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Threads of Time: Exploring the Permanent Influence of Gandharan Art on the male and Female Shawls of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Mehir Rahman

PhD. Scholar. Department of Archaeology, Hazara University Mansehra, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the enduring influence of Gandharan art on the traditional shawls of the Pashtun people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, worn with pride by both men and women. Using primary observation and secondary research, it traces the evolution of the shawl from its depiction in Gandharan sculptures to its continued role in contemporary Pashtun society. The analysis particularly focuses on the Chail or Salara shawl of Swabi, whose dotted patterns resemble those seen on Greek vases and Gandharan reliefs, suggesting a Hellenistic artistic origin later adapted into local traditions. Beyond its practical use, the shawl symbolizes dignity, identity, and cultural continuity, reflecting the deep connection between ancient art and modern heritage. This study thus highlights how visual motifs from Greece to Gandhara have endured through centuries, shaping the aesthetic and social fabric of Pashtun culture today.

Keyword: Gandhara legacy, Shawls, Veil, Pashtun women

Research Methodology

The two approaches used in this study are secondary data analysis and firsthand observation.

Primary Data

As a person who belongs to the Pashtun ethnic group in Pakistan, I have had the honor of witnessing personally the rich ethnic customs and intangible cultural legacy of the Pashtun people. This includes their exquisite traditional clothing, which emphasizes the use of Shawls and Veils, by both genders. Based on my personal observations, it appears that Pashtun society's continuous use of Shawls has a long historical history and is tied to the customs of other ethnic groups worldwide.

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Secondary Data

I have read a variety of secondary materials, including as books and research papers, to learn more about the origins and historical significance of Shawls in Pashtun society. I've learned a lot about the cultural and historical background of Shawls in Pashtun communities thanks to this investigation.

Introduction to Gandhara

Gandhara, which included what is now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, was known for its rich history, its proud Pashtun populace, and its perfumed, beautiful, and welcoming country (Zwalf 1996:11). According to scholars like Beal Abdu Rahman, and Gupta the word "Gandhara," which comes from the Sanskrit terms "Gand" and "Ahara," means "land of scent." Old Persian inscriptions, Vedic literature from roughly two millennia BC, Pali and other ancient Indian texts, and early Chinese manuscripts all contain references to Gandhara (Beal 1984:98–99; Rahman 1979:14–20; Gupta 1973:11). Geographically, Gandhara held a key location at the meeting point of the Hindukush range and the middle Himalayan Mountains, forming a northerly curve. (Foucher 1930:2; Wheeler 1954:154). Situated west of the ancient Indus River, the region's development and water supply relied mainly on the Swat and Kabul Rivers (Foucher 1930:2; Wheeler 1954:154). Apart from the aforementioned principal rivers, the agriculture of the Peshawar basin and its environs benefited from the presence of multiple spurs, streams, and minor rivers (Foucher 1930:2; Wheeler 1954:154). The Chach region, which includes the districts of Attock and Haripur, is located east of the area where the Haro, another minor river, pours into the Indus from the Khanpur Hills. In addition to providing irrigation, this river system connected Afghanistan and the Peshawar valley to central India and was an essential means of transportation. (Foucher 1930:2; Wheeler 1954:154).

Hinduism, one of the oldest religions in Southeast Asia, originated in Gandhara. This intricate and multifaceted religion's beginnings are still unknown, with some academics disputing whether God or humans created it (Samad, 2020:11). Historians admit that there isn't much hard data to pinpoint Hinduism's creator or the place of origin (Samad, 2020:11). While the most trustworthy source for

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understanding the introduction of Hinduism to Gandhara is the Vedic literature, which was composed between 1500 and 500 BC, it is thought that the religion gained prominence in the region when Hindu Shahis established their capital there in the 7th and 8th century AD (Rahman, 1979).

The rise of Mahayana Buddhism, which placed a strong emphasis on the idea of bodhisattvas—enlightened beings who delay their own nirvana in order to aid others in achieving enlightenment—was also greatly influenced by the Gandharan school of Buddhist art. The Mahayana concept of universal redemption was inspired by the compassionate and altruistic qualities of bodhisattvas, which were shown powerfully in Gandharan art. Beyond its sculpture, Gandhara left a Buddhist legacy that shaped Buddhist literature, painting, and architecture. Scholars and pilgrims from all over Asia were drawn to the region's monasteries, stupas, and cave temples because they functioned as centers of study and spiritual practice.

Gandhara Art

Gandharan art is acknowledged as religious art throughout the world. The stupa, the monastic area, the images of the Buddha, and the various scenarios shown in the stone panels all demonstrate the great interest of the followers of the Buddha. In the ancient Gandhara region which includes portions of modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan a unique Buddhist art form known as "Gandhara art" was widely used. In the third and seventh century CE, this art form rose to prominence. There are elements of Persian, Indian, and Hellenistic cultures in Gandharan art. It served as a key nexus for the Buddhism's expansion throughout the Far East and Central Asia. (Neeles 2010: 390.)

Gandharan art frequently depicts the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. In keeping with the traditions of Greek and Roman sculpture, it typically represents the Buddha in human form. Other Buddhist deities and characters from Buddhist mythology are also shown in the artwork. (Flood, 1989:27)

The blending of Greek artistic talent with Buddhist concepts is one of the features that distinguishes Gandharan art. The depiction of anatomical details, the employment of draperies, and the exaggeration of facial features are notable examples of this impact. This extraordinarily rich piece of art depicts the life stories

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of the Buddha and his followers, along with their clothing, haircuts, and physical attributes.

Like the majority of the represented male and female characters, the men of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continue to wear headgear, hats, different shawls, and other articles of clothing that also featured male and female caps. These types of shawls for men and women, which are still in use throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are depicted in Gandharan art. Let us examine the continued use of shawls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and their origins in Gandhara.

Veil/ Shawl Representations in Gandharan Art

This is a contemporary South Asian woman's Chadar or Dopatta; in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it represents feminine honor. Its use dates back to the South Asian republics, where it is still widely used returning to the Vedic era. A dupatta or chadar is worn by several female characters to cover their heads. Ingholt claims that although the veil may have historically indicated a woman's marital status, it is now a need for all women. In Gandharan art, women are seen wearing veils either covering their heads entirely or their heads and both shoulders (Lyons and Ingholt 1957).

In the middle of the image, behind a projected Sal tree, are Maya and Siddhartha. Maya is somewhat to her left but still facing forward. Maya has a gentle face with button eyes, a short snub nose, and round features. She's dressed in an over tunic that reaches her knees, a pair of anklets, and a foot-long paridana that peeks out. She also has a shawl slung over her shoulders. In all the Pashtun living areas, ladies still frequently wear this type of clothing. (Sardar,2017:115)

These women can be seen wearing veils in a panel that is presently on display at the Taxila Museum. The panel depicts Buddha and female worshippers that were retrieved from the Dharmarajika Stupa Taxila. Hariti and Panchika are shown on a panel that was found from Sahri Bahlol Mardan and is currently housed in the Peshawar Museum. Hariti might be seen donning a stylish veil. This tradition is not exclusive to South Asia; it was formerly regarded as an outmoded behaviour in the West as well. Roman women, especially priestesses, were expected to cover their heads with a veil or palla. Head coverings using dupattas have become customary for

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Muslim women, especially in South Asia. These days, the markets have a wide variety of elaborately designed, vibrantly coloured, printed veils, dupattas, and chadars to satisfy the cultural needs of Pakistani women. (Brijbhusan, 1958:21)

Wreaths for Female

In ancient Gandharan art, women wore headdresses as a representation of their high position and dignity. Another relief showed a drinking scene with a garland adorning the heads of the women. Usually composed of fabric, these wreaths were wrapped around the head of a female member of the royal family or thought to be the head of the household. It is evident that wreaths were a common headdress among the women of Gandhara since the majority of the female figures are depicted with wreaths on their heads. It was unquestionably imported from the West and used to the female figures in Gandharan sculpture. (Tissot 1985)

In panels showing the birth of Buddha, large lotus blossom streamers are frequently worn as foliage wreaths by Queen Maya, her sister, and their entourages. Presently on display in the Bharat Kala Bhavan is an additional panel that was discovered in India. It tells the same story and features the exact garland that Queen Maya and her attendants wore. In the Yousufzai area, which is most likely in Swat, another sculpture was discovered that represented a wreath with a flower in the centre and foliage adorning it. Currently housed in the Peshawar Museum are a bulky garland and a stucco head of a goddess discovered in Akra Bannue, both of which illustrate the significance of the wreath. (Anwar & Hameed)

Depiction of Polos in Hellenistic Art

This is another head covering that resembles a shawl; the word "palao," which means "veils or shawl but not very heavy," is still used in Pashto with only slight modifications. The significance of the palao, also known as the palos, is demonstrated in Pashto folk songs. This word originated in the West, though it may have modified its shape slightly on both sides. According to Collins Dictionary, the palao or palos is a tall, cylindrical headdress used by women in classical Greece, as depicted on statues. Goddesses were commonly portrayed wearing polos, a type of headdress; the Collins Dictionary website goes into detail about the significance and history of the palao. Polos, one of the gods of the Middle Euphrates, was finally adopted by the

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Greeks. It was made of fabric with a cover and a band that went across the wearer's forehead to hold it in place. It has a wig-like appearance. A picture of the goddess Demeter, a female figure wearing a polos headdress, is on display at the Freud Museum in London. (Yasur, 2011:192) Though low polos are frequently worn over the heads of female deities in the area, polo headdresses are uncommon in Gandharan art. Similar headwear can be seen on the reverse of Vasudeva III coins, which depict a seated Hariti or Ardoxsho. A polos crown rests above a sculpture depicting Demeter Hariti seated, revered from Sirkap. At the moment, it is housed in Karachi's National Museum (Ornan, 2011: 280; Assomull, 2013). The way that palo is shown and presented in Pashtun society is comparable, suggesting a movement of culture from the west to the east.

Depiction of Shawls in Hellenistic Art

Persia and Western art are said to have influenced Gandharan art as well as Hellenistic and modern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa art. Both of these artistic forms, which were well-liked in antiquity and are being produced today, relied heavily on clothing. Shawls worn by both sexes were significant emblems of social rank, cultural identity, and even emotions in Hellenistic art. Here is a glimpse at a fascinating aspect of historical fashion, accompanied by additional study resources:

Depiction of the Mantle/ Himation

Ancient Greek men and women wore the himation, an important garment, from the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods (c. 750–30 BC). Usually worn over a chiton, it served as a mantle or wrap, a larger drape that doubled as a cloak or shawl. (Mark 2023:06). The himation functioned as a cloak and a chiton when worn by itself in the absence of a chiton. The himation was not as full-fledged as the Roman toga. Vase paintings often feature women wearing the himation as a veil to obscure their faces (Renshaw 2008: 157). Usually made of wool and linen, and frequently painted white, the himation was the result of the artistry of women. Although professional weavers and dyers were also available, the process of manufacture entailed spinning wool or linen into a big rectangular fabric, a labor primarily carried out by women in their households. Owing to the exorbitant price of the cloth, only the wealthiest members of Greek society could afford fine linen. It's possible that the elaborate designs and

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vivid colors on the himation were painted or woven into the cloth, giving this ancient Greek garment a more sophisticated and eye-catching appearance. (Encyclopedia.com *2023:05-24*)

Depiction of the Women Shawl and Veil in Hellenistic Art

With Hellenistic art, women were represented with a greater range of shawls, including as the long, draped peplos and the more ornately decorated himation, which were worn by males as well. Similar to the kredemnon, veils were also frequently worn, concealing the head and occasionally cascading down the back. These coverings signaled social propriety, religious commitment, and marital status, among other practical and symbolic functions (Radle, 2019: 1070). In Hellenistic art, shawls were powerful symbols as well as stylish accessories. Emotions such as grief, wrath, or joy might be expressed by the manner they were draped. Additionally, they recognized cultural heritage, identifying certain styles linked to various ethnic groups and geographical areas. Examining these particulars provides important insights into the dynamic and heterogeneous Hellenistic communities. (Small, 2008:65). Studying historical fashion offers insight into the identities, values, and way of life of individuals from a bygone age and goes beyond aesthetics. We can better comprehend this dynamic and intricate era of history by exploring the realm of shawls in Hellenistic art. An unusual vase that is on display at the Meadow Museum has two scenes on its body. It is part of an Etruscan treasure from Tuscany, and the two scenes tell two stories. The lower scene features animal movement, while the upper portion of the scene features five figures of men and women dressed in traditional clothing. Each figure has shawls and mantles around her body. Two of the figures have red dots on white surfaces, while the other has white dots on red surfaces. The middle figure has red shawls wrapped around her body. All of these outfits resemble the chail worn by Swabi women, while the red shawl mimics the salu worn by Pashtun women during marriage. (Jocelyn, 2009: 46)

Male and Female Shawls in Present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa serves as a cross-cultural center. This region is home to a diverse population of people speaking different languages. This region has had numerous cultural revolutions from prehistoric times to the present. A diverse range

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of individuals from different cultures have moved to this region from outside. These folks nevertheless have diverse lifestyles, whereby the clothing code is essential. These ethnic groups' clothing differs in the aesthetic sense, with shawls or veils, palaos, dupattas, and chadars playing a significant role. It's possible that the various ethnic groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa adopted these Shawls and the associated rituals from Hellenistic and Western cultures. The various varieties of Chadar (shawls) ought to be included here.

Male and Female Chadar/ Sadar (shawl) in Pashtun Ethnic Society

Large textile pieces called "Chaddar and Duppata" are used to cover the head and surround the torso. They can be accessorized with a scarf or nikab, and shorter chaddars that are worn around the shoulders are also quite fashionable. The scarf is wrapped behind the chin and is used to conceal the head, not the face. Though it can also be worn with a coat and chaddar, young girls typically wear it alone. The coat is a long, sleeveless item of clothing that covers the entire body and looks great with a scarf, it is common in all over the country but specially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the use of coat and scarf is not common, all the women are love to wear shawls and dupatta. The head and torso are covered, at least down to the hips, with the duppata, a two and a half to three metre cloth. It is an essential component of Pakistani women's national attire and is worn with the kamiz (a knee-length shirt) and shalwar (loose slacks) everywhere, at all times. (Haque, 2003) the importance of the Chadar or Shawls in the Pashtun society is considering very much sacred. At the supplicant's request, the ulema (religious clerks) and the jirga (assembly of the elders) go with the culprit or criminal person to the enemy residence and offer forgiveness. Another type of chador, or scarf, is when a woman in need calls on a Pashtun as her brother and sends him her veil. A person leaves his tribe and becomes hamsaya in another if his tribe turns against him (Anamaria,2010).

Swati Shawls (Male and Female)

According to renowned scholar Parvesh Shaheen (Shaheen 2006:37), the Asoka raja used swat shawls for his throne and horse during the Mourayn period. These shawls are still being made in Islampur, a town near Mingora city, which is well-known for its talented weavers. These weavers use a significant amount of imported fine wool

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to manufacture handicrafts valued at an estimated 120 million rupees annually. These woolen handicrafts help generate foreign cash by being exported to important cities in Pakistan and Southeast Asian markets. Mingora and the rural areas around it are also known for their embroidery, with a broad range of shawls and fabric pieces marketed as Swati embroidery. The development of local handicrafts has been greatly aided by tourism; there are currently over 200 handicraft stores spread across several popular tourist destinations, including as Mingora, Madyan, Miandam, Bahrain, Kalam, and Marghuzar. (Viaro, A. Swat.) In the Pakistani Swat Valley, the feminine shawls of Swat, commonly referred to as "Swati shawls," are an integral component of the Pashtun cultural legacy. These shawls, which highlight the rich craftsmanship and cultural traditions of the area, are highly valued for their exquisite needlework, vivid colors, and distinctive designs. Skilled artisans craft exquisite wool or silk into Swati shawls, embellished with vibrant threads, beads, and sequins. The traditional themes and floral patterns draw inspiration from the stunning natural surroundings of the Swat Valley. The shawls are made more elegant by the use of mirror work embroidery, which represent various facets of Pashtun culture and are connected to joy, celebration, and festivities. Swati shawls are used at weddings and festivals and are seen as emblems of modesty, elegance, and femininity. They have cultural value and are frequently inherited from previous generations, imparting a feeling of tradition and family history. By creating jobs for craftspeople and boosting the Swat Valley's handicraft sector, the manufacturing of Swati shawls boosts the local economy. As the upper Swat folk song portrays, women would also don vibrant shawls on auspicious occasions.

"Huramza mozi ye daryiab si lal thua. Dhuth lhaghur asheem o sha zed zarin shawl thua."

Translation: Huramza is like a sea pearl to the adversary. Her lips are delicate and beautiful, and she has a red shawl around her head. (Torwali, 2015:38).

The shawls of Swat, renowned for both men and women, come in various varieties, colors, and sizes, catering to diverse tastes and budgets. Locally known as "pattu," men often wear these shawls as symbols of status and affluence. Considered integral to Pakistani culture, these shawls are frequently exchanged as gifts,

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reflecting their significance in societal customs. Plain shawls, crafted from materials like linen and cotton, enjoy popularity among men across the province, while also serving as essential attire for women. Warm shawls provide comfort during colder seasons, whereas lightweight cotton shawls offer versatility for year-round use. Women's shawls boast a wide array of colors, while men's shawls typically feature subdued tones such as black, brown, camel, and white. Thus, these shawls, whether for men or women, embody Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and stand as testaments to the skill and creativity of its people (Khatun, 2016:448).

The Chail (A Dotted Female Shawl of Swabi)

The *Chail*, a distinctive dotted shawl still worn by women in Swabi, represents one of the most meaningful textile traditions in Pashtun material culture. Its characteristic red dots on a white base have become a visual and symbolic marker of local identity, interwoven with narratives of valor, mourning, and continuity. The origins of this shawl, while deeply rooted in oral tradition, may also be traced to earlier artistic and cultural exchanges in the wider region of Gandhara.

A significant visual parallel can be observed in ancient Greek art. A Greek vase illustrated by Jocelyn Penny Small (2008) depicts female figures wearing dotted shawls closely resembling the *Chail* of Swabi (Figure 4). This similarity indicates that the motif of speckled textiles may have been part of a broader visual vocabulary shared across the Hellenistic and Gandharan worlds. The transmission of such decorative idioms possibly through Greco-Bactrian artistic contacts suggests that certain stylistic and symbolic features survived through cultural adaptation and persisted in regional weaving practices (Small, J. Penny. 2008:41-65).

The *Chail* is more than an ornamental garment; it embodies a historical consciousness tied to the region's socio-political transformations. Oral traditions collected in Swabi link its red-dotted design to episodes of warfare in the nineteenth century, particularly the battles fought by the Yousafzai Pashtuns against Sikh and British forces. According to these narratives, when the men of Swabi were martyred in battle, local women entered the battlefield to recover their bodies. Their white shawls were stained red with the blood of the slain, and in commemoration of this event, women later began to produce shawls with red dots as a symbolic reminder of

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sacrifice and resistance (Khatun B. 2016: 448; Babar et al. 2022: 167).

Dr. Bushra Khatun (2016) has argued that the *Chail* was originally known as *Salara* before acquiring its present name. She situates its emergence in the Sikh period, when Swabi's women participated, directly or indirectly, in the conflicts of that era. The renaming of *Salara* to *Chail* thus marks a process of transformation from a general textile tradition into a cultural symbol of collective mourning. Some versions of the oral narrative maintain that all Yousafzai men perished in one of these battles, and that the surviving women, upon discovering the massacre, laid their white shawls upon the martyrs. The shawls' bloodstains subsequently became emblematic, inspiring the red-dot pattern that persists in the *Chail* design today (Khatun B. 2016: 448)

The *Chail* also functions as a medium of identity and social protection, interprets its dotted motifs and floral geometry as visual representations of inherited wisdom and feminine agency. The shawl's structure, color, and ornamentation serve both aesthetic and symbolic purposes signifying chastity, resilience, and the intergenerational transmission of values. Craftspeople employ fine handwork to produce the dotted patterns, which in themselves constitute a language of remembrance and devotion (Khan 2020: 105).

Although historically associated with grief, the *Chail* has also evolved into a celebratory garment. Its crimson dots, reminiscent of flames, now adorn women in weddings and festive occasions, where it is worn as a symbol of pride and continuity (Khan 2020: 105). This transformation from mourning cloth to ceremonial attire reflects the adaptive nature of Pashtun textile culture, which integrates historical memory into living tradition.

Contemporary artists such as Anwar Khan have drawn upon the *Chail*'s imagery in their visual compositions, depicting it as an enduring emblem of female resilience. His work portrays the *Chail* not merely as a textile but as a repository of cultural memory and artistic inspiration, emphasizing its dual role as artifact and symbol (Dawn, 3 November 2018).

In conclusion, the *Chail* of Swabi embodies a layered history that links Gandharan visual motifs, classical Greek influences, and Pashtun oral traditions of heroism and

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loss. Its dotted pattern serves as a cultural palimpsest, recording both external artistic transmissions and internal social transformations. The *Chail* remains a living testimony to the capacity of textile traditions to preserve memory, encode identity, and articulate resistance within the dynamic continuum of Pashtun history.

Male Shawls of Pashtuns

Garam Chadar or Patu

The labor-intensive handcrafting procedure used to create these shawls was a reflection of the cultural significance associated with the item. However, the production of shawls has changed in the modern era, moving from artisanal workmanship to the automated procedures of factories. The essence of the garam chadar or patu is still firmly ingrained in the local culture in spite of this change. Of the several places that are well-known for producing these shawls, Swat, Chitral, and Peshawar are particularly notable. These areas are known for producing male shawls that are highly regarded for their distinctive qualities. These shawls, which are mostly made of sheep wool, are thick enough to be useful for keeping warm throughout the cooler months. The typical manner of donning these shawls involves draping them over the shoulders and upper body. In more extreme weather conditions, individuals may opt to wrap the shawl around their head and neck, thereby enhancing protection against the elements. The versatility of the garam chadar or patu is further highlighted by the array of colors and patterns available, with black, brown, and beige emerging as popular choices. Beyond its practical use, the male shawl from Swat, Chitral, and Peshawar is essentially a cultural symbol that combines tradition, skill, and practicality to adapt to the harsh weather of Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan.

Thin Shawls

A lighter-weight alternative to the bulky woolen garam chadar or patu, such as a cotton or silk shawl, has its own significance, especially in the context of the Pashtun people in Afghanistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This adaptable clothing item surpasses seasonal restrictions, serving a multiplicity of functions throughout the year. In warmer months, it's worn carelessly over the head or shoulders as a fashionable piece of apparel and a sun protection barrier. This shawl can also be

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worn for formal events and religious rituals, when it becomes a more closely worn item similar to a cloak and adds to a more polished and dignified appearance. (Khatun, 2016: 462)

Widely worn by people of all ages, but especially by the middle-aged and old, this shawl has become an essential piece of clothing for Pashtuns. Its cultural relevance and practicality are the main reasons for its popularity. This variation, in contrast to the garam chadar, has a wider range of colors and patterns, enabling a more varied expression of personal flair. Popular options include vibrant stripes and detailed embroidery, which give the shawl a dynamic and eye-catching dimension. The cotton or silk shawl, in this sense, embodies a blend of tradition and current flare, representing the rich cultural legacy of the Pashtun people while simultaneously meeting the diverse needs of contemporary fashion and lifestyle. (Barfield, 2010)

Shalws in the Pashto Folklore

Since ancient times, shawls have been an essential part of Pashtun clothing, worn by both sexes. Their importance stems from Pashto folklore, particularly from the well-known two-line poetry form known as "tappa." Shawls are mentioned a lot in this poetry, which reflects their significance in the culture. The folklore talks also include translations and a number of tappas that mention shawls.

(1) د سلاري نوکر دي زه وے
چې تا په سر کړے ما یې ټول کړے پلوونه

(2) شال یې په سر اوړی په غاړه
ګودر ته لاړه عاشقان رنځوروینه

(3) د ملنګی جامه کښې راشه
زه به په تور سالو کښې خبر دراوباسمه
(4) په سور سالو په بام ولاړه
امپل په غاړه شوکوي د خلقو زړونه

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(5) پلوَ په خان پسې راکاږي

عظیمه خدایه میلمنه به د چا وینه

Translation in to English

1. **I wish to serve your graceful salara;**

Each day you wear it, and I tend its folds, keeping it clean from dust.

In this tappa, the admirer communicates his great love for his sweetheart by honoring her traditional scarf, the Salara. He imagines himself as a loving servant, diligently keeping her shawl clean and free of dust.

2. **She wears a graceful shawl upon her head, and around her neck, the shining *Ougai* gleams; She walks to the gudar to fetch water. And sets her lovers' hearts aflame.**

This tappa depicts a Pashtun girl bringing water at Gudar, a communal site near the river. Her beauty, accentuated by her traditional dress and jewelry, captivates the young guys gazing from afar, making them feel lovesick.

3. **Come to my gate dressed as a beggar; I will give you alms, wearing a black shawl upon my head**

In this tappa, the girl sends a clandestine message to her lover, telling him to visit her home in disguise. She vows to appear under a black shawl, symbolizing the difficulties that women in Pashtun society experience when meeting their loved ones openly.

4. **A red shawl crowns her head upon the roof she stands. And with that glance, she steals the people's hearts.**

This tappa depicts a stunning girl on her rooftop, wearing a red shawl and a beaded necklace. Her dazzling appearance captivates the young guys that come across her, winning their hearts with her allure.

5. **Her shawl's fringe brushes the ground while she walks. Who, oh who, will host her in this village?**

In this tappa, the shawl known as palao represents beauty and grace. The sight of a lovely girl, clearly a guest, wandering through the hamlet with her shawl touching the ground arouses curiosity and admiration, leaving the speaker wondering who will have the honor of hosting her.

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These tappa verses highlight the significance of shawls in Pashtun society, reflecting their historical and cultural importance. Shawls, worn with great pride and respect, symbolize beauty, honor, and tradition for both men and women. The enduring use of shawls continues to embody the rich heritage of the Pashtun people.

Conclusion

The study of shawls in Gandharan art reveals a profound continuity between ancient visual culture and contemporary Pashtun traditions. The recurring motif of the draped shawl, visible in Gandharan sculptures and reliefs, signifies not only modesty and grace but also a shared cultural language that transcended geographical and temporal boundaries. The presence of similar motifs in Greek art, particularly in depictions of women wearing dotted or patterned shawls, provides compelling evidence of a Hellenistic influence that migrated eastward through the channels of Greco-Bactrian interaction. As these artistic ideas entered the Gandharan milieu, they were absorbed, reinterpreted, and localized within the social and spiritual context of the region.

In Gandhara, shawls appear not merely as adornments but as significant cultural symbols. The figures of monks, devotees, and Bodhisattvas portrayed in Gandharan sculpture often wear intricately carved shawls, emphasizing dignity, serenity, and moral refinement. This artistic convention likely contributed to the normalization of the shawl as a garment of reverence and respect within the broader cultural sphere of ancient northwestern South Asia. From Gandhara, the tradition continued to evolve, passing through centuries of regional transformation until it became an integral part of Pashtun dress and social expression.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Swabi, this inherited tradition survives in the form of the *Chail* or *Salara* a shawl characterized by red dotted patterns. While local oral traditions associate its origin with the battles against Sikh or British forces in the nineteenth century, artistic parallels suggest a much deeper historical lineage. The dotted shawls seen on a Greek vase (Small 2008) echo the same decorative idiom that persists in Swabi today, implying that the motif may have traveled from the Mediterranean world to the Gandharan workshops, and from there into the living fabric of Pashtun society.

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Today, the shawl remains a powerful emblem of Pashtun identity and honor. Both men and women wear it with pride men as a symbol of dignity and respect, women as a mark of beauty and virtue. The shawl also occupies a central place in Pashto folk poetry, where it frequently symbolizes love, loyalty, and remembrance. Through centuries of transformation, it has retained its dual role as both a practical garment and a cultural artifact, embodying the resilience and continuity of Pashtun society.

In conclusion, the journey of the shawl from the artistic conventions of Greece, through the syncretic culture of Gandhara, to its enduring presence in modern Swabi illustrates the remarkable capacity of material traditions to preserve and transmit cultural memory. What began as an aesthetic expression in classical art has become, in the Pashtun context, a living emblem of honor, identity, and collective pride. The shawl thus stands as a testament to historical interconnectedness and the enduring dialogue between art, history, and tradition across millennia

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Figure 1. Macedonian soldier guarding the entrance to the tomb of Agois Athanasios. After Robin J.Lan Fox. 2011. P.496. (figure wearing Swati Pakol and male

Figure 2 A statue of a Macedonian boy wearing kausia. Terracotta, made in Athens, ca. 300 BC. After Wekipedia.

Figure 3. The statue of Julian apostate, in the museum of medieval art Paris. Wearing male shawl and cap. After Wikipedia.

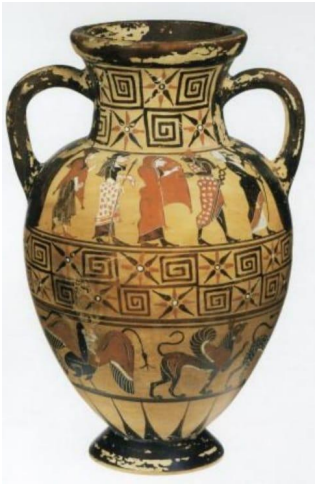

Figure 4. a Greek vase showing female shawls, similar to the dotted shawls of Swabi. After Jocelyn Penny Small 2008

Figure 5. Sitting Achilles wrapped in a himation, from c. 500 BC. after wikipedia.

Figure 6. Standing Buddha from Gandhara wearing a male shawl. after M.A.Khan 2005

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Figure 7. An embroidery female shawl

Figure 8. Fine wool warm male shawl from Swat

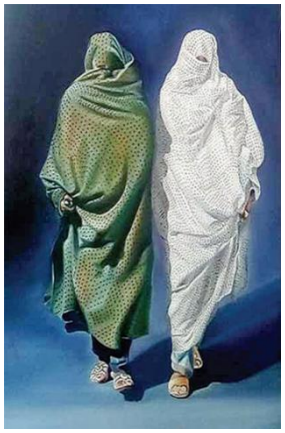


Figure 9. Two types of Chail painting by Anwar

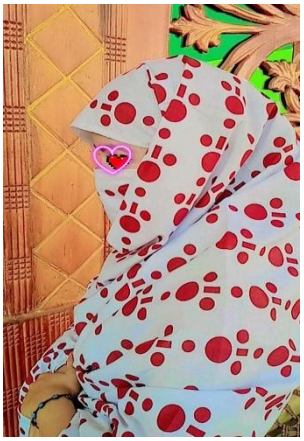
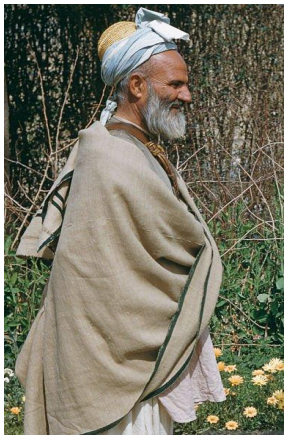


Figure 10. A lady of Swabi wear the traditional chail.



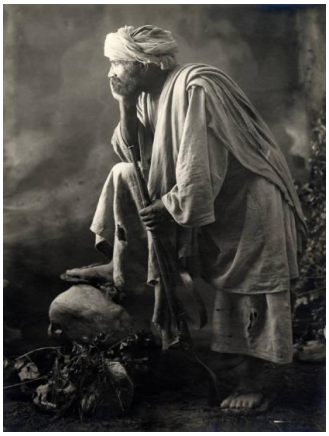


Figure 11. Two old Pashtun men wearing traditional shawls

Figure12. A young man busy in loop machine in Islampur Swat. Photo by the Author. 2023

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