance its impact, I soaked a piece of fabric in ammonia and placed the copper sheet face-down onto it. I then poured additional ammonia onto the fabric-facing side of the sheet. This method proved more effective, resulting in a satisfying and richly textured patina. To intensify the reaction, I sealed the tray containing the materials with cling wrap and left it overnight. The next morning, I rinsed the copper sheets to reveal a visibly transformed surface.

With support from the 3D workshop, I then punched the treated sheets into coin-like embellishments to be stitched onto the shawl.



Figure 4.38: Punching the copper sheet at the 3D workshop. May 2025.



Figure 4.39: Punched copper coins. May 2025.

4.10 From Start to Finish: Creating the Shawl:

Following is the step-by-step process leading to the completion of the shawl.

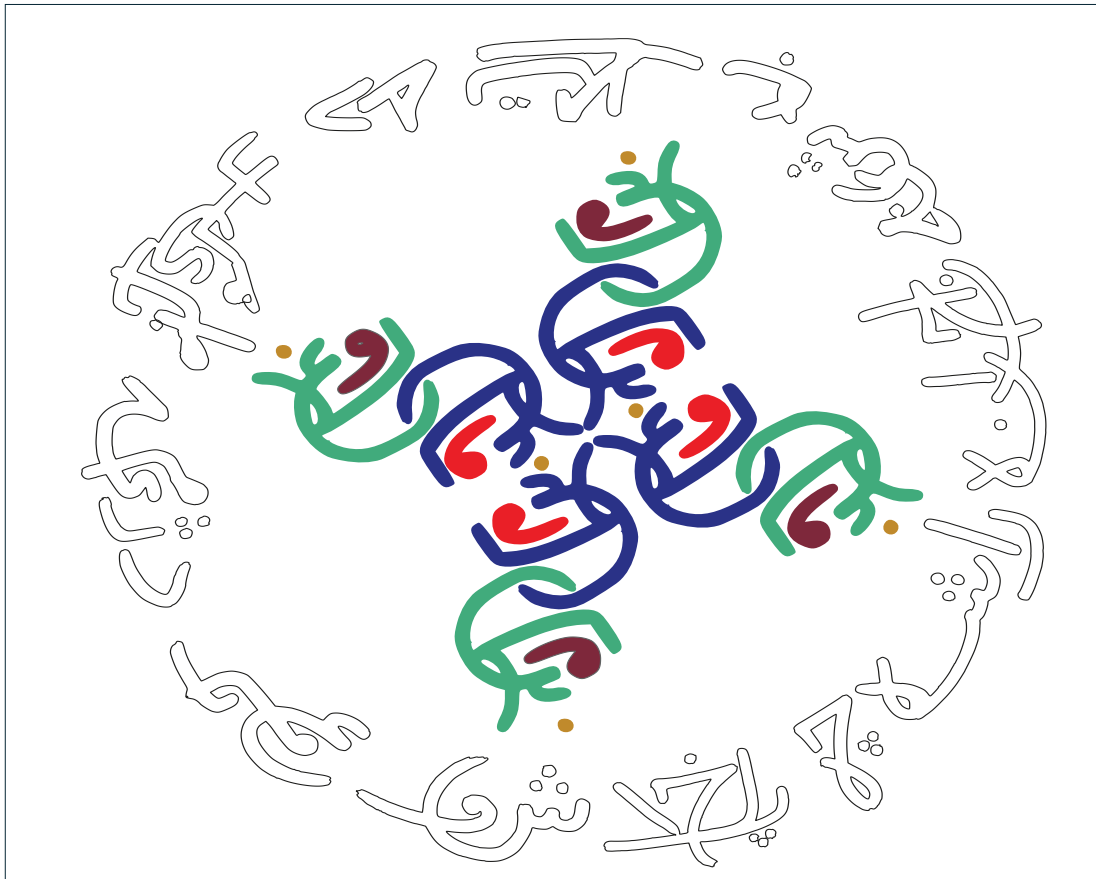


Figure 4.40: A Tappa written with a chisel marker, with a central motif created in Adobe Illustrator, ready for rasterizing in FabLab. May 2025.



Figure 4.41: Rasterized velvet fabric. Shawl placed on the laser bed. June 2025

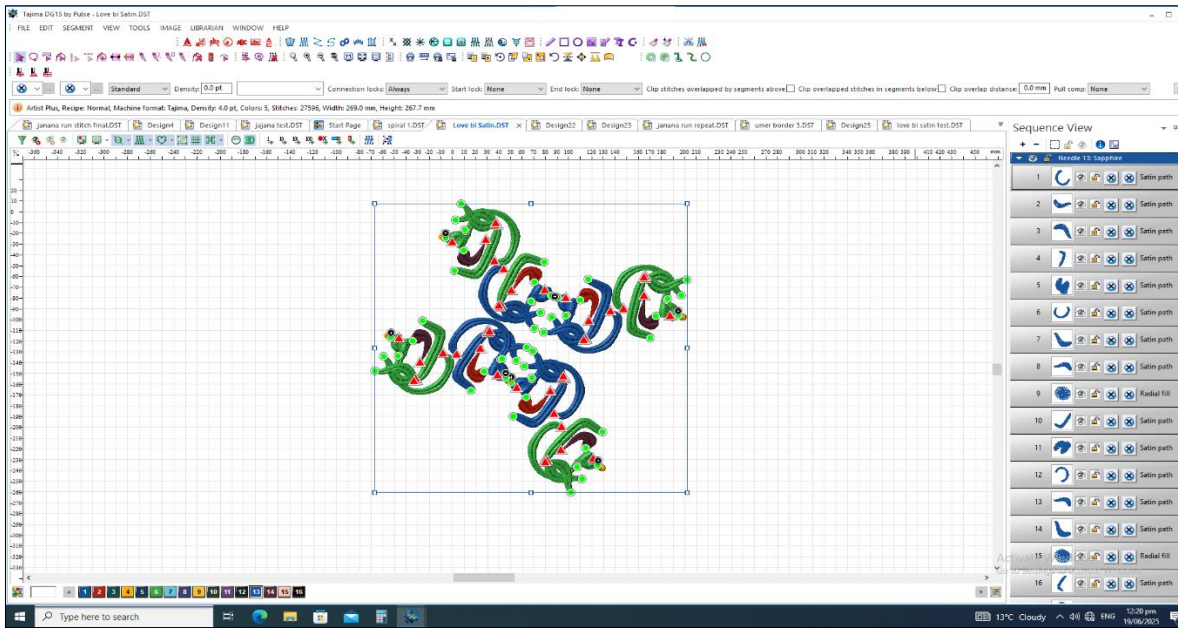


Figure 4.42: Central motif auto-digitized using a bi-satin stitch. June 2025.

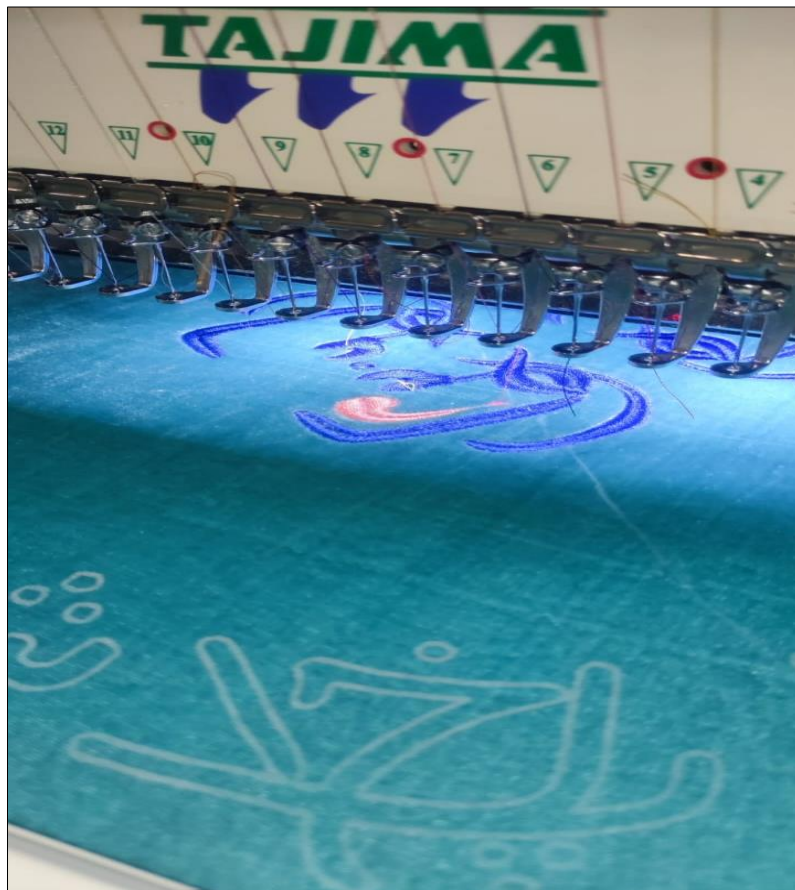


Figure 4.43: Digital embroidery in progress. June 2025



Figure 4.44: Shawl in the final stage. June 2025



Figure 4.45: Copper Patina coins sewn all along four sides of the shawl, using metallic (zari) copper thread, June 2025



Figure 4.46A : Final look of the shawl. June 2025



Figure 4.46B : Final look of the shawl. June 2025

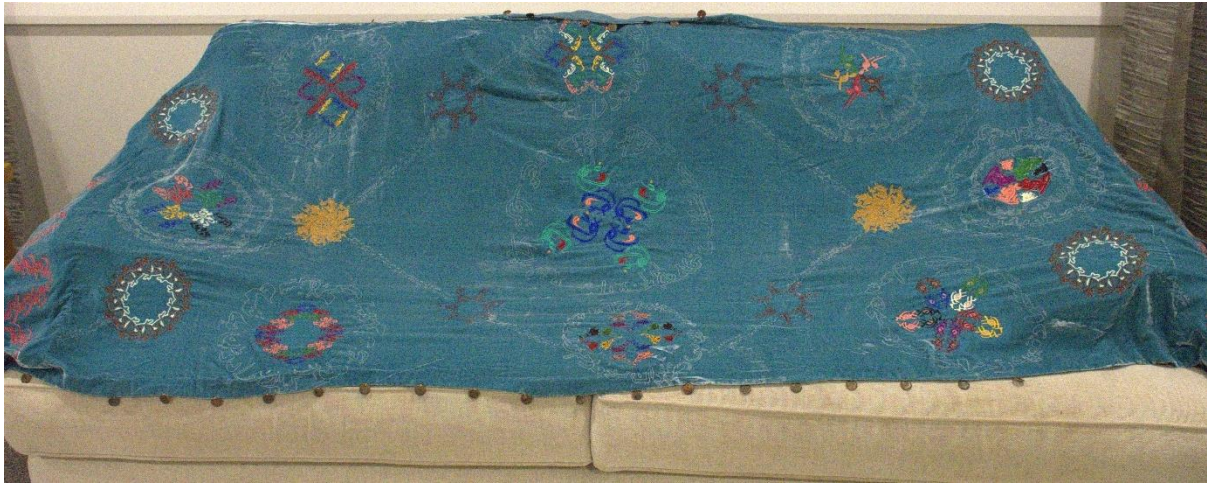


Figure 4.46C : Final look of the shawl. June 2025

4.11 Limitation of the Study

This research has several caveats that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the study did not include Pashto speakers from Afghanistan due to the absence or limited number of participants from that background in the Manawatu region. Second, while there is a significant population of Pashtuns from both Afghanistan and Pakistan living in Auckland, it was not possible to include them due to time constraints and limited resources. Third, the workshops only involved female participants, as in Pashtun culture, men are generally not engaged in embroidery or related artistic activities.

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Appendix 1- Participant Consent Form

I have read the information sheet and have received a clear explanation of the project details. All my questions have been satisfactorily addressed, and I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.

I understand my participation in this project involves the following:

- Engaging in the Pashtun heritage workshop. The workshop will span two days and be divided into three sessions. The first session will be an introduction, focusing on the Pashtun culture through discussion and culturally significant images. The second session will involve writing tappas (folk songs) in stylized calligraphy, while the third session will focus on regional embroidery.
- Participants will review and share their thoughts on Pashtun cultural preservation. They will discuss the images and samples provided and offer valuable feedback on what they would like me to include in the research.
- If necessary, the information, transcripts, or quotes from the workshop discussions may be included in the final exhibition at Massey University MDes Exhibition and published in MDes exegesis.
- Being informed of the use and presentation of the samples approximately three weeks after the workshop, where my feedback on the subject, style, and placement of designs will be valued. While my input will be considered, the final design details will be determined by the student as part of the exegesis.
- Allowing the images of my sample, as well as any photos or videos taken during the workshop, to be included Massey University MDes Exhibition from February 11th to 21st, 2025. The student may also retain these materials as part of their design portfolio record.

Please circle your response:

- I agree / do not agree to my contributions being quoted directly in the exhibition materials.
- I agree / do not agree to the photographs of my samples being used by the student in the exegesis.
- I agree / do not agree to the photographs of my work being used by Massey University for academic purposes.
- I agree / do not agree to the photographs of my work being used by Massey University for promotional purposes.
- I agree / do not agree to the conversation during the workshop being audio/video recorded.
- I agree / do not agree to the activities being photographed and audio/video recorded.
- I wish / do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
- I wish / do not wish to publish my sample in the student's exegesis.

- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I agree to participate in this project under the conditions set out in the information sheet

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - Printed

.....

Appendix 2- Workshop Runsheet

Workshop Runsheet for 14th September 2024

10:00 - 10:20: Arrival and Settling

10:20: Ensure consent forms are signed at the beginning.

10:40: Cultural Connection: Image Presentation & Discussion

11:10: What is Cultural Preservation?

11:30: Tea/Coffee Break (15 minutes)

11:45: Introduction to Calligraphy

12:00 - 1:00: Pashto Alphabet Practice

1:00 - 2:00: Prayer and Lunch Break

2:00 - 2:30: Conversation About Pashtunwali

2:30 - 3:30: Conversation about tappas and practice with different tools

3:30 - 3:45: Reflection on Workshop

3:45: Next Steps Outline the agenda for Session 2 and conclude the workshop.

*Participant Consent Form (Attached)

**Participant Information Sheet (Attached)

Session 1: Cultural Connection

*Instructions for the participants: Please use couple of words to answer the questions.

Question 1: What memories or connections do these images evoke for you?

Question 2: What is cultural preservation?

Question 3: What do you wish to preserve?

Question 4: How can we preserve culture? Please share your ideas?

Question 5: What are your thoughts on preserving language?

Session 2: Pashto Calligraphy

Question 6: Practicing Pashto letters on the big sheets provided?

Question 7: What does Pukhtunwali mean to you personally?

Question 8: How do you personally perceive Pukhtunwali and its codes?

Question 9: Which aspects of Pukhtunwali do you believe are still relevant in today's life, especially living in New Zealand?

Question 10: In your opinion what is tappa?

Question 11: Could you please share any of your favourite Pashto tappa?

Question 12: What is the significance of this tappa to you?

Question 13: Could you please rate the provided tappas on scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the highest (best) and 10 being the lowest?

Question 14: Which one do you think holds a more powerful meaning?

Question 15: Which of the following tappas do you think are relevant today?

Question 16: Practicing tappas on big sheets provided?

Question 17: Which medium for writing tappa do you prefer?

Question 18: Reflection and feedback?

*******THANK YOU*******

Appendix 3- Participant Information Sheet

Hello, my name is Maimoona Fawad Ahmad. I am currently enrolled in a Master of Design program at Massey University. As part of my degree, I am undertaking a 120-credit thesis, which involves conducting a two-day workshop in Manawatu for the Pashtun community. During my research, I aim to explore the demographics and cultural sensitivities of the Pashtun diaspora in New Zealand. Drawing on my personal background, I was born and raised in a Pashtun family and maintain close connections with the community across New Zealand, I will bring a unique perspective to this study. This personal connection not only informs my understanding of the Pashtun community but also underscores the importance of this research. The workshop, as part of this research, will provide a platform for participants to share tappas (folk songs) and regional embroidery, fostering a deeper dialogue and collaboration within the Pashtun community. During the workshop, the gathered data will be converted into digital format and then displayed as part of my exegesis. This hands-on approach is an integral component of my research. The contribution of all participants will be duly acknowledged and credited, reflecting their integral roles in the collective process.

Overview:

The workshops will be structured into three distinct parts. The first session will be introductory, where I will explain my role and objectives. The second session will focus on language preservation, incorporating unconventional tools for writing the Pashto alphabet and stylized calligraphy. The third session will feature hands-on activities with calligraphy and embroidery. These focus group discussions will encourage participants to reflect on and discuss cultural preservation, guided by relational aesthetics principles. The goal is to foster dialogue and collaboration, thereby enhancing community connections and ensuring cultural continuity.

Design Research/ Methodological Approach/ Research Framework:

During my thesis, I created several samples for my workshop using 3D laser cutting and on embroidery machine. I will provide unconventional tools to the participants for calligraphy to write tappas, such as cola pens, bamboo pens, pipettes, sticks, cardboard, and wooden pieces also provide the material used in embroidery for example embroidery hoops, needles, threads, beads and sequences for embellishments.

Workshop Layout (14th-28th September 2024):

I will begin by showing participants some photos that hold significance in Pashtun culture to help break the ice. Following this, we will move on to discussions and practical sessions on calligraphy and embroidery. Tea and food will be served.

Design Iteration:

I aim to compile the tappas written by participants using various tools, digitize them, and then laser cut the fabric. Additionally, I will auto-digitize the regional embroidery stitches and apply them to the final project.

Exhibition:

Exhibition will feature samples of the unconventional tools and stylized calligraphy used for language preservation, alongside the calligraphy and embroidery artworks created during the hands-on activities. Additionally, the exhibition will display photographs and videos documenting the workshops, excerpts from participant reflections written excerpts from the workshop discussions, reflecting on cultural preservation and community connections, and potentially interactive elements that allow visitors to engage with the Pashto language and traditional embroidery.

The workshop will be audio and video recorded and photographed. If you choose to participate in this project, you have the right to:

- Withdraw from the workshop at any time.
- Decline to answer any specific question during the workshop.
- Review and amend any transcripts or notes from discussions or activities you participate in, if necessary. You can contact the facilitator within three days after the workshop.
- Ask additional questions about the workshop as they come up.
- Provide information with the understanding that it will be used strictly as outlined in the workshop's objectives and methodology.
-

Notes from the workshop sessions will be retained and stored securely by the workshop facilitator. The facilitator will also retain all calligraphy, embroidery, and language preservation materials developed during the workshop. Participant's photographs and videos

taken during the workshop will be retained by the facilitator. These materials will be included in the facilitator's exegesis and exhibited as part of the Massey University MDes Exhibition. The information/samples will not be re-exhibited or re-published without the prior consent of the participants. Examples of the work may also be held for academic and promotional purposes by Massey University's College of Creative Arts.

Outcome:

The outcome of the workshop sessions, including language preservation activities, calligraphy, and embroidery, will form the content of the exhibition titled *Cultural Continuity Through Craft*. The exhibition will feature photographs documenting the workshop activities, textile samples from the embroidery and calligraphy sessions, and selected drawings showcasing the design process. All work will be displayed at Massey University MDes exhibition from February 11 to 21, 2024.

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Appendix 4- Selected Pashto Tappay with Translation

Code of Pukhtunwali	Pashto Tappay with Translation
Bravery	<p>په تور دکن دے څلے جور شه د بے ننګئ اواز دے را مه شه مينه</p> <p><i>Let your monument be in dark Decan (An Indian city far from Pukhtunkhwa), rather than hearing that you are a coward</i></p> <p>د اباسين چپے د يوسه دنامردئ اواز درامه شه مينه</p> <p><i>Let you be drowned by the tides of Abasyn (a river in Pukhtunkhwa), rather than hearing that you are a coward</i></p>
Love	<p>جانانه راشه چه پخلا شو عمر د ژمی مازیگر دے تیر به شپنه</p> <p><i>My beloved, let's reconcile, for life is as brief as winter afternoons.</i></p> <p>دتغ غزا د رغیدووی د څلے گذار په زره تیرا که جوره وینه</p> <p><i>The wounds inflicted by swords may heal, But words, they blister the heart."</i></p> <p>الله رسول پرے خوشحالیری څوک چه د خدا ے دپاره دوه یو څا ے ے کوینه</p> <p><i>God and Prophet bless those, who made the rift between two.</i></p> <p>عالمایو تر بل زار پگی عمر د ژمی مازیگر دے تیر به شپنه</p> <p><i>,O people! spread love and kindness For life is as brief as winter afternoons</i></p> <p>مسافری مے زره نری که په میروی خپه نه گدم چي یار به ی پاتے شپنه</p> <p><i>Living in a foreign land away from my loved ones has made my heart so fragile that I cannot even harm an ant, knowing they too have loved ones who would mourn them."</i></p>

	<p>چه عاشق نهه وي انسان نه ده</p> <p>به عشقه ژوند د خر تټو په شانتے وينه</p> <p><i>Those who are not in love are not truly human; a loveless life is like that of a donkey or a horse.</i></p> <p>په باغ كښے مهه اوله كونترے</p> <p>يوه به مره كړے بيا به نهه راځي سيلونه</p> <p><i>Don't shoot pigeons in the orchard, if you kill one, the flocks will no longer return.</i></p>
Religion	<p>صبركوه صبربادشاه ده</p> <p>دالله رحم په صابرو خلقو وينه</p> <p><i>Be patient, for patience is an emperor; Even God shows mercy to those who endure.</i></p> <p>واعظه بس كړه په هر حال به مسلمان اوسمه</p> <p>نور به څهه غواړي ضمانت چي به افغان اوسمه</p> <p><i>O preacher, hear my words: that I will remain Muslim in all situations, and the guarantee lies in the fact that I will remain Afghan, a true Pashtun.</i></p> <p>مينه د خداے د رسول بنه ده</p> <p>دا نورے مينے لبا سي پاتے به شينه</p> <p><i>The true love is for God and the Prophet, for all other loves are mere façades</i></p>
Religious Inclusiveness	<p>يار مي هندو زه مسلمان يم</p> <p>د يار ده پاره دهرمسال چهارو كومه</p> <p><i>My friend is a Hindu, and I am Muslim, for him I would clean temples.</i></p>
Hospitality	<p>اشنمے اوړے رانه لارو</p> <p>چي دسترخوان لره ورخم ژراه راځينه</p> <p><i>My friend left me while ravenous, so I start crying whenever I see a feast spread.</i></p> <p>حجره د ټول كلي د سره</p> <p>په نيمه شپه كور ته زما جانان راځينه</p> <p><i>Hujra belongs to the entire village, but my beloved is the one who comes home at mid-night, dedicated to serving others</i></p>

<p>Nationalism</p>	<p>وطن زما دتن جامه ده دتن جامه څه په ايمان نه ورکومه</p> <p><i>My country is as dear to me as my clothing, my clothing is even closer to me than my faith</i></p> <p>خان د وطن په شمه سيزه چي پتنگان د د زيارت طواف کوينه</p> <p><i>Burn yourself with the candle of patriotism, moths will circle around your shrine</i></p> <p>څوک چي دبنمن د خپل وطن وي تل شرمينده به په دنيا اخيرت وينه</p> <p><i>Those who betray their country, will always be ashamed in this world and in the hereafter</i></p>
<p>Spirituality</p>	<p>ذکر او فکر دزړه عيو کره چي د دنيا اخيرت دواړه نصيب شينه</p> <p><i>Let your thoughts and deeds be one, so you may be rewarded both in this world and the hereafter</i></p> <p>علم درياب عمل کشتي ده عمل او علم چه لري پورے به ش</p> <p><i>Knowledge is an ocean, and your deeds are the boat, with both knowledge and deeds, you will navigate the ocean successfully.</i></p> <p>گوتي قلم ته په ژرا شوي خط به باقي وي مونږ به توري خاوري شونه</p> <p><i>Fingers lamented to the pen, The letter will remain, while we both will vanish</i></p>
<p>Resilience / Hope</p>	<p>څانگه به نن صبا کی گل شی ما ئ په سر کے سرے غوتي ليدلے دینه</p> <p><i>The branch will soon bloom with flowers, I have seen buds at its tip.</i></p> <p>زما دم سره سمه ميرات شے غمه په خندا دتيرومه</p> <p><i>Knowing it will endure, I bear the cursed pains with a smile.</i></p>

	<p>کہ اباسین راغلی نہ وے پہ گنگخرو کنبے بہ چا موندل تیکونہ <i>Had Abaseen (river in Pakhtunkhwa) not wept, who would have found jewels in the stream</i></p> <p>اول رمضان وی بیا اختر وی پہ بیلتانہ پسے وصال وی رابہ شینہ <i>Just as Ramadhan precedes Eid, so does solitude precede intertwining</i></p> <p>دسپرلی بیا نخبے بنکارہ شوے نورے شبنم تورے ورخے زیر گلونہ <i>Spring's visible signs are evident: new drops of dew, dark clouds, and beds of yellow flowers</i></p>
<p>Social Issues</p>	<p>عمل وسلہ دلارے مل کرہ ستاد ی پہ سختو سختولارومزلونہ <i>Make your good deeds your steadfast companions, for you are destined to journey on rugged roads</i></p> <p>عمل دمل دخان سرہ کرہ یواخے عگران دی پہ پردی وطن کلونہ <i>Make your good deeds your companions, for in a foreign land, years are otherwise hard to endure.</i></p> <p>چی خوب کوے خاورے بہ یوسے شاہ د حغوچی شوگیرے ورتہ کوینہ <i>Sleep yields only soil, while magnates earn through sleepless toil.</i></p> <p>مسافری دے روزی مہ شہ وطن تہ راشہ خوانی برتہ نہ راخینہ <i>Do not wander forever in foreign lands seeking livelihoods, for youth does not linger forever.</i></p> <p>نورے دھبچہ کدے نہ خی دا یو پینتون دے کدے برہ لاندے ورپنہ</p>

	<p><i>No none moves belongings like the Pashtuns, who carry them from the highlands to the lowlands, and back again.</i></p> <p>دطوطی هسے خولگی سره ده د باغ گولونه تول بورا خورلی دینه</p> <p><i>Parrots flaunt their natural crimson beaks, as the flowers are feasted by the carpenter bees</i></p> <p>دلبنکرونو میر ته وایه په مرو مور شوے که لا نور کوے جنگونه</p> <p><i>Ask the chieftain, have you had your fill, or do you crave for more bodies?"</i></p> <p>دانقلاب سیلاب به راشی داقتدار بالاخانے راغورخوینه</p> <p><i>A deluge of change will soon descend, toppling the citadel of power</i></p>
<p>Women Empowerment</p>	<p>صورت زما واک ےء د نورو ربه ته واخلمے دا بی واکه صورتونه</p> <p><i>Though this face is mine, its mastery lies elsewhere; may God reclaim those faces that hold no rightful dominion.</i></p> <p>جانان زما په سر جانان که لاس ترے وا خلم د کوٹومنگ به شینه</p> <p><i>My beloved is cherished through my affection; without me, he would be but a wandering beggar in the streets</i></p> <p>قلم می توره، کتاب دال دے د هر رواج زنجیر شلوم چی سیاله شمه</p> <p><i>I have forged my pen into sword, and the book into shield breaking the chains of all customs to prove my worth</i></p>
<p>Pashtun women raise voices for freedom, love, or other sociopolitical</p>	<p>عمر غورخنگ د اباسین دے مدام به نه وی ستاخوانی زما سوالونه</p> <p><i>Life is as fleeting as the waves of Abaseen, and so is your youth and my pleading.</i></p>

<p>and cultural values</p>	<p>باران د زمکي ابادي ده شیرینه یاره زه په تا آباډه یمه <i>Rain is the life of the earth, and you are my life, as rain is to the land.</i></p> <p>اسمان کښه ستوری داسه خوند کری لکه د پیغله په لندئ زنه خا لونه <i>The stars in the sky shine as beautifully as the tattoos on a maiden's visage</i></p> <p>قد رپه مثل د الف د ر لکه د دال د غمه کوړ ورپسه شومه My beloved rises tall like the letter Alif (ا), while his absence has left me hunched like the letter Daal (د)</p> <p>گل خو د راکړو رب د گل کره الله د عمر ستا د گل نه کری مننه <i>Since you bestowed upon me a flower, may you bloom like its beauty, may your life endure longer than its ephemeral glow</i></p> <p>روپی می وی قطار می نه کری اوس می یادیري د روپیو قطارونه <i>I had coins but never arranged them right, and now I live with deep regret."</i></p>
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Appendix 5- Shawl Placement



Appendix 6- Designs and Motiffs

