

Khussa Ornamentation in Multān

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Multān specializes in the making of traditional footwear called khussa. A khussa is a leather shoe usually embroidered on the upper side. The toe of the khussa is round. The design of the embroidery is traced by cut paper to be later embellished by craftsmen in factories and workshops or women in villages who can do embroidery on khussa. Khussas having filigree patterns have embroidery done with a metallic thread called tilla on specifically red, black, or skin-colored leather. The origin of shoes is difficult to be traced however it is evident that man invented shoes to protect himself from threats caused by natural elements i.e. weather, climate, and rough surfaces. The shoe has been a protector of human feet for centuries. This paper will explore the types and varieties of Khussa's in Multan.

Keyword: Multān, khussa, patterns, embroidery, ornamentation

The initial stages of evolution of arts and crafts are attributed mainly to the needs of human race. The major crisis of survival, war, migrations and natural calamities shaped human arts and crafts since five thousand years. Every civilization developed their own customs and traditions based on its environmental and historical factors. Once human defeat the threats related to their survival and started their communal set up, they started aesthetic development on exponential basis("The oblique art of shoes: popular culture, aesthetic pleasure, and the humanities", 2015). Many civilizations have developed their edge over other civilizations by advancement in the field of arts and crafts(Mirza, 1964).

The sculptures retrieved from Gandhara region also proved to be brilliant example of footwear being used in that era (Naveed, 2015). The sculpture of religious dignitaries had shoes on them. Surya-dev, the tall idol found in Gandhara region was also found wearing shoes. During Stone Age, humans killed animals for the sake of food and warmth. There are some traces of using animal skins to protect feet from extreme weathers or rough surfaces. Leather products became more advanced and classy as the civilizations progressed.

The culture of traditional shoes making was also brought in to subcontinents by invaders such as Afghans, Arabs, Turks, Persians and Mongols. However when British started ruling the subcontinent they brought with them a new style of shoes, known as boots, which was the symbol of English culture. Due to cultural diversity, subcontinent always had a mixed sense of style. However it can be clearly stated that the dominant inspiration of subcontinent art and craft comes from Islamic patterns and designs. The common aesthetics shared by Muslims across the world is the ones which inspired Mughals too(Chaudhry, 2002).

Muhammad bīn Qāsim came to subcontinent in 711 A.D and with him he brought the essence of Muslim art and craft. Same was the case with Mughal Empire in 18th century. The Empires of Tughlaq, Khiljī and Āibak are known to have rich art and crafts. They were obsessed with novelty in every field. Since shoes are main part of a human's attire, they ensured that their shoes were one of its kinds. This started trend in common people too. They also started embellishing shoes with variety of designs and styles(Chaudhry, 2002).

Muslim rulers are known to care a lot about their appearance. They wore robes made out of silk, dresses with high embellishments, turbans with vibrant colors and jewels and boots up till their knees. These boots had delicate design and embroidery on them which made them distinct. Common men and women during Mughal Empire also wore shoes however they were not as embellished as that of emperors'. Men wore rough shoes for purpose of safety whereas women covered up in a long cloth often known as chādar wore leather shoes with silk embroidery (Kazmi, 2009).

Mughal emperors were responsible for qualitative shift of the architecture, art and craft of subcontinent. They enriched every form of art and craft. The amalgamation of Persian art style gave birth to a distinct style which became a symbol of Mughal design. It was a beautiful blend of their ancestor Taimūrid dynasty with a contemporary touch of Persian style of Safāvid dynasty. The footwear found during the reign of Babar and Akbar usually have same styling as that of Taimūr dynasty. This shows that Mughal's crafts were actually a blend of past and present with added creativity for forming a new style of their own(Ali, 2013).

Miniature painting was a hall mark of Akbar's court. Artists from his era experimented with miniature on stones, silk, pottery, painting, carpet embroider, leather products, ivory and jewelry. Shoes of that era had embellished borders on top and matching embellishments with same color on lower bottom with pointed toes. These shoes were worn by the elites. However some of Akbar's courtiers

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION

also wore low heeled colored leather pointed toe shoes with slightly lesser embellishments. Paintings from Mughal era prove to be helpful in figuring out the trends of that period. Another form of shoes found in the paintings of the same era is black shoes with folded down strap which helped their easy removal. The footwear from this time is quite extinct now. However some of the footwear we see today is inspired by that era. Jojo was men's shoe with folded heels and up turned toe, mujāri was a soft kind of footwear and jūti's with upturned toes folded heels and light wear often for women. These were some of the kinds used by Mughal's. Although the styles have become redundant as such however some of the eastern footwear of subcontinent is still inspired by it. The shoes of Mughal era varied from sandals to slippers often of silk or velvet embellished with gold or silver flowers. During Akbar reign, a special kind of shoe was prepared for him who covered the ankles too. The shoe was ornamented with pearls and diamond on the top. Elites used to follow the Mughal royalties in their fashion sense(Dar, 1984).

During Emperor Jahāngīr' reigns, salīm shāhi shoe was designed. Mišbāh u-dīn Bakhtiar a shop keeper describes salīm shāhi shoe as the early form of khussa. He claimed that the khussa as we know today is originated from the salīm shāhi jūtā which was very popular in the era of Mughal. It further gained popularity as people started wearing it and its different forms started getting popularity among people in Jahangir's era. Shoes popular in that era were chārhwān jūtā, ghateli jūti, lāl nāri k jūty, kashāni makhmal k jūty and salīm Shāhi jūta(Ribeiro & Cumming, 2000).

The unique style of shoes referred to as Salīm Shāhi is named after the royal Mughal emperor Jahāngīr. Another form of shoe which made its way to public was daisī jūti. Daisī jūti is an embroidered shoe often made on velvet or leather base. The craft of making daisī jūti is elaborate which takes skill of miniature and embroidery. These jūti's are visible in the portrait of Shāhjahān, a Mughal Emperor known for his love for miniature and his romance with his wife Mumtāz, for whom he got Tāj Maḥal built. In these paintings he can be seen holding rose in his hand and having golden embellished jūti with black front base. The culture of wearing shoes was not common in subcontinent. Only some people from north, west and south would wear food wear. As colonialism hit subcontinent, the customs and styles of foot wear changed too. British brought with them an aristocratic style of dress up. Before colonialism, khussa was the widely famous and loved foot-ware of subcontinent, proudly worn by emperors as well as masses(Jain-Neubauer, 2000).

Khussa jūti was a colorful and embellished form of shoe with turned up back. Inner part of Khussa is made out of colorful leather and the outer was

embellished with fine embroidery. These shoes had closed front and back. The khussa maker adopted different styles and variations based on the time and the preferences of local people who would wear it. Khussa is a closed shoe usually made out of leather. There is no distinction between left and right foot. Pakistan has diverse variety of khussa based on the diversity of regions they are built in and the culture and environment of that region. Many people who were expert in the craft of making khussa migrated to Pakistān during the partition. After the partition, Pakistānī khussa artist gave them unique names based on their shapes and geographical significance. Khussa is one of the most used foot wear in Pakistān. It is used in urban and rural areas alike; the difference is that urban population uses it for traditional occasions or for fashion whereas the rural population uses it as daily use due to its durability and practicality (Jain-Neubauer, 2000).

Punjab is known for khussa making throughout the world. The main hub of khussa making is Multān. The Multān is a developed city with advanced industrial areas. Due to animal breeding, the southern belt of Punjab also known as Sarā³iki belt is rich in animal skin or leather products. This craft is mainly part of Punjab which specializes in leather products. Some part of this belt is joined with other provinces as well however its major chunk is still annexed with Punjab. Multān, Dera Ghāzi Khān and Bāhāwalpūr are purely known as Sarā³iki belt and are part of Punjab. These three regions mainly are the contributors to highly skilled laborers of khussa's. They make decorative and highly embellished khussa's from thick leather which has gold embroidery. Multān has been a major city for business and trade and stands as fifth largest city in Pakistān. Multān also is a home for some of the finest handicrafts which are exported to different countries (Farooq, 2013).

The following regions of Multān district had embraced khussa in a variety of ways, so that it can represent their true colours.

Multān is known as the center of craftsman ship of khussa's. There are multiple workshops specializing in making khussa's across Multān. Khussa is extremely popular in rural areas of Multān due to its practicality and durability however it is in high demand in urban areas as well. The hub of khussa making is the roundabout of Ghanā Ghar. An old worker sitting in main market of Ghanā Ghar who used to make around 40 rupees for the making of single pair now makes 20 rupees for embroidery and 50 rupees for the making. Workshops have helped in division of labor to enhance the productivity allowing specialized tasks for each individual however it still is a tiring task since khussa's are usually made by hand.

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION

There are different outlets of Khussa in Multān and most of them has their own factories. Interviews conducted from craftsmen will be discussed further. Working in the khussa industry for thirty six years, Muḥammad Idrees who is the owner of khussa shop in Multan mentioned that the main areas of embroidered and ornamental khussa making in Pakistān are: Ronali, Khān Garh, Muzafargarh Garh, Kabīr Wālā, Khanewal, Jhang, Shah Jamāl, Kot Ado, Aḥmad Pur Sharqiya, Rahīm Yār Khān, Sadqa-Abad. Certain factories of khussa making in Kotla Tolay Khān are the main manufacturers of handmade khussas who give the half made khussas to teams of women working from home who hand embroider and embellish the khussas.

There are certain women and young girls who work in the villages for their survival. They work on minimum amount and make hand embroidered khussa's which is a difficult job. They deal with dealers on their own who outsource their services. These women suffer from social pressure as well as discrimination in wages. A survey in Punjāb reveals that most women workers in Punjāb face discrimination and low wages (Chahudry, 2014).

Another Khussa shop owner Badar Munīr further stated in his interview that °Alod-e-°Ali, °Ali Pur, Hataiji; Aḥmad Pur Sharqiya, Nawāb Pur, Navi Basti are the main centers of khussa ornamentation and these women are highly crafted and do heavy embroidery and ornamentation in menial money because they do it for regular income and to find poverty. They are not usually allowed to go out of their houses to sell their craft however they are provided with the khussa uppers at their homes to hand embroider according to their own aesthetics using traditional color schemes. He told that these women use the color reference they have from different interlinked culture of Sarā'iki belt.

Maḥmud °Ali has two years' experience of working at Rāja Khussa Maḥal which is famous for costly khussas. He stated that it is not possible to have a full range of khussas at one khussa shop given the variety in khussas. He described his khussa variety as ready to sell and made to order. In his experience of two years he learnt that they need to have strong contacts in different villages to get diverse variety of khussas. In each village they have a specific agent who helps them to connect with the handmade khussa expert ladies. Every village specializes in its own style. He further mentioned that the peak season of sales is wedding season and eīd season which is determined by °Islāmic calendar.

The leather khussa found in Multān is not only famous nationally but is sold internationally with high demand. The decoration of khussa is also done in Wazirabād and Hafizabad. Another form of khussa that is famous is tilla wālā khussa that is used for casual purpose.



Figure 2: Khussa Outlet Ghanta Gher, Multan; Mooltan Khussa, Maḥal, Interviewee; Badar Munīr & Muḥammad Idress. Photograph by Author, August 17, 2019.

Misbāḥ al-dīn bakhtīār mentioned in his interview that Khān Garh, Muzaffar Garh, Basti Chaman, Laiya, Chowck Qureshi. Tilla wala khussaa is very famous for casual use among others. Multan leather khussas are famous not only in Pakistān but also liked in aborad. Decorated khussa work is famous in Wazirabād, Hafzabād, sawanala hill in fasialabād (Bakhtiar, 2019, 12).



Figure 3: Khussa Outlet Ghanta Gher, Multan; Mubarak Chappal Housel, photograph by Author, August 18, 2019.

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION



Figure 4: Khussa Outlet Ghanta Gher, Multan; Mooltan Khussa Maḥal, Photograph by Author, August 17, 2019.



Figure 5: Khussa Outlet Ghanta Gher, Multan; Raja Khussa Maḥal, Interviewee; Maḥmud cAli, Photograph by Author, August 17, 2019.

A. Latīf in his book ‘The Industrial Punjāb’ states that during 1911 Multān was home to around 2000 craftsmen who specialized in shoe making. However this number has now declined to 800 numbers of units working for shoe making. These workshops are mostly located near Ghanta Ghar and Kotla Toley Khān. The craftsmen belong to the Sayyid, Tilu and Mochi sects(Ghazi et al., 1988).

In order to achieve perfect color, the craftsmen dye the leather with vegetable colors, the color palette used is often bright. These colors are taken from a village near Multan known as Keror Pukka. Although plain khussa’s are very popular in Multān, embroidered khussa’s have their special class. Kotla Toley Khān and the Clock Tower have almost 1000 to 1500 units of khussa making working currently however there are multiple individual crafts men who are working in different parts of the city. These individual crafts men are also dedicated to some special families. They make khussa’s only for some families which are impossible to be found otherwise in the market. This specialized and personalized service is heavily paid for(Ali, 2013).

Multān is rich with every single variety of khussa. One can find almost any kind of khussa in Multān. The most popular type of khussa is nāgra khussa. Its specialty is that it is made from camel skin. It is finely embellished on upper and lower counters and it has light brown base. Its throat line is ornament into floral shape to give it a unique look. Wazirabādī khussa is also widely known and liked. This Khussa is embellished with special metal tārkashī or bidri work done in Wazirabād hence it gets its name from there. The design of this khussa required intricate craft of leather cutwork. The specialty of this khussa is the tilla work which gives it unique look. Multān is also known for Sharaquri khussa. This khussa although is named after its original town Sharaqpur however since most of the crafts work is done in Multān hence has become Multān's specialty. The base for this khussa is black, brown or red with tilla work of gold or silver on top. The front often called as throat line of this khussa is either straight or front twisted so to give it a formal look. The insole is embellished with same work as the outer part of the khussa to give it more formal look. Multāni phūl wālā khussa is rather a casual and colorful khussa. It depicts the folklore culture of Punjāb with colorful thread pompoms which signify the importance of vibrancy in the culture of Punjāb. They also have anklets made out of thread work or leather strips which give it playful look(Raza, 1988).

Shoe making is a craft known to the rural population since ages now. Many villages and cities are known for making different foot wears in Pakistān however there are certain cities and villages which have gained more popularity in daisi jūī making due to the specialized craftsmen and their dedicated work. Crafts men make shoes from different materials, usually leathers, and embellish them with embroidery and stones in such a way that they become an art work. The embroidery done on these shoes is not ordinary. These shoes are sold on high prices due to the fine embroidery done on it. They are usually more expensive than embroidered clothes because of the fact that it is difficult to do embroidery on leather as compared to doing it on a piece of cloth. The craft of khussa is basically an amalgamation of two separate crafts, one is its making and other one is the embroidery. The embroidery unit is usually separate from the manufacturing unit. Embroidery is done by the women's working in small villages. The embroidery design is first transferred on a wooden block and later printed on a piece of paper. Through the technique of impression, this piece of paper traces the design on leather. Once the design is traced then the embroidery work starts. This part requires extensive labor and can incorporate several designs at a time. The uniqueness of these shoes is hidden in the intricate embroidery done on it(Chaudhry, 2002, 78).

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION

Khussa Making Technique Panna (Upper Part)

The upper part of khussa is made in the preliminary preparations of khussa. It is called the panna. The designs of panna are first made on a cardboard. The cardboard is further cut into stencil to form the pattern of the design. The shape and design of the stencil is copied exactly on the khussa. On embroidered khussas, the embellishment is done on the upper part. The women who work from home and are considered to be expert in embroidery are sent these upper parts to be ornamented. These women use several tools to embroider these khussas one of them is ār (awl).

Talla (Sole)

The sole of the khussa, locally called talla, is also made from leather. The leather used in the sole is thicker than the upper part to give it strong hold and to make the walk comfortable. A stencil is used to cut the talla of the khussa. The front of the talla is wider than the heel to adjust the wider area i.e. the fingers of the foot. A thick cotton thread is used to bind the talla and panna together. The front area where the toes are adjusted is stitched backwards on the upper side. In order to give it strength and support to last longer, the shoe-last, locally known as kālābattūn, is added to give it an appropriate size as well as desired design. The craftsmen let the kālābattūn in the khussa for approximately three to four days. This ensures that the shoe has proper size and shape. The shoe-last is later taken out of the khussa and makes it wearable.

Varieties and Identification of Khussas

Khussas are identified by their attributes. These attributes are on ornamental side which give them uniqueness and difference. These differences are deliberately developed by the craftsmen occasionally according to ceremonial events. The khussas of ceremonial events are regionally differentiated by colors, patterns, treatment and textures. These regional differences will be discussed below:

Multānī Phūl Wālā Khussa



Figure 6: Multānī Phūl Wālā Khussa. Photograph by Author. August 19, 2019.



Figure 8: Multānī Phūl Wālā Khussa. Photograph by Author. August 19, 2019.

D. G Khān and Rajanpur Khussa

D.G Khān has plenty of domestic animals which give a lot of leather based products. The leather khussa of D. G Khān is very famous. It is special made with leather, sewed with cotton thread and leather string which give it strong finish. For women khussas thread embroidery is added to give feminine look. The locals use the milk and meat is of these cattle to sell and later use their skin as leather to make khussas. Sakhi Sarwar, neighboring town of D.G Khān, is also known for khussa making. These areas are known for khussas because it is a ritual of wearing khussas even on weddings. The khussa made here are later sold

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION

in KPK and Baluchistān because of their firmness and strength to be able to be worn in hilly areas (Ghazi, 2009).

Naturally, the atmosphere of Dera Ghazi Khān District is differing because it is divided into two areas especially hill and plain areas. So there are used different varieties, one is known as khussa and other is called chappal (Sandal). Dera Ghazi Khān a big centre of khussa like other famous centers Multān and Bāhāwalpūr. These khussas are further divided into five main categories which are made in D.G Khān (Ghazi, 2009).

Khussa Gadai Wal

Gadai Wal is a place near D.G. Khān. This kind of khussa, available in embroidered form as well, is usually large in size. The Gadai Wal Khussa is of two types 1) the plain (Gadai Wal) and 2) the embroidered (Gadai Wal Karhai Wālā Khussa).

Khussa Wal Sada

This khussa is made from thick leather. It is specially made to be sold in Baluchistān. The leather is dyed red and embellished with tilla work. The main structure of this khussa is hard only to be used in hilly or plateau areas. The special design of this khussa involves covering the area of toe with black pointers (Ghazi, 2009, 259).



Figure 10: Khussa Wal Sada. Photograph by Author. August 19, 2019.

Khussa Gadai Wal Karhai Wālā

This khussa is popular in rural as well as urban areas alike. The upper part of this khussa has floral embellishment with black thread or tilla work on it. The embellishment is done in silk thread, hand embroidered with multiple colors making it vibrant. This khussa has a very colorful look with a very strong structure.



Figure 11: Gadai Wal Karhai Wālā Khussa. Photograph by Author. August 20, 2019.

Kehror Paka Khussa

The refine art on the Kehror Paka Khussa makes it distinguished from all kinds of khussas. It is a light weigh khussa mainly crafted by local craftsmen. The main reason of its superiority above other kinds of khussas is the delicacy which is reflected from manufacturing to the final piece. Another reason of its prominence is the natural material used in its manufacturing.



Figure 12: Kehror Paka Khussa. Source: (<https://images.app.goo.gl/Lq4z6WkBw1YLjXZAA>). Accessed Date: October 29, 2019.

Kabir Wala Khussa

Kabir wala is known for embroidered shoes with delicate thread work. The craftsmanship on this khussa is done using multicolored synthetic thread as well as golden and silver thread. . It has distinct design and shape from other khussas. It is very rich in design and soft in its feel on foot. The buyers from rural as well as urban areas are fond of it alike. The simplicity yet durability of this khussa make it distinct from other khussas.

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION



Figure 13: Kabir Wala Khussa. Source: (<https://images.app.goo.gl/XZQPewQkF4ugRLsN6>) Accessed Date: October 29, 2019.

Balochi Chappal

Balochi chappal as the name suggests is very popular in Baluchistan. This chappal is widely worn by women in Baluchistan however some men also wear it alongside brides and grooms during weddings. The skin of domestic animals is used for crafting this chappal. This chappal has become an important part of the culture and tradition of not only Baluchistan but is also very popular in urban areas as well.



Figure 14: Balochi Chappal. Source: Photograph by Author. Date: August 26, 2019.

Khussa Pathān Wal

Pathān wal khussa is not only used in the area where pathān dwell mostly i.e. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but is widely liked in other provinces including Balochistān and Punjāb. This khussa has similar shape as gadai wal khussa and has delicate work. The embroidery done on pathān wal khussa is intricate tilla embroidery. The upper part of khussa is embellished with silver and golden tilla work however the sole is mostly mass manufactured in factories. This khussa is also very popular in areas of Balochistān such as D.G Khān, Rakni and Lora Lai.



Figure 15: Pathān Wal Khussa. Source: (<http://stylevilas.com/traditional-khussa-shoe-designs-for-grooms/>) Accessed Date: October 26, 2019.

Khussa Taunsa Wal

The name Taunsa Wal is given to this kind of khussa due to its origin in the area of Taunsa. This khussa is almost similar to the Gadai Wal khussa however the only difference between them is that of the shape. The tilla work and silk thread work on Taunsa Wal khussa is more intricate and delicate as compared to Gadai Wal khussa. These khussa are liked by people of different origin and areas however there are some specific khussas liked by the Sarā³iki belt khussa craftsmen.

The Sarā³iki area known as kenālī jūti and daisī jūti are famous for the dedicated craftsmen for khussas. These khussas are not only liked in Sarā³iki belt but also in nearby areas (Ghazi, 2009). The details of these khussas are as following:

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION



Figure 16: Khussa Taunsa Wal. Photograph by Author. August 20, 2019.

Daisī Jūti

Daisī jūti is traditional footwear (Jamil, 1988, 63). This embroidered jūti set a percent for khussa. The daisī jūti brings together two basic crafts of shoe making, one being the shoe making itself and the other one is embroidery. Daisī jūti is the hallmark of Sarā³iki culture and is famous not only in the Sarā³iki belt but in near areas as well (Chaudhry, 2002).



Figure 17: Khussa Wal Sada. Photograph by Author. August 20, 2019.

Khussa Chappal Cholistan

The area of Rohi in Cholistān covers 2407 square kilometer. This desert area with some sand dunes surrounded around Hakra River has its own vitality. This area usually covers the districts of Bahawalpur, Bāhāwalnagar and Rahīm

Yār Khān. These are the main regions where khussas are manufactured, sold and worn. The type of khussas worn in purely desert area verses the type of khussas worn near the river area varies slightly. Due to strong influence of Mughal and Nawāb courts of Cholistān and Bāhāwalpūr, the area is culturally enriched with royal inspirations. The royal maharaja style khussas are still manufactured and worn by people as a status symbol and to cherish what is left of heritage of maharajas.



Figure 18: Khussa Cholistān. Photograph by Author. August 30, 2019.

The Mughal art work is still in place in these khussas. Like Mughal artists, the khussa makers of this region also use mirror work and hand embroider it with colorful threads and decorations. The local craft of phulkāri is done on the upper part of this khussa to further add colors to it. The most interesting aspect of this khussas is that the male khussas are as embellished and colorful as female khussas.

Khussa Bahāwalpūr

Bahāwalpūr is a well-known city of Punjab situated 90 km from Multān and 900 km from Karachi. This place has been home to many mentions and palaces made by Nawābs. These Nawābs were gifted the state of Bahawalpur by Hayatullah Tareen. Bahawalpur became a developed state later on with several markets and amenities of life. This state was counted amongst richest states of the Punjab. The old city still shows the remaining of well-planned markets and active social arenas. Places such as Maḥlī Bāzār, Farīd Gate and the Shāhī Bāzār still have the old shops which sell khussas. These places have become a commercial as well as cultural hub of the city.

Khussas were designed to be tough and comfortable yet plain footwear. As time changed the people started decorating and embellishing the upper side of khussa and the designs started becoming more elaborate. The khussas of Bahawalpur are known to be colorful. The plain brown khussas with green, red, yellow and orange colors are mostly high in demand. Most of the prints are floral. Craftsmen do gulkāri and thread work on these khussas. The sequins work

KHUSSA ORNAMENTATION

on the upper part of khussa is also very popular. Since the desert area of Cholistān is adjacent to the Rajhistān of India, the Rajhistānī culture is very popular in Bahawalpur.



Figure 20: Ornamented Khussa of Bahawalpur. Photograph by Author. August 30, 2019.

As a wedding tradition, the in laws of the groom gift him golden ulla khussa as a present. Expensive material is used to make these khussa. They are highly priced due to the intricate skill involved to make it and the expensive material used. Another specialty of the city of Bahāwalpūr is Kundan khussa which is a bridal khussa especially used to match the kundan jewelry of bride on wedding. Kundan craft is also very specialized craft of Bahāwalpūr.

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