Interpreting the Traditional Jewellery of Bedouin in Oman through Contemporary Jewellery Practice

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Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.

4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.

5. The word count of the thesis is 69,114.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the Al-Ismaili and Al-Hashmi families. Dedicated in loving memory to my grandmother who was part of this research and who passed away last year. Also, without the love and support of my husband Abdullah and my children Yazan and Muzn who were born during PhD period, this thesis would not have been possible.

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Abstract

Although traditional Omani jewellery is considered to be one of the invaluable crafts in the cultural heritage of the Sultanate, contemporary jewellery has been overlooked. Omani traditional jewellery has maintained the same designs for centuries. The market for this jewellery has decreased significantly. Previous studies dealt with traditional Omani jewellery only as objects. The women's role in the production of traditional Omani jewellery has not been investigated before. The leather parts of Omani traditional jewellery are generally overlooked in previous studies.

The aim of this research is to understand the subjective values associated with Omani traditional jewellery, based on the knowledge acquired from oral interviews with Bedouin women who are both makers and wearers of this jewellery. The study then seeks to interpret this traditional Bedouin jewellery through contemporary jewellery practice.

The methodology employed in this study is practice-based research that builds on knowledge developed through fieldwork. The study involved both ethnographic and auto-ethnographic research.

Fieldwork undertaken in Oman explored the role of women in the production of traditional Omani jewellery and identified 14 subjective values in traditional Bedouin jewellery.

The fieldwork revealed a previously unexplored area of the use of eco-leather in traditional Omani jewellery. The interaction with the Bedouin women enabled the recording of traditional craft processing techniques and production of sample material. The fieldwork supported the development of a co-creation group with women craft practitioners for the production of new forms of jewellery drawing on Omani cultural traditions and materials. The fieldwork led to the formation of a co-creation group of craft practitioners. This, in turn, led to experiments using traditional techniques with novel materials facilitating the production of new forms of jewellery which draw on Omani cultural traditions and techniques.

The insights gained from this research led to the development of a body of contemporary jewellery under the following themes- Jewellery and materials,

Jewellery and mixed cultures; Jewellery and social practice, Jewellery and recycling and sustainability, and Jewellery and technology.

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Glossary of Terms

Word	Description
Abaya	*Abaya* is an outer garment usually black, which is worn by Muslim women around the world for religious reasons.
Akam	*Akam* is a piece of jewellery worn underneath the chin and hooked on either side of the face into the veil wrapped around the head.
Al-eltah	The silver choker necklace with a large central gold bead is known as *Al-eltah* necklace. The central bead is made of gold. The golden bead is surrounded by shiny red resin beads and is also threaded through a straight silver rod ending in twisted loops. An inverted heart-shaped clasp is found at each end of the chains.
Al mndoos	*Al mndoos* is a medium size wooden chest decorated by brass bushing pins and is one of the most important pieces to complete the marriage within old Omani custom. The women also used *al mndoos* to preserve their possessions, whether jewellery, clothing, or money.
Beduin, Badawi, Badw or Badu	These other spellings are used interchangeably with Bedouin. In some literature reviews, these more old-fashioned spellings are used by Gulf Arabs.
Digg	The *digg* is a Bedouin necklace consisting of a lower part called the bar that is made of different beads. The *digg* necklace has some components made of gold and two small *hirz* (amulet box) are also attached.
Hadher	The Arabian word for settled community, as opposed to nomads. Hadhar derive their livelihoods from farming and trading.
Hanhun	*Hanhun* is a common type of necklace decorated with pendant silver coins such as Maria Theresa Dollars (MTD) and Indian Rupees. The central disc in this necklace is called *samt*, *sumt* or *somt*.
Hiblah	The term that the Omani Bedouin use to refer to the leather belt worn on the waist to secure the loincloth. It is produced using up to eleven twisted leather threads.
Hirz	The *hirz* is an amulet box that varies in size, design, style, and the way it is transformed into a necklace. *Hirz* was worn to protect the wearer from the harm of evil spirits or jealous eyes.
Kharka	A traditional headdress is commonly worn by women in Dhofar

Word	Description
	(a region in south Oman). It is a piece of cloth sewn on the sides and tops of the ridges of the crown, which are heavily encrusted with silver shapes and coins.
Manthura	The *manthura* necklace is the most valuable piece worn by Bedouin women. The tubular finial bead at each side, is constructed from a silver tube tightly bound with fine wire and it has a rosette-style granulation at the top and bottom. The silver *manthura* necklace with, its handmade thread link is similar to the newer gold chain designs that are also called *manthura.*
Manisa / Shabkah	*Manisa* has also been referred to as *shabkah (*or *net* in English) in previous studies (Richardson and Dorr 2003; Morris and Shelton, 1997). *Manisa* is bigger than *shaabook* and *nis'ah* (other types of Omani headdress). The *shaabook* covers the front of the head. The *nis'ah* covers the back, and the *Manisa* can join these two pieces to form a total head covering.
Maria Theresa Dollar (MTD)	The metal used in traditional Omani jewellery came from Maria Theresa Dollars. The silversmiths melted down the coins and used the metal to produce the jewellery, or sometimes they decorated necklaces with the coins. People in the Arabian Peninsula used MTD as a trading currency from the eighteenth century. This currency was officially withdrawn in Oman in 1972.
Mulwiyah or Maaseeb	The traditional Omani food which is prepared from the interior parts (intestine, lungs and stomach) of animals including camels, cows, sheep, lamb or goats. The animal parts are cut into very long, thin pieces and then twisted into long tubes. *Mulwiyah is* cooked as a curry or mixed with rice.
Nomadic Bedouin	The nomadic Arabs who migrate into the desert during the rainy winter season. In the specific case of Oman, there are desert Bedouins who migrate to the coastal areas in order to profit from the grazing in those areas. Furthermore, some fishermen Bedouins take their livestock into the interior regions when monsoons make fishing impossible (Morris & Shelton, 1997). Morris and Shelton (1997) remarked on this migratory pattern, and it remains current until today among some sections of the Bedouin community.
Nis'ah	*Nis'ah* is another type of Omani headdress. It is similar to *shaabook* but is different in the design and the way it is worn. Women part their hair across the crown of the head. Then they use *nis'ah* to wrap the split hair from the back of the head.

Word	Description
Nisfiy or Adhaar	*Nisfiy or adhaar* is another type of Bedouin headdress which is similar to *shaabook* design. It is smaller in size than *shaabook* and is worn on the forehead.
Photo-elicitation	A qualitative research technique, which used in the social sciences, refers to the insertion of one or more photographs during interview.
Renaissance of Oman	This term is used to cover the entire raft of reforms that were inaugurated after His Majesty Sultan Qaboos assumed power in 1970. They include the introduction of radio, TV, universal health care, effectively universal education and the opening of Oman to the outside world.
Shaabook	*Shaabook* is a headdress that covers the hair with a coiffure of plaited, whorled leather. It is produced from leather and studded with silver as an adornment by Bedouin. The leather is normally studded with silver discs produced by male silversmiths while work related to weaving and stitching the discs to the product is undertaken by women. The Bedouin women explained that *shaabook* was actually derived from "*entanglement*" in Arabic, a reference to the complex weaving technique.
Salwar	*Salwar* is a type of traditional Omani necklace which uses a red bicycle reflector pendant.
Settled Bedouin	A category of Arab Bedouins whose migration status has changed from nomadic to settled Bedouin; meaning that they are still known to be Bedouin although they are settled.
Shibgat	*shibgat* is another type of a complex Bedouin necklace. It is suspended over the head then attached to the earring instead of being worn around the neck.
Shahid	*Shahid* is a ring worn on the index finger. The word *Shahid* means witness. It concerns a core Islamic declaration. The Muslims usually point this finger upwards while saying the "*shahadah*". "*Shahadah*" is the creedal statement which states that there is only one God and Muhammad is his Prophet.
Souq	A traditional Arab market that can be held outdoors but which usually consists of a maze of small shops which are divided into areas according to the wares they sell. E.g. fish souq, vegetable souq and gold souq.
Snowball sampling	A data collection technique that uses multi-level sampling for identifying, selecting, and sampling from a population that forms a net-relationship. Technicaly samples are obtained in a

Word	Description
	scrolling through one respondent to get the next respondent. Selected respondents have a structured importance level. The way is similar to the snowballs rolled from the top to the hillside where the size grows, where the sampling of the characteristics is increasingly appropriate.
Tali, siin, siim and *sifah*	These are traditional homemade trims which consist of a narrow strip of foil that are surrounded by a framework of braided threads. Trims are used for the parts of women's costumes that have the heaviest embellishment. The *sifah* technique is also used for embroidery, and in the manufacture of the baskets which are used for collection in the harvest.
Tanning	The process of converting goat's skin into leather by a natural process using desert plants such as Pergularia Tomentosa (*Galqa*) and Acacia Nilotica (*Qarat*).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

Among the traditional arts of Oman, the work of the silversmith is probably the best known (Hawley, 2000). Skilled craftsman and silversmiths have traditionally employed a range of techniques to produce intricately designed jewellery. The designs are instantly recognisable as Omani work and have been passed down through the generations. It is commonly assumed, however, that the manufacture of Omani jewellery is exclusively a male domain. This study will prove that, particularly in the Bedouin community, women play as important a role in the crafting of jewellery as the men.

The role of Bedouin women in the production of jewellery has probably been overlooked for two reasons. In the first place, women have worked with perishable materials, such as leather. The result of this is that hybrid jewellery, incorporating leather and silver, eventually decays and only the more valuable silver is left. The second point is that headdresses, incorporating leather, are primarily unique pieces designed and crafted by the wearer herself. They are never offered for sale in the market, although women may trade them among each other.

Such pieces of jewellery produced and worn by female craftspeople may appear to be of lesser value than the jewellery produced by craftsmen/silversmiths, and it is true that the intrinsic value of the silver may be less. This, however, does not take into consideration the subjective value of the jewellery for its creator and her immediate family. Neither does it factor in the social capital that can accrue from a group of women who are jointly engaged in the creation of culturally important artefacts.

Precisely because the silversmith designs have been so traditional, in recent years they have also become unfashionable. The Omani jewellery market opened to international competition following His Majesty the Sultan's accession to power in 1970, and many Omani women chose to abandon heavy silver jewellery in favour of lighter, gold designs. Ironically, in recent years, the very rich have chosen to return to traditional designs, but again they prefer to have these made in gold, rather than silver. The rise in the price of silver since 1970

has also meant that a lot of traditional Omani jewellery was sold as scrap metal, because its owners no longer valued the design. This research discovered, however, that many Bedouin women retained their jewellery, mainly for its subjective or sentimental value. In some cases, they actually held on to pieces that they had not worn for years, but which they had no intention of selling.

1.2 *Problem Statement*

The use of leather in Omani jewellery has generally been overlooked despite its important role in Omani jewellery. Many other research studies have focused on the silver parts of the Omani jewellery because of its popularity, rarely focusing on the leather part. Therefore, this study investigates traditional and potential new aspects of leather use in Omani jewellery.

Several researchers (Richardson and Dorr 2003; Forster,1998 and Morris and Shelton, 1997) have studied Omani jewellery mainly as objects, ignoring the context in which the jewellery was created and evolved. This study is different from the existing studies in that it not only examines the jewellery by itself, but also involves the wearers, owners and makers (i.e. the Omani women).

According to the current literature (Richardson and Dorr, 2003) the role of Omani women in shaping and developing the identity of the traditional jewellery is very limited. Therefore, this study aims to find out the extent to which Omani women have actually played a role in shaping the identity of traditional jewellery.

A notable aspect of traditional jewellery in Oman is that it has maintained the same designs for centuries and the market for this jewellery has decreased significantly. This research aims to explore how traditional jewellery can inform the production of contemporary forms of jewellery. Therefore, the present study has used structured methodologies to study traditional Omani jewellery in depth, based on what such jewellery means to its traditional wearers and then, based on that, to create new contemporary Omani jewellery.

To sum up, these problems are:

1. The leather parts of Omani traditional jewellery are generally overlooked.
2. Previous studies dealt with traditional Omani jewellery as objects only.
3. The women's role in the production of traditional Omani jewellery has not been investigated before.

4. Omani traditional jewellery has maintained the same designs for centuries. The market for this jewellery has decreased significantly.

1.3 *Aim*

The aim of this research is to understand the subjective values associated with Omani traditional jewellery, based on the knowledge acquired from oral interviews with Bedouin women who are both makers and wearers of this jewellery. The study then seeks to interpret this traditional Bedouin jewellery through contemporary jewellery practice.

1.4 *Objectives*

- to contribute to the discussion of social culture research in Oman using a new method through the lens of contemporary jewellery;
- to understand the value of traditional Omani jewellery based on the knowledge acquired from the Bedouin community;
- to collaborate with the settled Bedouin makers through the lens of practice-based research and;
- to explore ways of interpreting the value of settled Bedouin jewellery to contribute to discourse on contemporary design.

1.5 *Research Questions*

Based on the above research aims, the following are the research questions:

Main question:

How can traditional Omani jewellery's value be interpreted, appreciated and developed through contemporary Omani jewellery design?

Secondary questions:

1. What is the background of Omani traditional and contemporary jewellery?

2. What relationship do Omani Bedouin women have with jewellery practice and production?

3. What are the issues and challenges associated with the creation of traditional and contemporary jewellery in Oman?

1.6 *Rationale*

Twenty years ago, I was visiting my grandmother's house in south-eastern Oman. She was originally a nomadic Bedouin before becoming a settled one when she married into a settled community. I was playing in the house yard when a trader knocked on the door. He had come to sell some goods to my grandmother and the other villagers. He firstly asked me to go and ask if there was any silver to sell. My grandmother allowed him to come in and they started to look at items to trade. I will never forget seeing my grandmother selling him some of the wonderful objects that she had. I was unaware at the time what one of the items was but it looked like a small silver box with a floral pattern. Now that I am conducting research into jewellery design, I remember this childhood story and I learned later that the object was designed for the application of cosmetics. My grandmother used to apply eye liner by dipping a silver stick in the *kohl* pot as shown in Figure 1-1. The box's function was to hold *kohl*, which is a natural black element originating from cuttlefish and the silver stick was joined to the pot by a chain.

This personal story from my childhood provides an insight, from my own perspective, into how and why we lost our family heritage. This story motivated me to trace the loss of heritage that has occurred across Oman.

Figure 1-1 *Khol* Pot (9×3.5×2.5 CM, Silver& cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Furthermore, there have been – to the best of my knowledge - few research studies (Morris and Shelton, 1997) into Omani jewellery and non-Omanis mainly conducted these. Those that do exist are argued to contain fallacies because jewellery is a sensitive subject, specifically relevant to women as mentioned several times in this thesis. This gap in the research literature motivated me to undertake this study. Being an educated Omani woman who was born after the

Renaissance of Oman, I was able to bring my local language and cultural knowledge, my research skills and knowledge of the outside world to bear on the topic of the importance of jewellery to woman in the Bedouin community. I am, after all, the grand-daughter of a woman from that community.

Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the Sultan of Oman, has emphasized, on more than one occasion, the importance of preserving the Omani heritage. He asserted that the Omani heritage is very precious and should be handed on intact to generations to come (Ministry of Information, 2015). This is also one of the strongest motivations of my research. Driven by this nationalist agenda, I felt that the two communities, Bedouin and *Hadher,* which I belong to deserve investigation. This study is a passionate work toward developing my country in my field of specialism.

However, the research indicates that a rich heritage forms a bridge between the past and today. The elements documented regarding Bedouin jewellery relate to a past era; the social structure in Oman is different within modern society. No one has written about settled Bedouin jewellery. The array of reasons outlined above explains the motivations for this research study being conducted.

1.7 *Geographic Research Context*

According to Royal Decree No. 114/2011, Oman comprises eleven governorates: Muscat, Dhofar, Musandam, Buraymi, the Dakhiliyah, the North Batinah, the South Batinah, the South Sharqiyah, the North Sharqiyah, the Dhahirah and the Wusta (Ministry of Information, 2018) see (Figure 1-2).This project focuses on the settled Bedouin community in the governorate of North and South East of Oman (called A'Sharqiyah in Arabic). The governorate of South A'Sharqiyah has five wilayats: Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Jalan Bani Bu Hassn, Masirah, Sur and Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi while the governorate of the North has six wilayats: Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Qabil, Dimma and At Tayyin, Al Mudhaibi and Ibra (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). However, the respondents were based at Ibra, Al Qabil, Wadi Bani Khalid and Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi (Figure 1-3). As my research progressed, I became more specifically focused on Wilayat Ibra in North A'Sharqiyah.

Figure 1-2 Oman comprises eleven governorates (The National Survey Authority, 2020) permission from The National Survey Authority Oman

Figure 1-3 The Wilayats covered in this research (image from National Centre for Statistics and Information, 2017) permission from National Centre for Statistics and Information

1.8 *Design Development overview*

My background of Omani cultural and Islamic traditions, coupled with my studies in the Western world, mean that I have interacted significantly with global culture. This has allowed me to identify the shift that has occurred in the

meaning and value of jewellery circulating in the community of Oman since the 1970s until now. The style of new imported jewellery is growing and developing in the community, shifting and replacing the old patterns (see section 2.3.4) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

As a contemporary jewellery designer, I realise that an item of jewellery I have made could be regarded as a meaningful artefact that represents my worldview, not just that of an individual, but also as a representative of a community or group. As a jewellery designer living abroad, I have a very important role in promoting a social reality, which is not observed by others because it is considered normal in my community. My jewellery designs can have a deep meaning with strong cultural and historical roots. Jewellery can be a social record that provides a lot of information about the structure of social life in a particular community. It involves many aspects; social, religious, cultural, economic and even political. As a designer of contemporary jewellery, I have also recognised that the development of modern design skills corresponds with the developments of technology, science and, most obviously, human needs. These needs can be physical, emotional, or spiritual) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

After a preliminary literature review, I started by designing rings to explore issues related to Omani and Islamic identity, and to explore how I could work with material and new processes in my work. I decided to design rings because they have a specific relation to Omani society. In this work, therefore, I produced new forms of the *shahid* ring using digital technologies such as laser cutting and 3D printing. In contrast with traditional production, I felt that I had taken out the soul of the long handcrafting process) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

During my first period of fieldwork, I started to explore conceptual value of jewellery, and how social contexts relate to traditional and cultural identity, by interviewing owners of jewellery and craftspeople involved in jewellery production such as the expert women who made the traditional headdress (*shaabook*). I identified a range of subjective values related the jewellery. I began to understand the value and aesthetic importance of leather and explore areas of potential design inspiration such as smell, weight, sound, and storage of jewellery) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

This fieldwork led to the production of a series of three rings using traditionally processed leather produced during the fieldwork in Oman. The rings explored concepts related to gender, religion, and sound, breaking new ground for me in how I combined design and material influences from traditional jewellery with reflection on Omani cultural issues. The change in my design approach was inspired by the 'wearable stories' project that was led by Hanson and Hutton in 2015. Wearable stories activities required the workshop participants to observe, select, photograph, gather, collate and print. I illustrated the wearable stories workshop in my photo book, Pages 118 and 119 and discuss it further in section 4.6.2) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

I returned to Oman in 2016 and began the first phase of my fieldwork. I started to work with a group of Omani participants to create jewellery. My engagement with these women played a major role in my practice. This work attempted to connect different crafts together to produce contemporary jewellery, celebrating the hybridity of the traditional Bedouin jewellery and exploring the relationship between the past and present. This first engagement led to the development of a co-creation group and the design and production of work exploring the potential of the leather thread and traditional meat products) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

This cooperation between me and those participants was an important point in the research. For me, contemporary jewellery not only concerns the maker. I am interested in the connection between my role as the maker and the people who inspired me to do something unique) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

My practice was changed and affected by the women who I worked with. This cooperation is an important element of traditional culture. It would appear that, to a certain extent, the social interaction between the women is as important as the actual finished product. The artefacts the women produce are crafted for their own pleasure or personal motives and are not commercialised. It was a pleasant and satisfying opportunity to work together with them, manufacturing jewellery and obtaining satisfaction from their efforts. The process of my ideas is related to that journey with the women. Influences from their ideas affected my work; which changed my practice as I learnt from them) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

After finishing the second phase, I came back to the UK and started working on designs which reflected upon my experience in the co-creation group. The

jewellery concepts originated from the group work with the settled Bedouin women, while the design development was also informed by knowledge and understanding of contemporary studio jewellery in Europe) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

I was influenced by western studio jewellery and the experience of being in the UK. An example of this was participating in the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) 'Create - Connect - Sustain' workshop event orgnised by Hanson and hosted by Sheffield Hallam University in February 2017. Hanson discussed her project in Tanzania (Hanson, et.al, 2015) which provoked me to think about creating jewellery from collecting things around me. When I went back in Oman in 2017, I went to a place by the sea, which I always visit. Hanson's workshop made me view this place in a new way and I began collecting things to create jewellery from. It was these materials that I subsequently used to make the *Saqla* necklace, which won the Enjoiat award in Spain (A-FAD, 2019).

In summer 2017, I undertook the collection of objects (400 water bottle tops) to create a necklace in the Sheffield Hallam University jewellery studio combining elements of traditional jewellery with found objects, exploring themes of recycling, modularity and value (see section 4.10.1). Overall the final necklace encapsulated all my experiences through my research and gave me my starting point for future research) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

In the last stage of my studio work, I focused on combining 3D printing processes with traditional materials to hybridise modern technologies and traditional leather weaving in order to develop new jewellery based on old traditions) (Al-Ismaeli, 2020).

1.9 *Structure of Thesis*

The study has been structured in such a way that the first chapter

provides an introduction to the topic, followed by the study problem and the significance of my finding that leather plays an important role in the design and manufacture of traditional Bedouin jewellery. The second chapter is concerned with the literature and offers a contextual review covering all the issues and topics related to two models of the Bedouin community. It shows the current discussions in both the creative and design contexts of contemporary jewellery

in Oman. Chapter 3 depicts the central methodology of the practice-based research approach that has been built on the basis of knowledge obtained through the fieldwork. Following chapter 3, chapter 4 provides the results of a practical investigation. Chapter 5 concludes the entire research through the reinterpretation of Bedouin design following the tanning and weaving process. This reinterpretation allowed me to begin to work with new designs for contemporary jewellery.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

Chapter 2 LITERATURE AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

2.1 *Introduction*

This chapter presents the literature and contextual review of the issues and topics that relate to Omani Bedouin Jewellery in this research. It gives a description of the two models of the Bedouin community in section 2.2 and in section 2.3 it presents current discussions of the contemporary jewellery context within Oman. The background of traditional Omani jewellery is outlined in Section 2.4, including types, techniques, and characteristics. Section 2.5 discusses the factors that influence the characteristics of Omani jewellery and section 2.6 examines issues related to traditional and contemporary jewellery. Section 2.7 discusses seven artists who explore traditional Islamic art themes through contemporary art work, while the important points detailed in the chapter are summarised in Section 2.8.

2.2 *Bedouin Community Models*

- ***What is the importance of Bedouin Community Models in the Omani Context?***

Bedouin is sometimes spelled as Beduin, Badawi, Badw or Badu. The Bedouin are the groups of Arabic speaking people who usually live in the deserts of North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017). In the Omani context, the Bedouin tribes are traditionally a community living in the interior of Oman. Omani society and culture were divided into two areas; the interior of Oman and Muscat in addition to the coast. Riphenburg (1998) divided the concept of Omani identity into different types. The first was a traditional (interior) community that was tribal (Bedouin). The second was a modern community that was engaged in trade within Muscat and the coastal areas.

According to Peterson (2004), the majority of ethnic groups in Oman are Arab tribes who came to Oman from Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. However, there are non-Arab ethnic groups settled across Oman. These groups include

the Baluchis, Zadjalis, Hindus, Lawatiyya and Swahilis. Even so, it is believed that the Bedouin in Oman are mainly comprised of Arab tribes.

There is a common psychology and moral stance which is characteristically Badu, although the diversity of the characteristics and values can cause confusion (Webster, 1991). Webster observed that, unlike the Arab tribes who maintained their pastoral nomadic culture, the Bedouin have achieved social success in terms of both modernisation and development. Al-Zadjali (2009) and Al-Mamari (2012) both comment on the Omani Bedouin's willingness to employ traditional manufacturing techniques with more contemporary design, once they have been persuaded that these designs are more in demand. They therefore accept social change, but there are certain codes of behaviour, beliefs, and values that are economic/productive and social/symbolic. For instance, the majority of the Bedouin retained traditional Bedouin culture, whereas others abandoned the tribal and nomadic lifestyle. These values shape their identity as Bedouin in contrast with *Hadher* (settled). Bedouin women are identified through their social rituals, including borrowing and visiting amongst and between households. Furthermore, Bedouin values are evident in the formal and highly ritualised context of greater social gatherings (Webster, 1991). Pastoralism is the basic characteristic of Bedouin, concerning their economic, social, and cultural way of life. The Bedouin identity would be lost if pastoralism disappeared (Webster, 1991). In recent years, settled Bedouin still look after their animals by themselves or employ herdsmen, normally from India or Punjab. My interest in Bedouin animals developed while I was collecting data (see section 4.6.1.12).

The nomadic Arabs migrate into the desert during the rainy winter season. There are desert Bedouins, as in the specific case of Oman, who migrate to the coastal areas to gain profit from the grazing in those areas. Furthermore, some Bedouin fishermen take their livestock into the interior regions when fishing is impossible during the monsoon season (Morris and Shelton, 1997). Both of these groups are known as Nomadic Bedouins. Nomadic Bedouins' life style will probably continue to exist for many years in Oman but there is also a speedy change to modernity and new lifestyles (O'Toole, 2017).

The social status of Omani Bedouins has changed, as most of them have ceased to be nomadic and have taken up permanent residences, but they are

still known to be Bedouin even if they are settled. They have settled because national borders slowly limited the free nomad mobility (Scholz, 1980). The Omani government encourages the nomadic Bedouin to settle in order to modernise the country (Cordes, 1980) and it provides the necessary services for settlement (Al-Araimi, 2003).

The diversity of Omani Bedouin is found in their cultural materials/artefacts. For instance, there were two types of headdress that were worn by Bedouin community; *shaabook* and *nis'ah*. One of the interviewees commented that Bedouins wore *Shaabook*, but not *nis'ah*. On questioning it was revealed that one of her parents was *badu* (Bedouin); while the other was *Hadher* (Settled). She was confused between both the entities because of her background, as her parents were from different backgrounds. It shows that an assimilation process has taken place in the context of demography and Oman's social structure.

The gradual change in the structure of Bedouin tribes in Oman is due to the government policy, which was driven by indirect colonial power (Zahlan, 2016). Scholz (1980) analysed several aspects to explain the consequences. Firstly, national borders limited unrestricted nomad mobility, causing some groups to gradually stay and become settled within the community. Secondly, the government gradually reduced the role and position of tribal chiefs within the local communities. The third factor considered was the camel's diminishing role as the main form of transportation across the Oman desert. The fourth aspect analysed was the expansion of arable lands, which caused a reduction in nomad grazing area. The arable lands are very complex. A systemic analysis and geo-referencing of various lands is required, and this should include the needs of labourers, soil fertility, land degradation and local redistribution. Even so, some grazing of crops has been continued on cultivated land.

2.3 *Contemporary Creative Culture in Oman*

- ***How is craft positioned in contemporary Oman?***

The current discussions on heritage in Oman were started by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, ruler of the Sultanate of Oman, through his words and actions. Examples of the royal speeches of His Majesty regarding the importance of heritage in shaping Omani identity include (Figure 2-1);

1978

"We should be proud of our Omani heritage and the spirit which strengthened our determination and enabled us to achieve victory through long years of struggle" (Qaboos, Ministry of Information, 2015, p 91).

1980

"Even as we work and plan for this material and social development of our country, we must bear in mind that our strength does not lie in material prosperity alone. Our strength lies in the great traditions of our glorious Omani culture, and the teachings and laws of our Holy Religion. We must never let an obsession with material things and alien thoughts blind us to this fact. We must cherish and preserve this beautiful land that God has given us and protect it from wanton destruction. This we are determined to do, but it is a task that is the responsibility of every one of us. We must equally foster and safeguard our traditional industries so that our cultural heritage is handed on intact to generations to come. These, then, are to be the broad plans and principles that are to provide the impulse for our future work. If we follow them faithfully, if we strive in every way to be worthy of the blessings that God has given us, our continued progress will be assured and our strength be consolidated and increased" (Qaboos, Ministry of Information, 2015, p 109-110).

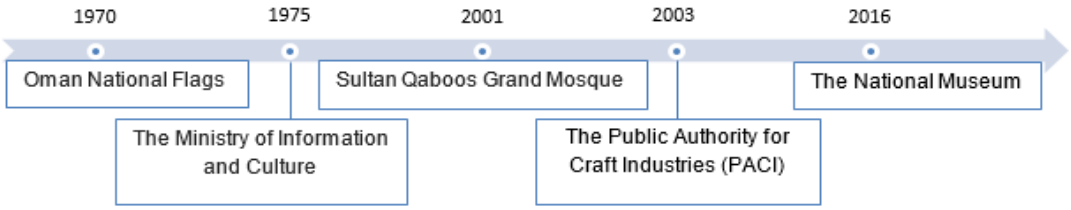

Figure 2-1 Actions by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos reinforced his words through several actions. Firstly, he introduced a new national flag, which has a traditional Omani influence (a dagger and two swords) in 1970 (Figure 2-2). In 1975, the Ministry of Information and Culture was the first government department to be formally related to heritage with a focus on Oman's intangible heritage. In 2002, the name of the Ministry of Information and Culture changed to the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. His Majesty then established another organisation to deal

with tangible heritage, named as the Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) in 2003. The official purpose of this organization is to preserve traditional handicrafts by building several workshops for different types of crafts. So far as the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is concerned, in His Majesty's speech in 2001 he stated that;

"It was on this basis that we decided to make this blessed Mosque a centre of culture and thought that, with God's good grace and assistance, would contribute to the revival of the Islamic heritage – God willing – and highlight the civilized values of the Muslim nation while modernizing its approach to dealing with Islamic affairs and issues" (Qaboos, Ministry of Information, 2015, p 433).

The decoration incorporated in the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque (SQGM), which was completed in 2001, reflects symbolic motifs regularly used in tribal crafts in Oman and the Arabian Peninsula (Figure 2-3). The themes of some of the mosque niches are inspired by Omani traditional silver jewellery as shown in Figures 2-4, 2-5, 2-6 and 2-7. It is interesting to note that one of the niche designs is the *shahid* ring (see Figure 2-5) which is embedded in Islamic tradition (see section 4.3.2.1). The design motifs in the niches of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque are labelled, in both Arabic and English, to explain the importance of design to the Omani identity, and to raise the awareness of both Omani citizens and tourists. The designs in the mosque and the Omani flag are not, however, exhaustive, and my research will show how other, lesser known, elements have been preserved in traditional jewellery.

The National Museum of Oman was established by royal decree in 2013 and it opened in 2016. It was another example of the determination of His Majesty to preserve the heritage of Oman. A future project announced by His Majesty is to establish the Al Ajyal College for traditional craft industries in Bahla (Times of Oman, 2014). But, to date, this institution is still in the planning stage.

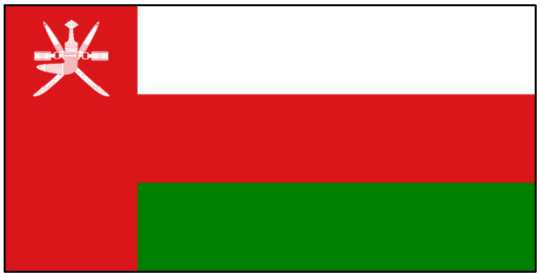

Figure 2-2 Flag of Oman with the dagger and two swords emblem

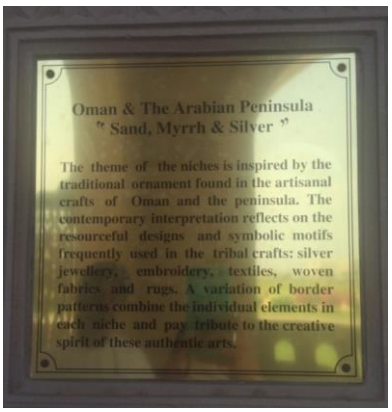

Figure 2-3 Information provided at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Muscat, Oman, 2016)

Figure 2-4 Mosque niche (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Muscat, Oman, 2016)

Figure 2-5 Niche inspired by *shahid* ring (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Muscat, Oman, 2016)

Figure 2-6 Niche inspired by earrings (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Muscat, Oman, 2016)

Figure 2-7 Niche inspired by necklaces (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Muscat, Oman, 2016)

Unfortunately, the ceramic design illustrated in Figures 2-4 to 2-7 above are all imported work. Oman has some traditional potteries in the town of *Bahla*, and this work is marketed by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, but there are a limited number of designs and much of the work could be characterised as cheap souvenirs. Traditional rug making, using goat hair, continues on the *Jabel Akhdar*, but again this is very much aimed at the tourist market.

In *Sur,* craftsmen still produce beautifully crafted miniature wooden ships, but these are exceptionally expensive and are usually produced to order by Omani government institutions. There is a particularly fine example in the vestibule of the Faculty Club at the Sultan Qaboos University.

2.3.1 The creative Art culture in Oman

- ***How is Omani culture reflected in contemporary Omani art and craft?***

Oman has a fairly low profile on the global arts scene. However, there are two Omani galleries at the forefront of recent change; the Gallery of The Omani

Society of Fine Arts and Bait Muzna. The Gallery of The Omani Society of Fine Arts has supported contemporary artists by providing them with studio space and a community in which they can learn, develop, and challenge each other. These artists have the opportunity to display and sell their works at the main contemporary art museum, Bait Muzna. There are also a few smaller galleries apart from the above-mentioned galleries, the most important of which is Bait Al Zubair Museum (Kluijver, 2013). Recently, Bait Muzna was closed. However, there are still galleries which exhibit modern art such Bait Al Baranda which opened in 2006, Ghalya's Museum of Modern Art (2011), the Stal gallery (2013) and the National Museum which opened in 2016.

The above-mentioned galleries have all specialised in paintings. Works from other artistic fields are not currently prominent in the Omani art scene, although there is a great potential for change. Al-Yahyai (2017) analysed some of the Omani painters who attempt to use their Omani heritage to symbolise Omani identity. An important example of that is the artist Anwar Sonia, who is one of the leading fine art movement figures in Oman. He has used symbols such as the fort, castle, particular landscapes, and Omani folklore in his art. Al-Yahyai (2017) found that some painters expressed their understanding of the concept of identity through their work, while other artists copied and repeated the same symbols. For instance, Naima Al-Maimani is a well-known Omani artist who uses traditional jewellery symbols in her art work. One of her paintings was of a woman wearing a long gold earring see Figure 2-8. Al-Maimani's work shows how a female artist can take her place in contemporary Omani art, and that she can use a woman as her subject (Al-Ajmi, 2017). Also, Al-Maimani is a traditional Omani jewellery designer. She has been exhibiting her jewellery and painting since 1996. She considers the size of her jewellery design to be suitable for the younger generation (Figure 2-9).

Figure 2-8 Naima Al-Maimani The One with the Golden Earing (Image from Al-Ajmi, 2017) permission from Al Maimani

Figure 2-9 *Hanhun* designed by Al Maimani (image from Deskgram, 2018) permission from Al Maimani

There are two PhD researchers (Al-zadjali, 2009; and Al-mamari, 2012) who have addressed social, culture and tradition art in Oman. Al-zidjali studied the history of Bedouin rugs in order to revive this original Omani handicraft. Al-mamari explored the challenges facing craft and pottery enterprises. Then, he developed a framework for Omani craft enterprises, so that they could run more successfully. The important point to note here is that jewellery is not usually covered in Omani art forms.

2.3.2 Jewellery designers

- ***What is the current state of contemporary jewellery design and production in Oman?***

The book 'Silver the Omani Experience' by Al Yaqoubi (2014) is a useful starting point in the field of Omani jewellery. Al Yaqoubi's book includes chapters focusing on innovation, Omani characteristics and identity (see section 2.4.3), jewellery design, and teaching experiences. The publication is useful as little research has been done to explore contemporary Omani jewellery. However, there is much room for further research. Al Yaqoubi's research is largely based on secondary sources, rather than on primary research. The jewellery that she produced shows some reinterpretation of traditional sources,

but is mainly focused on repeating traditional styles. She researched the material found in traditional Omani jewellery such as “corals, shells, amber, mercury and palm extracts like “leaves, fibre, and nuclei”, animal horns, animal claws, fox teeth, animal jaws, animal bones, wool, natural skin, cotton, wood, agate, glass beads, frankincense, beads and silver” (Oman Observer, 2013). Her work is synthesised between these different materials see (Figure 2-10). In her current work, posted on Instagram, she presents a new twist on Omani traditional jewellery by combining handcrafted silver with mass produced glass beads see (Figure 2-11)

Figure 2-10 Bracelet designed by Al Yaqoubi (image from Al Yaqoubi, 2014) permission from Al Yaqoubi

Figure 2-11 *Hanhun* designed by Al Yaqoubi (image from Al Yaqoubi, 2018) permission from Al Yaqoubi

Changes in lifestyle and urbanisation processes have led to the creation of an increasingly large increasingly middle class that is distanced from the activities of traditional craft. The reflection of that phenomenon negatively impacts women in the jewellery craft, who have to accept low income. According to the most recent statistics published by the Public Authority for Craft Industries

(PACI), women dominate in silversmith crafts (Al-mamari, 2012). One of the PACI goals is to maintain the form of traditional Omani jewellery. Although it is important to support the continued production and sale of traditional forms of Omani jewellery, I believe it is also possible to develop a market for new forms of contemporary Omani jewellery that refers to past traditions. Offering both traditional and contemporary forms of Omani jewellery could help to broaden and deepen the market for all Omani jewellery, supporting more craft production in Oman.

Three examples of well-known Omani commercial jewellery designers are Shadya Al Ismailiya, Muna Al Khuseibi, and Nadia Al Shamsi. All three of these women have produced jewellery which has been created with a strong understanding of the market context. Al Ismailiya is a fine jewellery designer and her source of inspiration is Omani heritage. Her brand name is Deema, which started in 2008. Recently, she expanded her brand towards the manufacturing of luxury goods beside jewellery (Elsayed, 2016). Al Khuseibi is a jewellery designer inspired by traditional Omani jewellery. She established her brand under the name of Kidani. Her second collection, exhibited in Bait Al-Zubair, was inspired by the eye make-up tool (Figure 1-1). Al Shamsi is a manufacturing jewellery designer inspired by her cultural heritage and the traditional jewellery in Oman. Her brand name is Mazayen, which means beautiful woman. She received her diploma degree from the London Jewellery School in 2014 (Ameerudheen, 2015). I selected one example of traditional Omani jewellery which, is a *hanhun* necklace (see Figure 2-27) to illustrate how the Omani jewellery designers can use it in their design. Al-Maimani (Figure 2-9), Al Yaqoubi (Figure 2-11), Al Ismailiya (Figure 2-12), Al Khuseibi (Figure 2-13) and Al Shamsi (Figure 2-14) have all used the centre part of the *hanhun* necklace as part of their design. Overall, their designs are almost the same. There is nothing wrong with making only slight changes to the traditional forms of Omani jewellery, but the final product remains derivative. The designers experiment with traditional shapes, patterns and use recognisable symbols and motifs with limited variations to the traditional designs.

Figure 2-12 *Hanhun* designed by Al Ismailiya (image from Deama, 2017) permission from Al Ismailiya

Figure 2-13 *Hanhun* designed by Al Khuseibi (image from Muscat Daily staff writer, 2015) permission from Al Khuseibi

Figure 2-14 *Hanhun* designed by Al Shamsi (image from Mazayen, 2014) permission from Al Shamsi

Continuity is important for characterising a living heritage. This means that the purpose of such a heritage is not to freeze it, but to allow it practical application in contemporary life. At present, in Oman, there are women designers who are interested in designing jewellery. These designers create fine commercial jewellery, but they have focused on copying the traditional jewellery. My own jewellery design, however, is influenced by experiences of studying in the UK and my observation of international contemporary jewellery culture. There are several reasons for the lack of originality in jewellery designs in Oman. These which include;

- Contemporary jewellery design in the Sultanate is new and has only emerged, following the establishment of contemporary art galleries. The numbers of jewellery designers in the field are limited, and new work is characterised by a lack of creative innovation. There is a great similarity and considerable overlapping in the designs, albeit within the frame of traditional Omani jewellery.
- Omani jewellery designers often do not have a design education background. This limits the design of new work to a more commercial focus. The designs remain confined to a limited angle, with little or no difference between each design. A contributing factor to this issue is that there are no jewellery departments in the colleges and universities in Oman.
- To great extent Omani society's norms do not encourage innovation. Deviation is frowned upon. For example, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has always issued strict laws that penalise any interference with Omani identity in clothing. These laws also receive support and encouragement from the local community, as any change in Omani dress affects Omani identity. The clothing of Omani women, both contemporary and traditional, has been able to avoid this prohibition because it is limited to special occasions such as weddings and the Eids. Women's daily dress is disguised in public because they wear an *abaya* on top of everything else. For this reason, in Oman, jewellery is generally displayed in private, or at semi-private family occasions like weddings and Eid celebrations. Omani women are typically decorated from head to toe on these special occasions; they wear intricate headdresses, front pendants, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, finger rings, anklets and toe rings (Mongiatti, et all, 2011). At these events, women may wear either expensive commercial jewellery or cheap costume jewellery depending on their social class and budget. In South of Oman much prestige is gained from the wearing solid gold ornaments, but in the North of Oman, jewellery is usually selected to complement the women's dresses.

2.3.3 The Nizwa trading centre for silversmithing

- ***How has the market for Omani silver jewellery changed in recent times?***

The most important industrial and trading centre for silversmithing has always been the city of Nizwa, where the craft continues till today. However, the consumer market for Omani jewellery has changed in recent decades and since the late 1970s buyers have been purchasing gold rather than traditional silver jewellery. I observed this phenomenon at the beginning of my research. I visited Nizwa souq (market) and I found that only two silversmith shops were left. Al-Ismaili is one of them and he complained about the recent situation where 50 shops have closed in Nizwa because their owners died and silver is not an interest nowadays. This change occurred due to the increased value of silver on the world market, which resulted in many high-quality examples of historic Omani jewellery being melted down to fund gold purchases. Also, the importation and accessibility of new styles of jewellery from Indian gold manufacturers has impacted on the market for traditional jewellery in Oman (Hawley, 2000; Morris and Shelton, 1997). Arnold (2016) indicated that this can be regarded as representative of the numerous cultures that have historically assigned a high value to jewellery. The meaning of jewellery changes from one culture to the next. Bernabei (2011) illustrates two example of late sixteenth century German lead jewellery which were obviously intended to be no more than the settings for more valuable gemstones. By contrast, until approximately 1970, Omani women treated jewellery at least in part, as “a wearable savings account” (Murray, 2018).

Mongiatti, et all (2011) say that jewellery represents financial protection and the personal assets of an Omani woman. This is not an exaggeration. Even today, a bride expects to receive jewellery as part of her wedding settlement, or an appropriate sum of money with which she can buy jewellery of her own choice. Such jewellery is her own property. It remains hers in the event of divorce or widowhood, and traditionally, the massive, heavy silver jewellery of bedouin women was displayed as a visible sign of wealth.

An unfortunate downside of this emphasis on the monetary value of silver jewellery, resulted in the recycling of the metal. Historical data is vague on this point, but it would appear that throughout the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century, silversmiths were in the habit of melting down “pre-owned” silver jewellery and silver coins to produce new artifacts. One reason for this was the belief that it was possibly unlucky to wear jewellery that had

belonged to a deceased woman, but another was the high silver content of the Maria Theresa thaler. This was a coin, originally minted in Austria in 1741, which came to serve as international currency until well into the twentieth century, particularly in the Arab Gulf. Most of these coins post-date the death of the Austrian Empress, but they are still dated 1780, and have silver content of 83% weigh (Mongiatti, et.al, 2011).

The last fifty years in Oman has seen a rapid decline in the demand for Omani silver jewellery, as it is increasingly being replaced by gold. Traditional Omani jewellery is no longer being made, and silversmithing techniques may soon be forgotten as they are no longer passed down from father to son. Many silversmiths in Oman have also adapted to the demands of “souvenir” jewellery, with the result that truly traditional Omani jewellery is increasingly housed in private collections.

2.3.4 Jewellery preferred by the women in Oman

- ***What type of jewellery is preferred by Omani women?***

A variety of global imported designs has been welcomed by the new generation. They are more adventurous in trying new designs and following the new fashion trends. Women living in the city prefer lighter weight jewellery in reduced quantity; while the spread of jewellery imported from Western countries, such as Switzerland, Italy and Spain is characterised by high quality and the use of precious stones (Figure 2-15). Figure 2-15 shows notable examples of jewellery from branded gold shops in Oman such as Damas, Malabar, Laialy, Juyalukkas, Pure gold and DVG. However, some women prefer to buy traditional designs in gold (copying traditional Omani silver) and a common place to buy these is Mutrah souq (Figure 2-16). Another example is women who buy both styles, eastern and western, and they wear them according to the occasion. Gold jewellery remains the most popular in settled Bedouin areas; while silver and gold are popular in other regions.

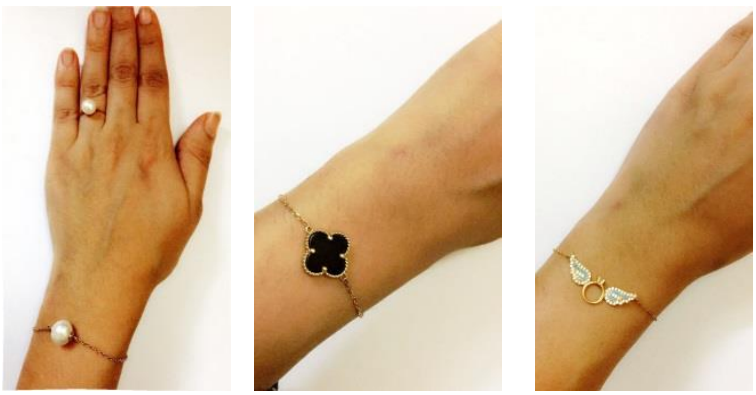

Figure 2-15 Lighter weight jewellery (photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Muscat, Oman, 2015) permission from Al Rashdi

Figure 2-16 Traditional designs in gold (copying traditional Omani silver) (photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Muscat, Oman, 2015) permission from Al Rashdi

2.4 *The Background of Omani Traditional Jewellery*

- ***What is the background of Omani traditional jewellery?***

The craft of the silversmith is the most beautiful and varied among all the traditional arts of Oman (Hawley, 2000). It is certainly the best known outside the country. Oman has been renowned for the quality of its silver work for centuries. Much of the silver jewellery found in other Gulf Countries originated in Oman (Hawley, 2000). Historic Omani silver jewellery is difficult to trace because there are no hallmark type stamps or signatures on the pieces. The absence of such hallmarks has affected the local Omani silver industry and the sustainability of this traditional craft has become uncertain. Additionally, the skills and knowledge relating to the jewellery industry will diminish as the elder craftsmen retire or die. Younger people are rarely trained due to the reduced demand for these products and because cheaper imports of silver jewellery are available from other countries (Morris and Shelton, 1997). This has been recognised by the Public Authority for Craft Industries in Oman who have made efforts to support the silversmithing industry through a network of workshops.

However, their focus is on the reproduction or slight modification of traditional pieces rather than on innovative design.

The majority of authors who have written about Omani jewellery have focused on specific types of jewellery (Rajab, 1997). Different types of Omani jewellery have been classified according to three main areas of Omani community: the north, the interior, and the south regions. Generally, the traditional jewellery in Northern Oman was heavier and larger, while jewellery in the South tended to be more delicate. There are specific protocols when buying jewellery, and these differ between regions. In the south region of Oman, there are a few women silversmiths who go to the client's house to take measurements. They also discuss the finished design directly with the client or a man from the client's family takes the client's measurement and gives it to the silversmith. However, there is no social stigma in a woman herself going to the silversmith's shop to have her own measurements taken in Northern Oman. In the North there are both Bedouin and *Hadher*; each group has their own particular type of jewellery but the common types such as *hanhun* necklaces and *shahid* rings can be found in both groups

Hawley mentioned that the origin of the silver used in much of the traditional Omani jewellery came from Maria Theresa Dollars (MTD) (The Anglo-Omani Society, 2015). This is supported by most of the previous studies such as Richardson and Dorr (2003). The term 'traditional Omani jewellery' can be traced back to the period of using MTD in Oman (Figure 2-17). The Arabian Peninsula used MTD as a trading currency from the eighteenth century. This currency was officially cancelled in Oman in 1972 and after 1972 silver jewellery started to be replaced by imported gold jewellery (Al-Kindi, 2017). Throughout this thesis, the term 'traditional Omani silver jewellery' refers to the period when Maria Theresa Dollars were used as currency in Oman. Interestingly, the heavy Bedouin jewellery was made from coins because of the purity of the silver in MTD. Also, there is a popular type of traditional Omani necklace called *Marriyah* (Figure 2-18). A possible explanation of *Marriyah* is that it refers to the first name of the currency, Maria Theresa Dollars.

Figure 2-17 Maria Theresa Dollars (3.5×3.5×.4 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal AL-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 2-18 *Marriyah* necklace (14×4×2 CM, Silver, cotton thread & glass beads. Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

2.4.1 Types of Omani Traditional Jewellery

- ***What are the types of Omani traditional jewellery?***

This section provides a brief overview of the types of jewellery found in the Bedouin and *Hadher* Omani communities in the A'Sharqiyah region. The rings are found in both the groups. The following types of jewellery give one example from Bedouin and another from *Hadher* to show the difference.

2.4.1.1 Rings

The Omani ring in general is called "*Khatim*", meaning the stamp. Rings are usually designed to include five pairs with a different design to be worn on each finger (Figure 2-19). The style of rings worn on fingers two, five, and the thumb are constant in Oman. However, rings worn on fingers three and four vary in their shapes and styles. A woman herself could choose the design details instead of adhering to the normal style and shape for each finger. It was a very rare for an unmarried girl to wear finger rings unless her mother had two sets. In that case a girl could be allowed to wear one set for a particular celebration (Forster,1998, Morris and Shelton, 1997).

Figure 2-19 Five pairs of Omani rings (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah,Oman, 2015)

The ring, which is worn on the index finger, is known as *shahid*, which means witness (Figure 2-20) and is illustrated in photo book page numbers 14, 52, 53, 84, 94 and 95. It concerns a core Islamic declaration. Muslims usually point this finger upwards while saying the "*shahadah*". "*Shahadah*" is the creedal statement which states that there is only one God and Muhammad is his Prophet. This ring has two shapes, either a teardrop or a circle surmounted by a lozenge-shape decorated with leaf, floral patterns, or geometrical patterns. This ring also reminds the wearer of her duty to pray five times during a day. The faith of the Muslim is reaffirmed by repeating the refrain; 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the messenger of God' (La ilaha illa Allah, Mohammed Rasool Allah) (Rajab, 1997). I used the concept of *shahid* ring in my preliminary practice based on knowledge from the previous research (P. 98).

Figure 2-20 *Shahid* ring worn on the index finger (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

2.4.1.2 Hadher Anklets and Bedouin Bracelets

Anklets were worn by married *Hadher* women in the North of Oman. They were considered as an important way of demonstrating wealth. They are large and finely worked with flower and leaf designs, including a geometric pattern (Figure

2-21). Some sources suggest that anklets were originally created in Zanzibar, which was an Omani colony from the late 1690s until 1856. Here the ships from Oman sailed to bring much cross-fertilisation of styles (Morris and Shelton, 1997). This was partially confirmed by an historical photograph of the princess Salmah bint Saeed, latterly Emily Rueute, who lived in Zanzibar. The photograph (Figure 2-22) shows she is wearing Nizwa anklets which the flat surfaces face outwards instead of inwards as usual. These conventional overwhelming anklets were worn by ladies from the northern and interior regions of Oman on uncommon events. They are brightened totally with perplexing chased plans including hatched lines, circles and flower, vegetal or geometric motifs (Mongiatti, et all., 2011). A certain amount of orientalist fantasy might be attributed to this studio portrait, but Rajab (1997) confirms that there was a well-established trading route between Oman, India and Zanzibar, which possibly means that some of the princess's silver anklets may have originated in India. On the other hand, the Bedouin in Oman do not typically wear anklets. They have a similar piece of jewellery instead which is worn by Bedouin women as bracelets (Figure 2-23). There are a number of similarities between *Hadher* anklets and Bedouin bracelets. Both are made with a hollow tube on the back and a wide rectangle on the front and are worn as pairs.

Although *Hadher* anklets and Bedouin bracelets belong to Eastern Oman, they are also strikingly different in many ways. For instance, the physical size of anklets is larger than the bracelets. Moreover, the anklets are opened half way, which has been described by Rajab (1997) and Forster (1998). The anklets are held together and secured with a large silver pin. The anklets are like a whole round hollow tube but the bracelets are more like a half tube from the back and curved wide panel in the front (Morris and Shelton, 1997). The anklets have geometric and arabesque patterns, but the bracelets only possess geometric patterns. They can also be distinguished by the metal they are made of. The bracelets are made of silver with gold embellishments. According to Morris and Shelton (1997), the Bedouin women took their jewellery to have gold-leaf and gold plate applied when gold became available in Oman. However, the majority of the anklets are made purely of silver.

Most studies only show the anklet without showing how it should be worn (Rajab, 1997; Forster,1998; Hawley, 2000 and Richardson and Dorr, 2003).

Morris and Shelton (1997) have taken a step further and provided photos showing the anklet worn by Omani women. However, the way it is presented in their book is not the correct way of wearing this anklet. The anklets are shown facing forwards, when in reality, the large flat surfaces would have faced inwards, towards each other. Any other arrangement would have made it difficult for women to walk. Surprisingly, this mispresentation is also found in the Omani National Museum (2017) and in an exhibition organized by the British Museum (2011), see 4.6.1.11. Based on the findings of this study I drew sketches showing the right way of wearing this anklet (see section 4.9.1).

Figure 2-21 Omani anklets (7×6.5×3 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 2-22 Salmah bint Saeed (image from Ruete, 1907) permission from the puplisher

Figure 2-23 Bedouin bracelets (9×10×3 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

2.4.1.3 Hadher and Bedouin Earrings

There are two types of Omani silver earrings. The first one is attached through a hole in the ear. These earrings can be made of silver or gold, and it is usual for even small babies to be given jewellery of this kind (Figure 2-24). According to Ruete (1907):

> *"If it be a girl, she has holes pricked in her ears on the seventh day (after birth) with needle and thread of red silk, generally six holes in each ear, to which heavy gold rings are attached for ever when she is two months old. I say "for ever" because females who do not wear earrings either mourn a deceased relation or they have no holes pierced"*

The second type of earrings was very heavy, and it could hardly be described as earrings, because it was worn over the ears. One reason for this was the weight. A complete set could weigh as much as 2.5 kg. This may seem excessive today, but given the harsh lifestyle prior to 1970, at that time it would not have been considered too much for daily wear (see section 4.6.1.6) and at that time, such jewellery would have literally been "a wearable savings account". There are different designs of *Hadher* and Bedouin earrings. One example of the *Hadher* earrings is apparently unique to the Northern area as it was a style of triangular earrings similar to the ends of *akam* (Figure 2-25). These were decorated with fragments of gold plated silver. Hanging from the base of these triangles were six rows made of three loops linked vertically and horizontally (Morris and Shelton, 1997). According to Forester (1998) each hoop ends in an elongated silver bead decorated with pointed bosses and the familiar mulberry design was made up of placed silver balls. This design is again repeated in five

larger beads, which hang one from each hoop. The hoop and pendant are held by a silver or thread head strap to keep the headscarf secure (The British Museum, 2017). One of my interviewees described this earring in more detail (see photo book page no. 37).

Previous studies of Omani earrings describe the silver part of earrings. However, the thread part in the earrings was woven by women. Women's threading work in Omani jewellery has never been investigated in previous studies. Therefore, this study explores this area in detail (see section 4.6.1.9).

Figure 2-24 Earrings attached in the hole in the ear (7×4×.4 CM, Silver, coral & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

The triangular earrings called dufuf were widely worn by Bedouin (Figure 2-26). According to Rajab (1997), this style was worn by Bedouin women in both Oman and the UAE. These had a vertical upright with a short arm at right angles to the upright, and a third piece joining the first two to make a triangle. These earrings were often made of plain silver wire, but on occasion they were more elaborate. They usually had little bead danglers added, the most common of which was a single round bead. The upright of these earrings consisted of a long-tapered cylinder surrounded by fine silver wire in a continuous coil. These heavy earrings were usually called *rukun* (Morris and Shelton, 1997). My interviewees have a different name for these earrings: *lakdani*. Therefore, it is suggested that different names exist for the same piece of jewellery because of various local dialects in Oman.

Figure 2-25 *Hadher* earrings (22×7×3 CM, Silve r& cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 2-26 Bedouin Earrings (21×17×2.5 CM, Silver & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

2.4.1.4 Necklaces

The Bedouin of central Oman were rarely able to buy a readymade necklace. Instead, women used to buy the individual components of a necklace, such as chains, beads and pendants, when they were able to afford them. The Bedouin women themselves made other necklaces according to their own taste and personal inclination. For instance, some of the individual components were old as they were passed down from mother to daughter. This can be clearly seen in the case of coins, some of which are of an extremely early date. Alternatively, many necklaces started by being short but grew longer as women were able to obtain of more pieces to add to them. During hard times, these necklaces could be broken up and the pieces could be sold (Morris and Shelton, 1997). This modular concept is not only found in necklaces. For example, from my fieldwork I found this concept in earrings (see section 4.6.1.9).

There are common necklaces worn by Bedouin and *Hadher*. One example is the *Somt* (or *Sumt*) and sometimes called *hanhun* (Figure 2-27). In the dialect of the women living in the Eastern side of Oman it is called *hanhun*. It is made up of a number of beads and Maria Theresa dollars threaded onto plaited rope with a central medallion. The smaller and less elaborate version is flanked by two

silver-capped red beads. The complexity of work on those medallions is amongst the finest to be found on any piece of Bedouin jewellery. The basic design is always the same consisting of a six-petal flower, where the centre and petals are often covered with gold leaf (Forster, 1998).

The circle is basically an Islamic symbol of unity and the most commonly used element in Omani design. The circular motifs and families of patterns are generated by the mathematical division of circles into smaller geometric components. Such roundels are featured and designed in plaster, copper, and silver work (Richardson and Dorr, 2003). Hybridity can be identified in *hanhun* necklaces, where coins such as Maria Theresa Dollars, Saudi Riyals and Indian Rupees were utilized to create necklaces (see sections 2.5.3 and 4.7.3.4).

Figure 2-27 *Hanhun* (Somt) necklace (70×8×2 CM, Silver, Maria Theresa Dollars on a necklace, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Another common example of necklace is the *digg* necklace, which possesses a complex shape associated with the Bedouin of central Oman (Figure 2-28). The *digg* consists of a bar that is made of different beads. One characteristic of the *digg* necklace is that it has some components made of gold. The gold-work in the *digg* is due to trading with East Africa. Another complex example is the *shibgat* necklace that is suspended over the head, then attached to the earring instead of being worn around the neck see Figure 2-29 (Al-Salimi et al., 2008).

Figure 2-28 The *digg* necklace(image from Morris and Shelton, 1997) permission from the puplisher

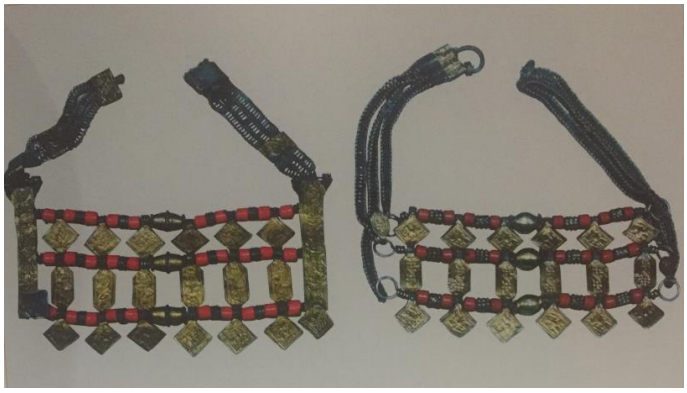

Figure 2-29 The *shibgat* necklace (image by Al-Salim et al., 2008) permission from the puplisher

According to Morris and Shelton (1997), the *manthura* necklace is the most valuable piece of silver worn by women of the Northern Interior (Figure 2-30). It comes from the Rustaq area, whose silversmiths are specialised in making it, although it was worn much more widely. It was never manufactured in Nizwa but it was worn there by the wealthier townswomen.

The tubular finial bead at each side, constructed from a silver tube tightly bound with fine wire had rosette-style granulation at the top and bottom. The cotton fibre that emerges from the wider base of the finial bead was in three groups of strands. The effect of linking three strands was that the necklace lay beautifully on the person who wore it.

The triple barrel shaped beads were interspersed with danglers along the bottom of the three rows. From each of these hung a further line of beads, consisting of a small cog-wheel loop. A single bead was made up of two small cog-wheel loops with a round silver bead in the middle. A plain ring and a bead made up of a cog-wheel loop were attached to a round silver bead that contained a large piece of mulberry granulation.

Manthura is the most distinctive of all Bedouin necklaces. It is an example of modularity in jewellery (see section 4.6.1.8). Also, it is considered as a representation of infinity and unity (see section 2.5.2). One of my interviewees (W11) who liked to collect traditional silver Omani jewellery wished she had this piece, but she did not find it in her area because most of these necklaces had been sold.

Figure 2-30 *Manthura* (image from Oman and Zanzibar virtual Museum, 2020) permission from the Oman and Zanzibar virtual Museum

The silver necklace with a large central gold bead is k

nown as a Choker necklace (Figure 2-31). My interviewee called this necklace *al-eltah*. The bead is made of a thin sheet of gold coated with resin that helps in maintaining its shape. The ovoid bead is decorated with a raised central band decorated in a zig-zag pattern. It is flanked by two smaller gilded beads with a similar raised pattern. The central bead is mostly referred to as a *lulu'a* (pearl). The golden bead is surrounded by shiny red resin beads and is also threaded through a straight silver rod ending in twisted loops. An inverted heart-shaped clasp is found at each end of the chains. The cord was used to fasten the choker around the neck (The British Museum, 2017).

Figure 2-31 Choker necklace (18×4×2.5CM, Silver, gold & coral, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

2.4.1.5 Hirz

The *hirz* is an amulet box that varies in size, design, style, and the way it is transformed into a necklace. *Hadher* generally wore *hirz* outside the clothing whereas Bedouin wore them underneath. The *hirz* can appear as the centrepiece, or as matching pair on either side, in Omani Bedouin necklaces. There are three types of necklace; *marriyah, hirz*, and *hatma* necklaces (Forester, 1998).

Hirz was considered as the most important piece of jewellery throughout the Northern region. It was worn to protect the wearer from the harm of evil spirits or jealous eyes (Morris and Shelton, 1997). One common example of *hirz* is the *taswira* necklace (Figure 2-32). This is unusual for Islamic countries as it provides a clear representation of a human figure, which varies in style and shape across different regions. Islam prohibits the depiction of living forms, which is why Islamic art prefers abstract images. The images on the *taswira* necklace have been described as fertility symbols by some people. Therefore, it is assumed that they were worn by women to increase the chances of conception and provide a smooth delivery during labour. Children wore them for protection from evil.

Additionally, there is another example of a human representation on the back of the *hanhun* necklace. This was a small figure representing a *jinn* (spirit) (Figure 2-33). This figure was depicted as being handcuffed at the ankles, causing nightmares for children. The *hanhun* was usually placed under a boy's pillow, around his neck, and sometimes wrapped in leather and tied above the elbow during sleep to provide protection against any harm. On the other hand, this figure was sometimes drawn on paper along with Quran verses. The paper was then inserted into a silver *hirz*. This amulet was then known as *hirz al kama*, which was worn by married women and young boys to protect them from bad dreams and mental illness (Morris and Shelton, 1997). During my fieldwork, I did not find the *taswira hirz.* However, belief in the power of silver as protection still exists among Bedouin women, but in different forms such as rings and *akam* (see section 4.6.1.3).

Figure 2-32 *Taswira* necklace (image from Morris and Shelton, 1997) permission from the puplisher

Figure 2-33 Female jinn necklace, showing a figure shackled at the ankles (Morris and Shelton, 1997) permission from the puplisher

2.4.1.6 Headdresses

The most popular headdresses in the Bedouin community are the *shabkah* which consists of the *shaabook* and the *nis'ah*. According to Forester (1998), both pieces are stitched onto leather by Bedouin women, who incorporate silver cylinders into the headdress and attach an ornate forehead piece to the centre front during the plaiting process (Figure 2-34). The Bedouin women get the silver components of the *shaabook* from the town silversmith. This makes these jewellery pieces rare examples of a single craft resulting from the combined work of Bedouin and settled people (Richardson and Dorr, 2003) is a two-volume book.

Figure 2-34 *Shaabook* (leather plaits attached to silver cylinders and an ornate forehead piece to the centre front). (33×27×1 CM, Silver, gold, cotton thread & leather, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Leather-braiding techniques have a close relationship with the techniques used in plaited-strip basketry. However, the leather strands are finer than those of

palm fibre. The leather-worker typically integrates more strands into a single plait than the basket-maker. For instance, the flat plaits on the *shaabook* consist of up to 15 strands (Figure 2-35). Plating patterns are variable but a simple herring-bone pattern is mostly used. Plaits are arranged in a grid and twisted together at each intersection to create the web-like *shaabook.*

Figure 2-35 *Shaabook* have up to 15 strands (33×27×1 CM, Silver, gold, cotton thread & leather, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

The extensive use of leather in this piece is due to the lifestyle of nomadic pastoralists; the hides of camel, sheep, and goat are a versatile resource. They are used for the crafting of exquisite personal articles along with the production of basic nomadic equipment, although many such articles are now made of plastic, and bought in towns and villages. Even so, my own growing interest in the leather articles that I found while conducting this research was such that I later incorporated leather in my own designs (see chapter 4).

During my initial investigations about the headdress, I found that leather, as a component of this jewellery, added a value to it. For example, leather absorbs the scents of the user, thus personalising the piece and adding the aesthetic quality of smell to insight and feel. Additionally, this piece of jewellery is usually hidden and not well known by people from outside this community (including me). The headdress is owned by a single person (woman), and so it provides an identification of that particular person. Usually, this piece cannot be exchanged between women because it is tailored for the wearer herself. It is worth mentioning here that whenever the leather part of headdress is damaged, it can be renewed with a new piece. It is also the only jewellery (leather part) that is entirely created by Bedouin women. Leather, made from goatskin or camel skin, was used for a number of purposes by the Bedouin, and it belonged firmly to domestic sphere of woman. Cradles for babies, belts, water buckets,

water skins were all manufactured using leather, and these artifacts were crafted by women. Leather was regarded as a readily available and comparatively cheap material, that held no intrinsic value.

More valuable silver jewellery, by contrast, was made by men, and the jewellery trade in Nizwa remains in the heads of male silversmiths.

Other jewellery is made by male silversmiths. It might be wrong to press this point, but in a patriarchal, conservative Islamic society such as the Bedouin experience in Oman, I found it fascinating that women should have used their headdress as expressions of their personal identity. This motivated me to explore this piece of jewellery to highlight its cultural importance and share it's beauty with the world. I believe, this thesis is the first study to acknowledge the agency of Omani women in the creation of jewellery. All previous studies of Omani jewellery have tacitly relegated women to the position of consumers (Rajab 1997, Forster 1998, Ruth 2000). They have been regarded simply as the customers of male silversmiths; people who bought artifacts that were created for their use. The headdresses, however, revealed that there was a hidden, unknown, creative side to Bedouin women's jewellery. Within the privacy of their own domestic worlds, they both designed and manufactured complex artifacts which were worn primarily for their own satisfaction. These were not ornaments for public display, but expressions of the women's own taste. Gaining this knowledge was important in making the decision to focus my research on women. It also directed my research away from an initial focus on silver and shifted it towards the craft of leatherwork.

These two pieces of jewellery are differentiated mainly by the way they are worn. Forster (1998) indicated that *shabkah* is fitted close to the head like a type of bonnet and secured by a pair of cotton strings in a bow under the chin. The *nis'ah* is passed under the hair and through the back loops to tie at the back of the neck (Figure 2-36). Then the *nis'ah* goes across the top of the shoulders and is secured by a length of black cotton cloth looped at the front. Along each side the front part of the collar is formed by six decorated cylindrical beads threaded onto leather thongs. Forster (1998) also added that these two pieces are sometimes worn together.

Figure 2-36 *Shabkah* and *nis'ah* (image from Forester, 1998) permission from the puplisher

I found through the interviews I undertook that the *nis'ah* is actually worn differently than explained by Foster. It is hard to follow the first origin of this type of work as conflicting answers were received from the women I interviewed. However, this type of headgear was worn only by the mountain tribes. Until the 1970s, the majority of the tribes inhabiting the mountainous areas of Oman were isolated due to the remoteness of their mountain settlements. The building of new roads in these mountainous areas and the increased popularity of vehicles have both changed the status quo. It has become possible to find some examples of this wonderful leatherwork in some of the foothill villages (Forester, 1998). Morris and Shelton (1997) recorded only one type of headdress, which is *shabkah* in A'Sharqiyah regions. Other authors (see Forster, 1998; Richardson and Dorr, 2003) mentioned two types *shabkah* and *nis'ah.* However, this study investigated four types of headdress: *shabkah* or *manisa*; *nis'ah; shaabook* and the smaller *nisfiy* or *adhaar.* These are very similar in terms of components and weaving techniques but they are mainly differentiated in the way they are worn and their size (see section 4.5.3).

To conclude, this study has investigated these headdresses in much greater depth, and has contributed to the gap in knowledge. Bedouin women's headdresses are made of two main materials: leather and silver. The leather parts are made by Bedouin women and the silver components are made by men. Leather work is one of the traditional Omani crafts. Bedouin Omani women have used leather in various handicraft industries, which includes headdress jewellery. Thus, the headdress exemplifies the importance of leather crafts in the silver jewellery work, and the role played by women in the handcrafting of traditional Omani jewellery. Although this study was initially about exploring traditional Omani silver jewellery (see section 4.3.1) the

investigations revealed the importance of leather as a material in the study focus shifting towards leatherwork. The following investigations showed that women were the ones who prepared and created the leather parts of the headdress. Therefore, the study focus was expanded to include the role that women play in making Omani traditional jewellery. However, it has been found that the effect women have goes far beyond the technical handicraft but also influences the whole identity of the jewellery (e.g. smell, sound and narratives).

It is interesting to note that the Dhofari community in south Oman have a similar headdress to the *shabkah*. Headdresses and hair ornaments are widely worn, particularly on special occasions, by married women in Dhofar. One example of a headdress is the *kharka* which is worn on the crown of the head (Figure 2-37). It is constructed using a piece of cloth sewn on the sides and tops of the ridges of the crown, which are heavily encrusted with silver shapes and coins (Morris and Shelton, 1997).

Figure 2-37 *Kharka* headdress (image from Hawley, 2000) permission from the puplisher

2.4.2 Techniques of Omani Traditional Jewellery

- ***What are the techniques that are associated with Omani traditional jewellery?***

The literature reviewed has focused on recording of traditional Omani jewellery techniques such as hammering, casting, hollow forming, fusing or soldering, embossing, chasing, engraving, filigree, granulation, niello, and gilding. The most recent study (Mongiatti, Suleman and Meeks, 2011) utilised the largest collection of Omani silver in Europe, which is housed in The British Museum. It was under the focus of a major exhibition in 2011 entitled 'Adornment and Identity: Jewellery and Costume from Oman'. The 240 items in this collection exemplify the high standard of craftsmanship that is at risk of becoming extinct.

It has been possible to characterise and understand the raw materials and manufacturing techniques by using new technologies, such as X-radiography, X-ray fluorescence (XRF), Secondary electron (SE), backscattered electron (BSE), and scanning electron microscopy (SEM). These traditional techniques will be forgotten unless they are passed on to the next generation.

However, all the previously mentioned surveys of Omani jewellery suffer from some limitations. For example, the contribution of Bedouin women to Omani jewellery such as leather and thread weaving is not classified as a traditional technique. Nor was there any mention of techniques that could be described as "handicraft". For example, the use of leather, and of textiles was ignored. The emphasis lay entirely on techniques associated with metalwork. My practice has focused on leatherworking and the relevance of leatherworking to traditional Omani jewellery making as discussed in chapter 4.

2.4.3 Characteristics of Omani Traditional Jewellery

- ***What are the characteristics of Omani traditional jewellery?***

The National Museum in Oman houses a sample collection of various aspects of Omani craft in Oman and these have been reported by Richardson and Dorr (2003). The characteristics of Omani craft include the widespread use of geometric forms, the arabesque, and Arabic calligraphy using the name of the Prophet Mohammed and verses with special status from the Holy Quran. One of the limitations of Richardson and Dorr's description is that it does not explain the jewellery motifs but concentrates on the craft in general. According to AL Yaqoubi (2014), traditional Omani jewellery has been divided into two characteristics. The first area is concerned with the decorations engraved on the surfaces of the pieces of jewellery (regular repetition and distribution between the elements, taking into consideration proportionality). The second point is the design of the jewellery, which dealt with the Bedouin jewellery, characterised by simplicity. In addition to these elements Bedouin jewellery utilises yarn thread with beads of silver and coral and the design of these ornaments was based on shapes and geometric line.

It is clear that the characteristics discussed above are based on the structure and shape of the jewellery. Although Al Yaqoubi (2014) dealt with features of the design of the jewellery, she concentrated on the outer shape. She

suggested that Bedouin jewellery is characterised by its simplicity, and that it was distinguished by the woven thread that connects the components of silver and coral. I disagree with her at this point because Bedouin jewellery is very complex. An example here comes from one of the women I interviewed. She and her sister inherited a necklace from their mother. The necklace was disassembled, taking the silver beads from the thread. The silver components were weighed for a fair division between them. Many years later she wanted to reassemble the necklace. Unfortunately, no one was able to recreate it, because the original design had been so complex.

The above anecdote describes one of the design characteristics of Omani jewellery. The main limitation in previous studies is that the jewellery is analysed only in terms of its physical form. There are several other factors that shape the characteristics of jewellery, but these are not examined. These characteristics do not consider the relationship between the jewellery and the wearer. This research looks into the value which has accrued between the women's life over time and with their own jewellery. Moreover, Bedouin women feel their jewellery is more than themselves. It is meaningful for their family, community and country (see section 4.5.3). Thus, Bedouin women played an important role in shaping the characteristics and identity of Omani jewellery (see section 4.6). In addition, there are three key factors that could shape these characteristics which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 *Factors that influenced the characteristics of the Omani Jewellery*

The three key factors that can shape the characteristics of Omani jewellery are (a) identity (b) religion and (c) hybridity. These characteristics will now be discussed in greater detail.

2.5.1 Identity

- ***How is identity likely to affect characteristics of Omani jewellery?***

According to the Oxford dictionary, identity is defined as the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. In the context of this project, identity is rooted in national identity which, in turn, is a sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture and language. It is further defined

by both Tajfel and Turner (1986) and Ashmore et al. (2001) as a sense of belonging to one state or to one nation. National identity refers to a subjective feeling about a nation that is shared by a group of people, irrespective of the status of legal citizenship.

Edensor (2002) stated that national identity is formed by daily elements, which refer to the mundane details of social interaction, habits, routines, and practical knowledge. In general, objects are part of the everyday world that provides symbolic images and effective experiences (Edensor, 2002).

The perception of national identity in Oman is a central aspect of this work. The Omani national identity is historically based on a territorial and 'state' concept that once spread into eastern Africa. At different times, Oman possessed authority over some of the key tribes that form today's United Arab Emirates (UAE). Partrick (2009) stated that contemporary Omani national identity means something quite different from that sense of belonging which was felt in the first half of the nineteenth century. He explained that even minorities with Omani nationality, such as the Baluch, had a sense of "dual belonging". On the other hand, Elliot's argument suggested that the geographical construction of Oman has instigated a variety of ethnic groups. Elliot asserted that this diversity influenced the identity of people in society including their language, appearance, dress, morals, customs, beliefs, and lifestyle (Elliott, 2011). Alternatively, Cole (2003) suggests that the Bedouin cultural heritage is a component of national identity.

However, in today's diverse contemporary society, the majority of the Omani people dress with the *khanjar* as part of the national dress, which reflects a shared Omani national identity. The khanjar is a traditional dagger worn by Omani men. It is worn only on formal and ceremonial occasions. The wearing of national dress is most evident in Oman (Peterson, 2004), where different ethnic groups are made clear and the Omani identity of the majority of people is apparent.

Mazumbar (2014) pointed out that jewellery is close to identity emotionally, materially, economically, and politically. It can be read in two opposing semiotic modes. It can strengthen the drift towards identity; or it can break up the shell of existing identities to make place for new identities. Mazumbar (2014) gave an

example of the existence of jewellery in pre-modern societies and revealed that it had the powerful function of strengthening identity through allegiance and inclusion. It is embodied in badges, buttons, rosaries, crosses, crowns, diadems, or other symbolically loaded elements that are used to adorn divine or human archetypes like gods, goddesses and heroes. Moreover, jewellery can also strengthen identity by using materials, noble metals or precious stones, which are enlisted in a traditional catalogue of values.

Jewellery is not only appreciated by Arab women for its design and appearance, but it holds importance due to its economic value. In fact, at marriage, women sometimes acquire their first jewellery collection. That stands as an outward sign of their new marital status. It is important here to mention that jewellery is paid to the father of the bride by the groom as part of the bridal price (e.g. dowry), but this jewellery is entirely the bride's own property. It is often added to her previous collection of jewellery, if she has any, or alternatively she can trade part of it for cash whenever she wants and the money she earns is her own. The grooms purchase their brides' jewellery from itinerant craftsmen or near Bedouin camps, where traders travel with their wares.

However, traditional Omani jewellery has been influenced by many other cultures and has become very rich in design complexity and it is distinctive due to the long history of seafaring and trade in Oman. The Sultanate traded with partners like India, China, Iran and Zanzibar, which are the main sources of influence in Omani jewellery (Figure 2-38). Together this jewellery was traded with other partners, along with the jewellery that was traded locally, to shape the Omani national identity.

Figure 2-38 Anklets of Zanzibari origin (8×7×3 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Arnold (2016) stated that jewellery needs to be studied in the context of its culture to understand the link between identity and jewellery. According to Hall (1997), representation connects meaning and language to culture. Culture is a

broad notion, which involves shared experiences in the context of specific culture, language, ideology, and particular concepts. It is observed as a product of the process of representation, which not only involves the presentation of cultural identity but also constructs the process of production. This suggests that the meaning of Omani national identity can be partially constructed by an understanding of the specific historical and cultural context of jewellery within Oman. This suggests that jewellery is a system that can help to explain Omani national identity.

2.5.2 Religion

- ***How is religion likely to affect the characteristics of Omani jewellery?***

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which Arab culture relies on Islam, which is considered to be the foundation stone that gave distinctive features to both Arabic culture and non-Arab Muslim societies (Badeau, 1983). Indeed, even non-Muslim Arab societies (Copts in Egypt, Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian Christians) adhere to many of the wider Arab Muslim indicators of social and cultural identity. Islamic culture evolved around the synthesis of a shared religion and urban values, which led to the development of beautiful objects that correspond to the different aspects of daily life (Badeau, 1983). Around the world, pre-Islamic practices, beliefs, forms of representation, and cultural practices persist syncretically alongside 'orthodox' Islamic cultural expression (Von Grunebaum, 2013). The earlier examples (Figure 2-32 and Figure 2-33) of figurative representation are likely to be an aspect of much older beliefs and practices accommodated within a more modern Islamic framework and belief system. One important example of these objects is Islamic art.

Islamic art is the art which was produced by Muslim artists and patrons in lands dominated by Muslim rulers during the Islamic era. It was significantly influenced by religious and cultural thoughts (Bhabha, 2006; Rogers, 2000). Contextually, Islamic art could be defined as the art composed from Muslim philosophical thought and creative expression, which were formed by the spirit and doctrines of the Muslim faith (Rogers, 2000).

The influence of Islam on art is demonstrated in the deep relationship between each piece of art, relevant doctrine and beliefs, and the usage of the Holy

Quran to create art. For example, Islam is a monotheist religion and Muslims believe in one god, the Almighty. There is no one in existence who he could be compared with. The faith prohibits believers from imagining what the Almighty looks or sounds like, and it is stated that God has unprecedented universal perfect qualities and abilities (Sachedina, 2001). Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad is considered to be a holy figure and he cannot be drawn.

Madden, a professor of philosophy, mentioned that Islamic art is an interpretation of a whole culture intertwined with theological and religious beliefs. He proposed that there are three characteristics of classical mainstream (Sunni) Islam that have influenced Islamic art including; infinity, abstraction, and religious symbolism. Infinity is deeply rooted and is emphasised in the Islamic faith, as Allah (god) is all powerful with all the qualities that makes him infinite. God is a unity. God has no beginning or end but is omnipresent and it is not possible to specify his nature. The fact that he is transcendent and cannot be characterised makes him infinite. Therefore, the infinite pattern, which is a continuous line with no beginning or end, overlaps to create geometrical patterns that symbolise Allah's infinity and unity. The Omani *manthura* necklace is an example of infinity and unity (see Figure 2-30). My interest in the infinite concept is part of the development of my research outputs. This pattern inspired me to use the infinite symbol in my experiment and practice. Please refer to the photobook page no. 122 123,124 and 125. This is an important issue for future research.

Abstraction mainly revolved around the idea of representing holy figures in the Islamic art. The Quran and Hadith (the Prophet's sayings) prohibit the portrayal of holy figures in any kind of art, although a very few representations of the Prophet may be found due to the varying Islamic ideologies in some non-Sunni societies. Consequently, Muslim artists developed abstract forms of art by using different methods such as the repetition of designs like the arabesque and by using geometrical and floral elements The abstract human figure found in Omani jewellery (*hirz*) is an example of this (Figure 2-32). The Omani silversmith used coins with Maria Theresa figure to decorate necklaces. These coins were not crafted by an Omani silversmith but they were exported to Oman during the 18th century (Al-Kindi, 2017). The craftsmen used coins from the

angle of decoration without considering Islamic issues. I would suggest that this is an example of the peaceful coexistence of religions in Oman.

Another influence of Islamic doctrine and beliefs is concerned with the way in which women and men should dress. In Islamic society women should cover their heads and bodies except for their hands and face after they reach puberty. Moreover, they should not show their beauty or ornaments to men other than those in their families (father, brothers, grandfathers, uncles, nephews, and father in law). Likewise, men are also prohibited from wearing any gold or silk (Madden, 1975). Because of that, most of the Omani Bedouin women covered their jewellery when they were outside their domestic home. However, this belief does not stop women from beautifying themselves because of the Hadith "God is beautiful and like beauty".

Arabic calligraphy has been the focus of Islamic art from the beginning. The Holy Quran is the holy book of Islam, which contains the words of God. The Holy Quran was written in Arabic, which makes it the focal point in contributing to the art of language and calligraphy. Calligraphy is rich with different styles and patterns of writing that were created and developed through the Islamic era. It varied from symbolic decoration such as the older Kufic and curvilinear Naksh to Uthmanic and Farsi. It has been most commonly used to transcribe verses from the Holy Quran or expressions outlining Allah's infinite properties (Madden, 1975). Arabic calligraphy is widely used in Omani jewellery such as on *hirz* (see section 2.4.1.5) and such decorative use of calligraphy can be easily adopted to the making of jewellery. I have also used this concept in my practice in section 4.3.2.3.

Additionally, Zakat is a type of charity that Muslims give from their wealth every year. The amount of money that a Muslim gives is determined by specific rules. Gold and silver should be weighed and valued based on their weight. Then the amount of money is calculated based on a specific equation in relation to their value (Adamu, Owoyemi, Cusairi, 2016). According to Milwright (2017) in the 7th century Islamic craftsmen produced gold and silver jewellery and the value of the jewellery was measured according to the weight of the metal and not the design. Valuation of jewellery by weight still exists in Oman (see section 4.5.1).

2.5.3 Hybridity

- ***How is hybridity likely to affect characteristics of Omani jewellery?***

The term hybrid has originated from the biological definition of the offspring of two plants or animals of different species or varieties, such as a mule or a thing made by combining two different elements. The definition of hybridity has recently widened and it can now be used to describe culture, technology, genres, media forms, and lifestyles in social sciences (Clifton, 2010). Within the field of art, Neshat (The ASX team, 2014) suggested that hybridity can refer to artistic works that explore the blurring of boundaries between people, socially and geographically. Many contemporary artists now use this as a conceptual starting point of creativity. Understanding and utilising notions of hybridity has become a cornerstone of my own work. A similar approach was reflected in the present study when I worked with a number of Bedouin participants in some of the practical workshops making jewellery items from leather. Hybridity, in simple words, can be anything that is combined together to present a new thing or concept. In art, there are two types of hybridity; material hybridity - blurring the boundaries and cultural hybridity. In *hanhun* necklaces (Figure 2-27), coins such as Maria Theresa Dollars, Saudi Riyals and Indian Rupees were utilised to create necklaces. In the hybridity of Nomadic and settled Bedouin art, such incorporation of foreign, non-Islamic, silver coins into necklaces, is directly associated with Bedouin cultural change. It has been noted that shifting culture change is directly associated with altered or changed versions of jewellery, so contemporary jewellery designs are being modified partly due to cultural hybridity. Nomadic Bedouins now travel more, and travel widely. Their cultural horizons have expanded in the past 50 years, and their traditional culture has been affected by a number of global and technological changes e.g. the mobile phone and the internet.

Two common aspects of the characteristics of Bedouin jewellery are the nomadic, non-fixed sense of place and the settled fixed sense of place. These criteria affect the design of jewellery, but recent social developments have added a dimension of fluidity which makes it difficult to firmly establish artefacts, like jewellery, in either time or place. This had affected the jewellery characteristics such as weight, materials and shape. For example, nomadic Bedouin jewellery has been found to include many materials such as leather,

bones, animal teeth and coral. Nowadays, Bedouins have become more settled and this is expected to affect the identity of Omani traditional jewellery. It has, however, also opened the door to innovations, and these hybrid influences may be important in the future of Omani jewellery.

2.6 *Traditional and Contemporary Jewellery*

- **How are traditional and contemporary jewellery differentiated?**

2.6.1 Traditional jewellery

- ***What is traditional jewellery?***

The term 'traditional' is derived from the Latin word *traditun* that is equivalent to the Greek word paradise. It means someone 'handing over' something to someone else. It is dynamic, interpersonal, and needs to be understood within the context of a community. Some scholars believe that these terms link to the ideas of community customs and beliefs. Handler and Linnekin (1984) suggest that tradition refers to an inherited body of practices and beliefs. In other words, culture is formed through the mind, the imagination, and the actions of all community members from the past to the present. Graburn (2000) stated that tradition refers to cultural features that continue to be handed on, contemplated, and preserved in situations of change.

The passing down of customs and beliefs is often dependent on an oral tradition. In Oman specifically, traditional thinking patterns influenced both customs and beliefs until his Majesty's accession to power in 1970. The most negative of these customs and beliefs (e.g. child marriage, traditional medicine) have lost their power in the last 50 years, but the transmission of oral wisdom remains a common process within the Omani context. This refers to information regarding the most fundamental aspects of tradition being handed down orally from generation to generation. This is especially true for certain types of society, such as underdeveloped areas or regions with low literacy levels. Many traditions have become extinct because the information has not been recorded in writing. The younger generation that wants to study or even revive tradition has difficulty in finding proper data sources; therefore, they rely on collecting data from the stories of different people. The laws of 'tradition' were focused and denominated by oral tradition but were anonymous. This form of anonymity included congregated knowledge, memories, values, symbols configured in

linguistic objects of a non-literary, or an aesthetic-literary nature, and the unwritten folk wisdom that forms the collective conscious of consecutive generation.

The term ‘traditional’ is sometimes used interchangeably with the term ‘folk’ that means inheriting a culture within a family or community. Art as an aspect of folk culture is also defined by specific historical periods (e.g. art nouveau, art deco).

Art is an important aspect of tradition as artistic activity can be based on the principles of spirituality and religiosity. Traditional art is a bridge between temporal, and spiritual, needs or values. It also presents artists’ expression of their inner spiritual experience. In this traditional perspective, there is no tension or conflict between art and craft, fine art and industrial/popular art, beauty and utility, or the artist and artisan. Art is not meant to benefit the art industry but rather the community; therefore, it is integrated into everyday life. The art aligns itself with the needs of the people, depending on each generation’s definition. Linnekin (1983) suggested that traditional timelessness is situationally constructed. Therefore, the term traditional can be subjective and the whole concept of “traditional” is nowadays associated with conservation and preservation in some respects, including the products of the old era as cultural heritage. According to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Omani heritage must be preserved and protected from any destruction (Qaboos, Ministry of Information, 2015) in section 2.3. However, what I suggest in terms of the creation of a hybrid traditional/contemporary form of Omani jewellery, is not in conflict with His Majesty’s word but a further step for the preservation of our country’s heritage. From this perspective, traditional values can be the adaptation, selection, and creation of the positive cultural experience of past generations.

Traditional art refers to the elements of culture that form a part of life in a particular community and region. Tradition can be the actions and behaviour that occur naturally because of the needs of the people. The creation of traditional art is based on cultural values and philosophy, such as religion, spirituality, and social needs. Therefore, art incorporates the values, norms, knowledge, and confidence that are integrated into the culture of everyday people to achieve the ideal purpose of life. These perspectives are similar to the context of traditional jewellery, which refers to the jewellery that was worn with traditional, national, or regional costume (Perry, 2013).

In the European context, traditional jewellery reached its peak in the nineteenth century when many people still wore the same costumes as their ancestors. Traditional jewellery was used as a sign of distinct identities, which might be social, political, or economic. Traditional jewellery is defined by Perry (2013) as conservative. It is worn in conjunction with traditional costume and made with meticulous detail by specialised professional silversmiths, who pass the technique on from generation to generation. Therefore, traditional jewellery is priceless for some people and has its original function of demonstrating status and social identity, acting even as a talisman/amulet.

I defined the term 'traditional Omani jewellery' in this study to refer to the period of using MTD coins in Oman, the period from the eighteenth century until 1970 (see section 2.4). The primary objective of traditional arts and crafts (including jewellery) in a traditional society is to complement life and add to its richness. In addition to social needs such as social symbolism, traditional art can be a means of establishing a harmonious social order. It can be said that craft, or traditional art is one of the necessities of life for some people in any particular community. However, there is the phenomenon that what is perceived as traditional may change. The concept of traditional in relation to art may evolve within the scope of a community's life. Such evolution of traditional art will be compatible with the spirit of the past, allowing for the creation of art as part of the local customs, and these themselves develop and evolve.

Even so, the production of traditional Omani handicrafts has declined despite periodic attempts at stimulus. The main purpose of women wearing precious jewellery was because it signified wealth and status to both men and women. Hence, in Bedouin culture, women wore studded silver discs. The silver was perceived as a precious material. In their culture, *shaabook* and *nis'ah* were used to utilise the silver disc and decorate the leather on the jewellery's surface area. The leather itself was perceived as being less precious than the silver although it served as a decorative support for the silver.

2.6.2 Contemporary Jewellery

- ***What is Contemporary Jewellery?***

The history of contemporary jewellery dates back to the years immediately after World War II. Skinner (2013) refers to "the contemporary jewellery made in

Europe over the past 70 years." In the same volume, den Besten (2013) refers to those jewellers who, seeking artistic independence, created their own workshops "in the early 1950's", and L'Ecuyer (2013) references "pioneering artists" of the 1940's and 1950's. Today, contemporary jewellery it is still a relatively under researched subject: difficult to define, to position, even to date. Although it is recognised that the discipline of contemporary jewellery originates after the Second World War, it is from the 1960s when discussions and documentation of creative activities really begin to emerge. (Turner 1976; Dormer & Turner 1985; Metcalf 1990; Dormer an English 1995; Turner 1996; Gaspar 2007). These cultural and critical theorists and many artisans, have defined it as a way to explore issues of contemporary identity, building upon notions that jewellery can convey such things as taste and preferences; status and wealth. (Game 1997). Modern jewellers and writers such as Lignel, Bernabei and Gaspar (Skinner, 2013) examine this position, discussing how contemporaray jewellery has the power to express and reveal the complexities of social and personal identities that reflect personal desires and cultural norms (Skinner, 2013). It is important to note that this examination is not just done through the analysis of the object itself but has been interpreted from three different angles, which are the maker, wearer, and viewer (Gali 2014; Jessop 2013; Cunningham 2008; Besten 2006; Poston, 1995). The meaning of contemporary jewellery and also the complexity of the topic rises even further when considering how the concept varies between countries and cultures.

In the UK, "contemporary" jewellery refers to jewellery created in the period after the Second World War, or certainly since the 1960s (V&A, 2020). Significantly it refers to creations from the New Jewellery Movement of the 1970s (Turner 1976; Dormer & Turner 1985; Metcalf 1990; Dormer and English 1995; Turner 1996; Gasper 2007).

In Oman, despite a virtually unbroken tradition of silversmithing dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, the silversmith's craft has declined due to shifting preferences in fashion. 'Contemporary' Oman Jewellery has come to mean the increasingly popular gold jewellery, as more and more people change their preference to gold instead of silver. This is accelerating as more local motifs are incorporated into gold style jewellery (Mongiatti, et al., 2011).

In the UK there is extensive literature on contemporary jewellery, especially related to art and design. Contemporary jewellery is regarded as a rich craft discipline that seeks to extend concepts of jewellery by embracing new, and reinterpreting old, materials, processes and perspectives, whilst challenging preconceptions of jewellery and its role in society (Gaspar 2007; Jessop 2013; Skinner 2013).

Oman lacks any formal literature regarding jewellery. Even today, silversmithing is regarded as part of local wisdom passed from generation to generation. Jewellers were taught by practice, and most were probably illiterate or semi-literate. Western scholars such as Das (2019) and Mongiatti et al. (2011) have reported on the collection of twentieth-century Omani silver jewellery assembled by the Department of the Middle East at the British Museum. Even this, however, was a collection of pieces owned by a private British collector, who had bought them in various markets in Oman in the 1980s. No Omani writers have contributed to the literature, however, making this thesis an important beginning in this field.

So far as materials are concerned, the UK, has seen a move away from the elitist concept of jewellery as a method of displaying wealth and power. Faggiani (2006) suggests that contemporary society downplays the importance of the monetary value of jewellery, creating spaces for other values, such as sustainability.

In Oman, by contrast, the intrinsic monetary value of jewellery has always been important, which perhaps explains the rapid shift from silver to gold. Brides now expect to be presented with gold jewellery as part of their marriage settlement, despite silver having been the core of jewellery for most of the country's history. Building upon this, it is fair to assume that Omanis prize jewellery as much for its resale value as for its aesthetic appeal.

It stands to reason, then, that sustainability and resale value are concepts that will need careful consideration by my craft group.

In the west, along with the democratization of jewellery that occurred after the Second World War, there were also moves to transform everyday artefacts into jewellery. The famous Cartier Juste un Clou (1971) transformed what was essentially an elongated gold nail into a bracelet, and later, as a result of the

1970s Punk movement, safety pins were similarly rebranded. While the original punks simply used the pins for their basic function – instant repairs to old clothes – their use later became iconic (Hannon, 2010). First came “designer” safety pins which were used by the fashion designer Gianni Versace, in his signature (1994) black dress worn to a premier by the actress Elizabeth Hurley (ibid.) and then safety pins made of precious metals were adopted as fashion accessories by people who were, effectively, the antithesis of punks.

The inclusion of such a wide range of objects in the category of jewellery vastly expanded the range of possible definitions of contemporary jewellery. This knowledge and understanding was influential in the approach taken within my own practice.

In Oman, the use of artefacts has followed a different trajectory, and it has been influential in commercial design. One local jewellery company, Jawaher Oman, has reformulated traditional designs by crafting shahid rings in smaller sizes, in gold, and adorning them with tiny, fine quality gemstones. Other adaptations have been the use of traditional designs of bracelets to form rings, or earrings, and the manufacture of napkin rings based on a fusion of traditional ring and bracelet designs. Jawaher Oman is part of the Al Zubair Corporation, and these up-market products are available exclusively at the flagship store in Qurum, and the gift-shop attached to the Bait Zubair Museum.

A similar use of tradition can be seen in the products of the Dar al Herfya. This is an Omani heritage enterprise which offers high quality “souvenir” jewellery, such as cuff-links in the form of the round “terrs”- a type of small buckler used as a shield – and tiny Omani incense burners reformulated as nielloed silver pendants.

Thus, we see the definition of contemporary jewellery in Oman leans less towards inclusiveness (as in the UK or the west in general) and more towards the evocation of long-standing tradition. A study of these traditions will therefore be critical to my craft’s success.

Jessop (2013) gives an extensive list of the sociocultural influences that have affected jewellery makers in the UK, in Europe and the broader western world since the end of the Second World War. The partial erosion of class distinctions, the rise of a consumer culture and the influence of designers’ marques have all

resulted in trends, or fashions, in commercial jewellery, with the avant garde constantly exploring new dimensions.

We see here a further widening of the way contemporary jewellery is defined: the focus in UK is on trying new things while often leaving the old behind, the reverse can be seen in Oman.

In Oman, jewellery is influenced more by commercial design trends from India. There are a number of Indian gold outlets in Oman, all of them pushing the "New Arrival" on their clientele, and Das (2019) actually claims that practicality has a strong influence in this area. This could be a valid point: traditional Omani jewellery is very heavy, and for modern Omani women, lighter jewellery that maintains a cultural reference may be preferred.

In short, Omani jewellery seems to emphasise tradition instead of discarding it, with all changes meant to make it easier and more pleasant to wear and display. This makes for a multitude of customs and nuances that I and my group will need to account for in our craft.

In Oman, as has been shown in this thesis, traditional Omani jewellery was worn until the 1970s, and it was ostentatiously displayed on social occasions such as weddings. Even so, much of this jewellery, particularly the anklets and hadher earrings, was simply impractical for everyday use. In public, moreover, Islamic custom dictated that women should hide this jewellery underneath their dresses and scarves. It was only ever intended for display in private, in front of their families, husbands and other women.

As a result, modern Omanis have either turned to European style jewellery, made from precious metals and gemstones, or have bought cheap, Chinese costume jewellery that is often worn only once and then discarded. As in the past, however, this jewellery is principally worn in the presence of other women, and particularly at all-female social gatherings. In the presence of men, and especially of men who are not close relatives, the jewellery remains covered.

Thus, we have yet another divergence between UK and Oman: where contemporary jewellery in the UK is overt and unsubtle, the wearing of jewellery in Oman is governed by very exacting strictures, all of which will need to be accounted for by any jewellery maker or crafts group such as mine.

Jessop (2013) refers to the Galerie Marzee in The Netherlands, “where jewellery is celebrated as an object to be collected.” This is a contentious concept. Lindemann (2011: 13) concedes that, in Europe, “traditional jewellery has until very recently been kept and exhibited mainly in palace and cathedral treasure chambers or ethnographic collections.” Nevertheless, he also suggests that this has probably obscured “the adorning function of jewellery as decoration worn on the human body” This opinion is endorsed by Den Besten (2006), who states that a conventional “showcase exhibition” cannot handle the phenomenon of wearability.

Even so, this raises the question of narrative jewellery. Jessop (2013) describes the Military Brooch 1940 from Gralnick’s 2007 Gold Standard Part II series as being “designed to reflect the brutality of World War II and inscribed with the legend ‘work makes free’.” This is arguably an inadequate description that undersells the horrors depicted in the Military Brooch, as in fact it combines a circle of gold teeth with garnets, above the inscription Arbeit Macht Frei. This is obviously an allusion to the extraction of gold teeth from the mouths of the Jews murdered in the Holocaust. As such, this piece of jewellery, while a powerful narrative device, becomes effectively unwearable. Its only place is in one of those same conventional showcase exhibitions.

Oman, in contrast to the UK and other western nations, has only recently established museums, but there are ethnographic collections in the Bait Zubair Museum and the more recently opened National Museum. In my own case, the exhibition of the leather necklaces crafted by the co-creation group, and of the mulwiyah necklace were only small scale showcasings of artworks, but within the local community, they were ground-breaking events.

Based on the above, two distinct definitions of contemporary jewellery emerge, both of which have similarities to the concepts Roberta Bernabei formulated in her *Interviews with European Artists* (2014): “The first projects self-expressive content often relating to socio-political conditions, world events, body relationships or autobiography (jewellery as content). The second group incorporates a sensitive manipulation of materials, techniques and the formal relationships within a piece (sensitized jewellery)” (Bernabei, 2014:25). The former seems to be the view in the UK, while Oman is more prone to the latter. In both cases, it is not just the piece that is important, but also who wears the

objects, what cultural and social value they have for their wearers, and even what historical value they have now (Unger, 2017).

Interestingly, the ultimate role of jewellery has not really changed from how it was described by Dormer and Turner almost three decades ago. Already, back then, it was considered a shrewd monitor that reflected the ups and downs of not only money and fashion but also of political, social, and culture change (Dormer and Turner, 1994). Accordingly, not only shape and meaning can be altered, but the perceived value of certain materials may also be altered. This may explain how the cultural shift in Oman has enhanced the status and value of leather. Before the Renaissance of Oman, the natural tanned leather was widely available and was very cheap. However, today it is rare to find this form of traditional leather and it is expensive.

Traditionally, jewellery is used to provide inner satisfaction through beautifying the body. Women wish to be associated with high status brands and enhance their own social standings. Therefore, older tastes in jewellery have changed and the traditional motifs have been replaced by modern designs (Vale, 2015). Changes to concepts and techniques, however, do not necessarily mean an abandonment of tradition. Though the purpose of using jewellery has changed in Oman, and it corresponds with the changing structure of society particularly from Nomadic to Settled Bedouin, this has been manifested in a focus on materials and availability, with any changes to form or function being mostly incidental. The intent of Omani women in the past was to collect and store silver for their future security. This idea is no longer prevalent as women have become more financially independent. Now, they often buy European style jewellery, made from precious metals and gemstones, and they sometimes acquire cheap, Chinese costume jewellery as well, which is often worn only once and then discarded. This contrasts within the areas where the settled Bedouin live, however, as some women still practise the older customs in which jewellery functions as savings by having part of their dowry in the form of money to buy jewellery (particularly gold).

All things being considered, the definition of contemporary jewellery best suited to this study is probably that of Wallace et al. (2007) where contemporary jewellery is defined as a rich craft discipline that seeks to extend concepts of jewellery by embracing new, and reinterpreting old, materials, processes and

perspectives, whilst challenging preconceptions of jewellery and its role in society. Taking into account everything previously mentioned, however, I would also define contemporary jewellery as a meeting place for culture and social issues, a vector for both understanding and conveying how people live, create and engage with their culture, society and each other. Thus, my jewellery starts from memory, the place where I was born, where culture and social issues meet, where I gained my ambition to investigate deeply the themes of contemporary jewellery design by living with people, and by collaborating, engaging, creating and developing my craft.

- ***What are the themes in contemporary jewellery design?***

The following themes are discussed in this study. I used these themes in my jewellery practice and context to support a discourse around design (see chapter 4).

1. Jewellery and materials
2. Jewellery and mixed culture
3. Jewellery and social practice
4. Jewellery and recycling and sustainability
5. Jewellery and technology

1. Jewellery and materials

The nature and value of materials is important in any discussion about contemporary jewellery practice. Historically, precious metals denoted power, status and wealth. However, much contemporary jewellery challenges this by creating a different preciousness that is based on intrinsic value and worth. Jewellers use the non-precious material to make their work inexpensive or they prefer to raise 'some meanings' through less expensive materials, for example, gel or jelly "awareness bracelets", or they use precious metal jewellery differently from its traditional purpose (Dormer and Turner, 1994). They have learned from these concepts of contemporary design, deliberately choosing not to use precious materials in their work (Cherry, 2013). However, some jewellers, such as Wendy Ramshaw, Jacqueline Mina and Giovanni Corvaja, explore interesting concepts by using precious material, but this does not preclude pieces from otherwise gaining intrinsic value independent from this. For

example, Mina and Corvaja both work in gold, which has an innate monetary value, but Corvaja's (2009) Golden Fleece also references European classical mythology, which confers upon it an extra value rooted in the local culture and social values.

I do not use non-precious materials (such as leather) as a means of breaking the relation to the past, but instead to understand the material. For example, women historically made traditional headdresses (*shaabook*) from leather. Previously, it was easily available. Nowadays, however, it is rare to find naturally tanned leather being sold on the market. I need to order supplies from the people who are still experts in tanning, and it costs a great deal, which makes it more precious to current-day clients. For this reason, I have also personally helped to create some of the materials that I use, instead of relying on outside sources (see section 4.7.3.1). In chapter 4, I discuss this theme in section 4.3

2. Jewellery and mixed culture

The creation of contemporary studio jewellery involves a mixture of techniques and concepts related to old and new styles. In other words, designers take jewellery which is rooted in local values, and attempt to evolve it. Jewellery becomes a witness to our personal experiences with people, places and time. For instance, Mizuko Yamada was interested in social relationships within one national cultural context (Cherry, 2013). Originally, this artist is from Japan, but she had spent time working at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London. This experience undoubtedly affected her perspective in relation to traditional techniques. In her project, jewellery was designed as a tool to connect one person with another on the basis of mixed cultural understanding. My research was also undertaken abroad. I became more understanding about myself, so jewellery can reveal aspects of ourselves to us (see section 4.4).

3. Jewellery and social practice

Jewellery provides opportunities for connection; through a conversation between people, by making an emotional connection through matching jewellery such as wedding rings or using jewellery to physically connect two people as if they were joining hands. According to Dormer and Turner (1994), when people call themselves weavers, potters, jewellers, or enamellists, they

are not just talking about material and techniques, they are actually identifying themselves. The words point to an emotional bond between the person and the work. They highlight the seriousness of these craftspeople, who do not just manipulate threads on a loom, or turn boards into chairs. This loyalty to the medium is one of the defining characteristics of craft. The methods used by contemporary designers are combining old elements such as the concept of a tribal or local tradition with modern artefacts.

Mah Rana's 2004 research project, *Meanings and Attachments*, utilises her knowledge of contemporary jewellery and her experience within social science to explore the value of jewellery (Rana, 2017). Rana is well respected within the field of contemporary studio jewellery for her collaborative approach, which engages people from diverse backgrounds in a dialogue about themselves through jewellery. This project is about surfacing the importance and significance of jewellery and adornment within people's lives. It is about exploring and revealing the multiple layers and viewpoints – giving voice to things that are often private. Rana uses different processes to reach the public including visual, material, and experiential and creative activities. From a critical perspective, she has allowed visitors to tell stories about their jewellery in her exhibition. Rana has collected a huge number of stories to *emphasise* the importance and beauty of owning, giving, and wearing jewellery during a lifetime. The importance of her jewellery was obvious, as she allowed the public to wear the jewellery she had designed.

Rana and I have followed a similar approach to the collecting of memories from the owners of jewellery. Within my research I have used photo-elicitation, discussion, storytelling and the physical objects as catalysts for the participants to reveal their hidden heritage. An important finding was that both the participants and the researcher made observations in the same way. I encouraged them to talk about their jewellery and feel responsible for documenting it. For example, I explained that their silver jewellery had lost its shine and had tarnished to black, simply because it had been locked away, and not worn, for almost fifty years.

An increasing number of contemporary jewellers have extended their practices to engage with co-creative methods. Arts Council England initiated a national partnership between 16 museums across the UK, MUSEUMAKER. The

jewellery makers Lin Chueng and Laura Potter worked collaboratively on a collection shown to the public in Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA). To advertise the Institute of Modern Art, Chueng and Potter engaged in several creative workshops in groups within Northern England. These workshops were organised in order for people to see their work. They helped in the development of their expertise and exceptional talent. The collection of jewellery was developed in response to a request by contemporary makers, who were represented in the museum collection. The co-creative activities allowed the engagement of people living and working in the local area to understand something deeper about their heritage. This was also expressed through the collection in the museum. The rationale of contemporary makers of jewellery objects tends to be a good vehicle to connect people, and it has an important place in people's lives (Cheung, 2017). A further example of a co-creation project is related to "Junk: rubbish to gold", which was co-created by Jivan Astfalck, Rachel Darbourne, and Laura Bradshaw in 2015. Their team collected around 700kg of discarded and broken jewellery from various charity shops over a period of months (Astfalck, Bradshaw-Heap and Darbourne, 2015). 30 jewellers and makers gave their time and expertise to transform the massive pile of the discarded junk jewellery into desirable objects. The outcome of this project was a Silent Auction, and the proceeds were distributed to charity.

The Create and Connect project situated in Zanzibar has brought together researchers from craft practice, tourism, and service design. Similarly, the project has also explored the socio-cultural links and identified crafted souvenirs and practices of jewellery production. The researcher Maria Hanson used a co-creative workshop during her fieldwork to test design thinking strategies to empower female craft makers. The 2014 project, Create and Connect, combined perspectives and knowledge from development and gender theory, human geography, design thinking, design anthropology, sustainable tourism, and craft-making (Hanson and Levick-Parkin, 2016).

My co-creation group applied different processes in order to achieve an effective outcome that differed from those of the above mentioned examples (see section 4.7). My project was constructed from individual sites of practice and knowledge. I also worked with one of the craft women, which led me to new thinking and my work with the group became more profound. My experiences of

working with this woman encouraged me to work with a group of women in a co-creation workshop. This aspect will be discussed in more depth in the methodology section (snowball sampling).

4. Jewellery and recycling and sustainability

Not all jewellers are aware of recycling and sustainability issues. Manheim (2009) lists the main features of recycling and sustainable jewellery as follows: old for new; waste not, want not; ephemeral jewellery; found objects: odds and ends; conceptually recycled; useful objects and things which come in handy; wearing it out and found in nature. This concept of recycling and creating sustainable jewellery underpins Bartley's (2017) project Seeding the Cloud: A Walking Work. Bartley creates jewellery made out of plastic precisely because it is guaranteed to last a long time. Furthermore, her way of processing plastic spreads increased awareness of environmental concerns among people. Her collaboration with the public appears through her invitation to neighbours to join her in performing the process of walking while collecting the waste plastic and then making wearable objects. Seeding the cloud has proposed a more complex role for jewellery in resolving some of the issues in contemporary life. In my practical investigation I used this theme in section 4.10.

5. Jewellery and technology

In the past few years, the technological revolution has been powered by computer innovations such as CAD (Computer Aided Design) and Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM). CAD uses software such as Rhino3D, JewelCAD, Illustrator and Maya software. CAM uses manufacturing methods such as 3D Printing and CNC milling. This has provided opportunities for some jewellers to expand their practice through the development of ideas and forms which can be difficult to make by hand processes. The combination of using our hands and digital tools requires finding a balance between both. "The challenge is to make something emotionally rich and yet also technologically sophisticated." (Zellweger, 2003 p.70). In section 4.11, I explore this theme through my practice.

2.7 *Current trends among a small group of designers using Islamic Art as a source of inspiration*

- ***In what ways have contemporary designers used traditional Islamic Art as a source of inspiration?***

There are a significant number of opportunities for contemporary jewellery makers in the development of better practices. Re-reading of traditional works in new contexts can refresh both the works and contexts (Burgin, 1986 p.14). Contemporary Art work inspired by historic traditions is not a new issue. For example, contemporary jewellery is exploring heritage and hybrid concept. In contrast to the situation that prevails in Oman, there are multiple examples of designers working with traditional Islamic themes in creative contemporary ways in other countries. For instance, the fashion designer Ghadeer al Saleh uses fashion for bridging eastern and western cultures in Oman (Muscat Daily staff writer, 2016)**.** *The Jameel Prize* is another example of this approach. "The Jameel Prize is an international award for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition. Its aim is to explore the relationship between Islamic traditions of art, craft and design and contemporary work as part of a wider debate about Islamic culture and its role today" (V&A, 2018). It also promotes and reflects the relationship between traditional Islamic Art and contemporary work. The following seven artists have all been shortlisted for the Jameel Prize. Their examples have been beneficial in my own understanding of how Islamic traditions have been used in relation to influencing contemporary design. In the brief explanations given I have been able to draw insights and connections with my own approach and thinking.

2.7.1 Florie Salnot: Inspiration from Traditional Jewellery

- ***How is Florie Salnot inspired by traditional jewellery?***

Salnot is a British jewellery designer working with Sahrawi women from the Western Sahara. Troubled by social issues in the region, Salnot devised her 'Plastic Gold Project'. This was a co-creation project, where Salnot worked with women who lived in the refugee camps at desert sites in Algeria. Inspired by the traditional jewellery worn by these women, she developed a craft that they could practise, despite their limited resources. Using only hot sand, simple tools and spray paint, as shown in Figure 2-39, the women transformed superfluous

plastic bottles into necklaces and bracelets (V&A, 2016). This was a participatory project, aimed primarily at converting waste material into saleable artefacts that would be of economic benefit to Sahrawi women. Only when the project was completed did Fiona created her own designs (Figure 2-40), which were displayed in the Jameel Prize exhibition (V&A, 2014).

Like Salnot, I worked with a group of women, although in my case the group was not concerned with producing marketable design. We both used recycled plastic, but she used discorded plastic bottles, where I only used the coloured bottles tops (see section 4.7.2). Where Salnot sprayed paint on her design, moreover, I combined my found, and naturally discoloured plastic bottle tops with the traditional weave of *shaabook* to create my prize-winning *Saqala* necklace.

Figure 2-39 Hot sand, plastic bottles and spray paint (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, the Jameel Prize exhibition, V&A, London, 2014) permission from V&A

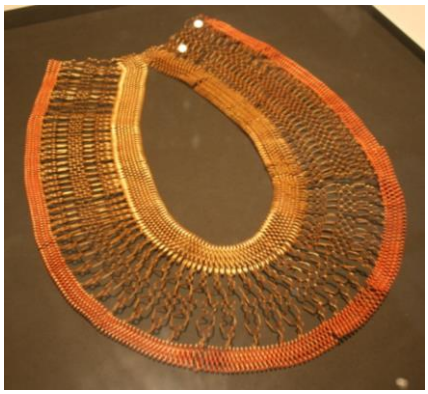

Figure 2-40 Necklace designed by Fiona Salnot. (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, the Jameel Prize exhibition, V&A, London, 2014) permission from V&A

2.7.2 Faig Ahmed: Synthesising Traditional Techniques and Disrupting Traditional Forms

- ***How has Faig Ahmed synthesised and disrupted carpet weaving in Oman?***

Ahmed, an Azerbaijani, works using some diverse methods including painting, video, and installation. Based on traditional ancient weaving methods rooted in the traditions of his birthplace, they are handmade and conventional in design and yet they show elements of contemporary styles. Ahmed is known to restructure parts of the patterns of his design in his work as one corner of the carpet seems to have collapsed. In other work he uses hybrid techniques, illustrated in *Pixelate Tradition*, where much of the pattern has disintegrated into pixels (Figure 2-41). Ahmedi uses the concept of "melting" the traditional by bending the literal fabrics of his society. He also demonstrates that it is possible to reconceptualise "accepted" forms of beauty (V&A, 2016). I applied his ideas by synthesising traditional weaving techniques with traditional design, but then transforming those designs by using recycled plastic in synthesis with silver domes and traditional silver tubes (see section 4.10.2).

Figure 2-41 Pixelate Tradition, the carpet pattern has disintegrated into pixels. (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, the Jameel Prize exhibition, V&A, London, 2014) permission from V&A

2.7.3 Mounir Fatmi: Traditional object with Technology

- ***How has Mounir Fatmi used technology to develop traditional calligraphy?***

In multi-media installations, Fatmi often uses Arabic calligraphy in new ways that arrange traditional calligraphic texts in impressive wheel-shaped compositions. Fatmi used these circular compositions as wheels, representing the parts of a noisy locomotive that hurtles forward relentlessly.

Technology offers a metaphor for the contemporary world in constant and erratic movement, with no end to production and consumption. The images repeat so rapidly that they cannot transmit their content, like today's world where we are bombarded with constant information, very little of which is useful. The forms suggest both the circular compositions found in Arabic calligraphy and Marcel Duchamp's Rotoreliefs by Mounir Fatmi (Figure 2-42). Like Fatmi, I have also employed calligraphy, which is regarded as an art in itself across the entire Islamic world, primarily because of its association with the Holy Quran. I made a conscious reference to use this link by creating some personal narratives on the type of paper that is frequently used to print Quranic verses. The narrative, however, was not printed, but laser cut, and then formed into a ring called Memory (see section 4.3.2.3).

Figure 2-42 Kinetic art by Mounir Fatmi (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, the Jameel Prize exhibition, V&A, London, 2014) permission from V&A

2.7.4 Laurent Mareschal: Using traditional patterns in new material

- ***How has Laurent Marescha used traditional patterns within the new material?***

The work of Mareschal is concerned with the temporariness of our lives. He often incorporates the scents of Palestinian spices in his work, recognising the particular insubstantiality of Palestinian lives. He creates patterns by stencilling spices in the same lines as the decorative floor tiles in old houses and he expects audience participation in transforming the art (Figure 2-43) not by walking on the "tiles", but by looking at them and realising that they are made of spices, and not ceramic. For some of the audience, of course, the scents of spices will trigger memories.

My *Mulwiyah* necklace (see section 4.8) was designed to work in a similar way. I used traditional weaving techniques to create an necklace out of internal animal parts. This resulted in a recognisable artefact produced with unusual materials. The necklace was then grilled, and eaten, providing both the scent of cooking meat and the taste of a known dish, while becoming metaphor for insubstantiality.

Figure 2-43 Spice Tile (Photographed by Amal AL-Ismaili, the Jameel Prize exhibition, V&A, London, 2014) permission from V&A

2.7.5 Soody Sharifi: Combining traditional objects with modern narrative

- ***How has Sharifi combined the traditional with the modern narrative?***

Sharifi crafts digital collages using enlarged scans of original Persian miniatures in which the artist inserts her own photographic images, producing what is called 'Maxiatures'. Sharifi's digital collections explore the dichotomy between public and private spaces. The subject matter ranges from Islam and the clash of cultures to modernity and youth culture. Contemporary life in Iran is explored by opening up scenes of private life and distorting the line between reality and fiction, as well as by reflecting on the discourse between East and West.

Sharifi offers continuity from the past to the present by using the miniature format and merging original imagery with contemporary life, (Figure 2-44). For example, her Fashion Week (Figure 2-44) is created in the style of traditional Irainian paintings, but the central panel features a collage of contemporary women parading along what could be either a staircase or a fashion house catwalk.

Sharifi works with hybrid painting and collage, linking contemporary details and historical fiction, whereas I work with three-dimensional jewellery design. My goat hair necklace (see section 4.9.4), however, is attempt to use narrative in

combination with modern material. The inspiration came from a story told by one of the women in my co-creation group, who took me to a place in the desert where one of her goats had died. This explains my use of goat hair, and links with the theme of death and transience that I explored in my *Mulwiyah* necklace.

Figure 2-44 'Fashion Week', Soody Sharifi, 2010. Courtesy of the LTMH Gallery, New York (image from V&A, 2017) permission from V&A

2.7.6 Babak Golkar: The traditions of Modern and Post-Modern architecture

- ***How has Babak Gokar reflected the*** **connections between the traditions of Modern / Post-Modern architecture and the traditions of a nomadic society?**

Golkar's piece entitled 'Negotiating the Space for Possible Coexistencies No.5' (2011) is an example of his multi-disciplinary work that examines the socio-cultural issues experienced from living in the Middle East and Canada.

Golkar uses the Persian carpet to portray his own connection with his Iranian heritage in a North American context. This work is part of a series that uses the pattern of Persian carpets as a blueprint for architectural scale models. The model sits atop a Persian carpet so that the relationship between the two forms is accessible to the viewer. This is done by creating a visual connection between the traditions of Modern and Post-Modern architecture and the traditions of a nomadic society.

Golkar has created bodies of work which attempt to convey the space between these cultures (Figure 2-45).Using ceramics, drawing, installations, print and sculpture, his work manoeuvres between outwardly contrasting territories such as East and West, modernity and antiquity, minimalism and ornament.

As a woman coming from the Renaissance of the Arab Gulf, with experience of studying in the UK, I was particularly attracted to the concept of coexistence, and to his visual metaphor of modern development placed on a foundation of traditional craft. His blending of installation with textiles also appealed to me, and encouraged me to combine the traditional techniques that I had learnt from the Bedouin women in Oman with the new technology of 3D printing that I had learnt in Europe. Golkar's work also led me to the work at Sevan Bicaki (see section 2.7.7).

Figure 2-45 'Negotiating the Space for Possible Coexistences'.Courtesy of Collection SANZIANY © A. Riklin-Foundation (image from V&A, 2016) permission from V&A

2.7.7 Sevan Bicakci: Handcraft and architecture

- ***How has Sevan Bicakci explored handcraft and architecture?***

Bicakci's hand crafted jewellery combines contemporary glamour with vivid evocations of historic cityscapes and the urban life in his native Istanbul. His designs representing an entire Ottoman mosque on the body of a single ring, are realised in a wide range of techniques. These include metal-based painting, engraving, calligraphy, intaglio carving, and micro-mosaic setting. Bicakci's jewellery pieces reflect a reverence for jewellery designed with humanity, rather than by technology.

Bicakci is one of several non-Muslim artists and designers short-listed for the Jameel Prize but his birthplace was a predominately Muslim city. He was born in Istanbul, into an Armenian Christian family. At the age of 12, he was apprenticed to a jeweller, entering a trade in which Armenians have excelled in Istanbul.

In the rings, Bicakci uses materials of the highest quality to evoke the Ottoman architecture of Istanbul (Figure 2-46). For instance, Saray Burnu showed two

dominant features of this part of the city; the domed mosque of Aya sofia and the sea walls of the Topkapi Palace. The sea walls are depicted in micro mosaic, while the mosque was carved in deep intaglio into an aquamarine that was later painted (V&A, 2009). To a certain extent, similar architectural elements are reflected in my own work. My copper ring and silver ring (Figure 4-88) both have a beveled surface that recalls the dome of a mosque, but the rings illustrated in Figure 4-3 is directly inspired by Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.

Called Domes, these are copper rings, which are themselves echoes of the traditional *shahid* ring (Figure 4-1). The petals can be open, or they can close, forming a dome, which is again a reference to mosque.

Figure 2-46 'Umut Kapısı' (Gate of Hope), Sevan Bıçakçı, 2007. © Photos: Reza Hemmetirad and Levent Yucel. Private Collection (V&A, 2016) permission from V&A

The above creative making practices may be divided into eight main categories.

- Depending on the integrative approach, encompassing stylistic elements and artistic vocabularies pertinent to local traditions.
- Having varying designs in a single form to achieve rich styles.
- Depending on a combination of opposing designs to attain distinctiveness.
- Depending on stylistic emulations of tradition- like terminologies and employing these within a modern vision.
- Investing in traditional applications and combining them with modern ones in a single design.
- Using new technology in order to develop traditional techniques.
- Using elements of architectural historic building in a new design.
- Using materials other than those which are traditionally employed.

In summary, these eight categories show how artists can engage in a continuous process that builds on existing traditions. They do this by exploiting

the four elements found in all traditional crafts; concept, material, aesthetics and technique, all of which may impact, in the case of jewellery, on the value of the finished artefact. Ahde-Deal (2013) has indicated that the value of jewellery can be assessed in two ways- subjective value and objective value. Subjective value is determined and constructed through personal meaning and personal attachments to a piece of jewellery. In other words, an intrinsically worthless, mass produced trinket may have enormous sentimental value for the owner, depending on his/her associations with its place of purchase or the giver. Such value is not necessarily associated with the production process but comes over time through use and ownership. Objective value is based on material value - the cost of materials; and market value - price.

Overall, the four traditional elements can all be assessed in accordance with these value systems as shown in Table 1. Richardson and Dorr (2003) and AL Yaqoubi (2014) have focused on the objective value that can apply to some types of traditional Omani jewellery (section 2.4.3). To the best of my knowledge, however, subjective value has never been addressed. It is my own focus and is examined in section 4.6.1.13.

Table 1 subjective value and objective value

Subjective value	Concept		
Objective value	Material	aesthetics	technique

2.8 *Summary*

The literature identified that there are two Bedouin communities in Oman; nomadic and settled. However, in contemporary Oman, the nomadic Bedouin are fast becoming settled. This societal change has had important consequences. It has affected art, and the design of jewellery. Heavy silver Bedouin jewellery became regarded as old fashioned, although the same designs were acceptable in gold. “Modern” Omani women demonstrated their modernity by wearing lighter jewellery and by turning to European designs.

This chapter presented the background of Omani traditional jewellery including its types, techniques, and characteristics. The types showed the differences between Bedouin and *Hadher* jewellery (rings, anklet, bracelet, earrings,

necklaces, *hirz* and the headdress). The types of jewellery concluded with a description of the headdress which will become the main focus of this research.

This chapter has provided the three key factors that influence the characteristics of Omani jewellery (identity, religion and hybridity). The main emphasis in this chapter is on the importance of the terms of “traditional” and “contemporary” jewellery. The term ‘traditional Omani silver jewellery’ refers to the period of trading in Maria Theresa Dollars in Oman from the eighteenth century until the coins were officially cancelled in 1972. After 1972 gold must be considered as the most common form of material for contemporary jewellery. The chapter explored issues related to traditional and contemporary jewellery, and also referred to a number of contemporary artists and jewellers relevant to this study. I used four themes in my jewellery practice which are Jewellery and materials, influenced by Dormer and Turner (1994) and Cherry (2013), Jewellery and mixed culture were influenced by Yamada’s work. Jewellery and social practice were influenced by Rana’s (2004) project. Jewellery and recycling and sustainability were influenced by Bartley’s (2017) seeding the cloud project, “The wearable story” workshop, delivered by Hanson and Hutton (2015) and by Astfalck, Bradshaw-Heap and Darbourne (2015) “Junk-rubbish to gold” project, all of which taught me that waste material could be recycled, and that artifacts which one person had discarded as being essentially worthless could be used as the raw materials for creativity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 *Introduction*

In chapter 2, the literature on traditional Omani Jewellery was discussed with particular reference to that worn by the Bedouin women. It included descriptions of the photos and images of the traditional Omani jewellery that is associated with the Omani communities. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and the techniques that are employed in the process of data collection and the generation of ideas and insights in a socio-cultural context such as this work. Thus, the meaning of ethnography and auto-ethnography are described as well as the snow-ball sampling and Photo-elicitation method used in this practice-based research. In addition, standard ethical procedure is discussed as it relates to this work.

- ***What approach has been used for conducting the study?***

The central methodology of this project is a practice-based research approach which builds on knowledge developed through fieldwork. It involves two stages of fieldwork, namely the ethnographic research approach and the auto-ethnography research approach. Auto-ethnography is also based on qualitative research, but it uses Participatory Action Research (PAR): That is the active participation of the researcher in the community of participants. Auto-ethnography is used for events that occur in a cultural and social situation.

In this research, ethnography is based on qualitative research that uses informal semi-structured questions through snowball sampling and photo elicitation methods. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), ethnography is a qualitative approach, which is associated with the study of beliefs, behaviours, social interactions, active participation, observation, and interpretation of the obtained data. Similarly, Barbour (2007) stated that ethnography generally tends to give an analytical description to different cultures. The main purpose of the ethnography method is to collect and interpret oral knowledge.

The goal of my research is to understand the values of Omani traditional jewellery and to use these values in contemporary jewellery practice. The research goal cannot be separated from the environmental context in which the social and cultural values of settled Bedouin people are embedded. Therefore,

the main focus of my research project was cultural and social situations, specifically the use of traditional jewellery by the Bedouin women. I went to the governorates of A'Sharqiyah North and A'Sharqiyah South, to undertake research related to the values of traditional Omani jewellery. I observed, took notes, recorded, questioned and investigated sources closely associated with the events that occurred at that time.

The details of these approaches have been provided in the next sections. Figure 3-1 shows how my practice-based research is comprised of fieldwork 1, based on an ethnographic research approach which includes photo elicitation and snowball sampling techniques. The arrow reflects the continuation towards fieldwork 2 as observed in the auto-ethnography approach. The auto-ethnography approach interacts with the co-creation Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach.

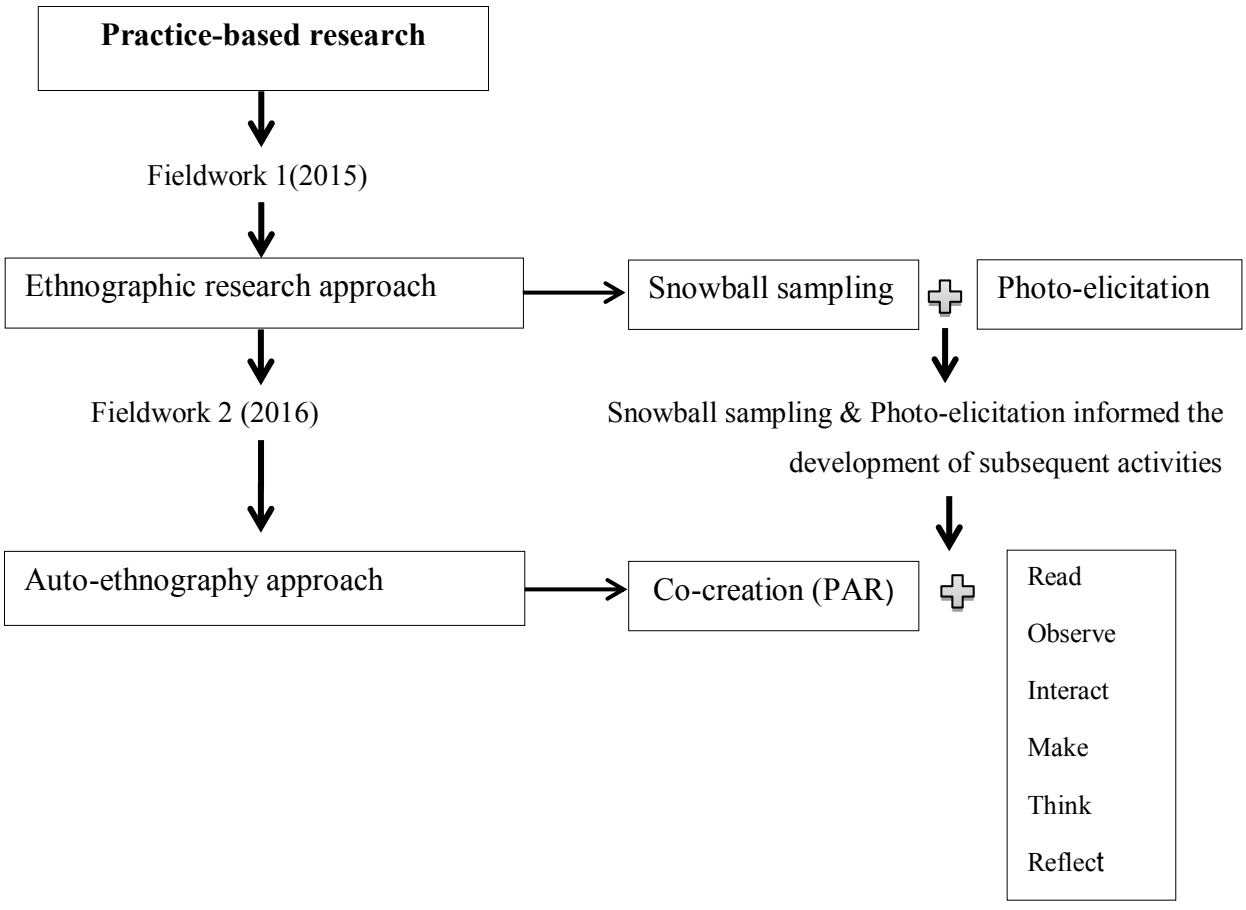

Figure 3-1 Methodology structure

3.2 *Practice-based Research*

- ***What is 'practice-based research'?***

It is believed that research, writing, undertaking scientific procedures, designing, and making art are common aspects of practice (Frayling, 1993). According to Candy (2006), there are two types of research related to practice: practice-based and practice-led. Practice-based research is defined as research with its creative artefact as the basis of the contribution to knowledge, while practice-led research primarily leads to new understanding about practice.

The use of a research based approach leads towards a better understanding of practice (Vessey et al., 2017). An experiential learning impact can be created with the help of practice-based research. Therefore, it can be said that practice-based research is significantly associated with the identification of better outcomes related to the topic that is being discussed. In the case of this research, it can give a better understanding of traditional jewellery design and use and can contribute to the production of new pieces of jewellery.

Practice-based research advances knowledge through a continuous process. Moreover, it is an original investigation which is undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding about a specific topic. Many research studies are conducted via case controlled or randomised controlled trials. However, practice-based research has a closer relevance with writing and research along with the design and making of the art. Gilbert et al. (2013) indicated that practice-based research tends to be in the first stages of an investigation and can assist in the development of conceptual understanding among the readers/audience/viewers.

3.3 *Jewellery related practice research*

Both design and craftsmanship therefore, are part of the same creative and artistic expression; a type that has come to be described as ‘practice-based’. McFadden (1995; 50) states "Jewellery has an innate relationship with both the physical and the cultured body, and jewellery making, like all art, is profoundly humanistic concern". This is in line with the concept of "artist-led jewellery" or "art-jewellery", which "bears a story mark of the maker, not as subservient but as a means of expression of the maker" (den Besten, 2005). Silverman (2016) has stated that practice-based research is helpful in obtaining more in-depth and realistic outcomes, as compared to other designs and methods. A study conducted by Wallace (2007) developed a practice-centred methodology to test the appropriateness of contemporary jewellery practice as a creative strategy

and as a research tool in the development of contemporary jewellery. That research culminated in physical and conceptual work that has relevance for both design and theory. Such activity represents (historically) a relatively new strand of scholarly endeavour. In this context, the Craft Council's 'Ideas in the Making: Practice in Theory (1998) is interesting. Pamela Johnson noted that;

"It is important that the field of contemporary craft practice becomes more widely understood. The crafts are a diverse and sometimes contradictory set of practices, fundamentally about materials, processes and their related traditions, but it is possible to adopt different positions in relation to them." (Johnson, 1998:10)

Practice based research has been used successfully by other craft practitioners. Flavell (2001) studied drawing and decorating glass using voids and bubbles. Informed by Dormer's (1994) concept of the artistic craftsman, he suggests that the use of materials can be "driven by idea that engender thoughtful response" (p.108). He also suggests that practical knowledge can be inherited through generations of craftsmen. Similarly, Wallace (2007) explores what she describes as "socially embedded practice" (p.102); the social and/or cultural dialogue that is implicit in, particularly, traditional jewellery.

The present research aims to advance knowledge by means of practice in the Omani context. It is based on original ethnographic investigations that were undertaken to gain both knowledge and understanding. This practice based approach offers a significant contribution in its discovery that, in Oman, Dormer's artist craftsmen were frequently artist craftswomen- a factor that had been completely overlooked. It also reinforces Wallace's concept of socially embedded practice by linking traditional Bedouin jewellery with both Islam and availability of easily excessed materials. This serves to offer a deeper understanding of the position that jewellery holds among women in the Bedouin community. Being practice based, the study concludes with the creation of a final product, in itself, provided a significant contribution to knowledge and demonstrated the truth of the concept of inherited knowledge, as its production depended entirely on unwritten skills that had been passed down over many generations.

3.3.1 Ethnographic

- ***How does ethnography inform my developing methodology?***

Ethnography is a well-known qualitative research methodology which is built upon a social science specialism, known as Anthropology (Hammersley, 2005). It is a description and interpretation of a social or cultural group or system. An ethnographic researcher examines the behaviour, customs, and way of life of a group of respondents. In this research, the ethnographic approach has been taken in the first stage of fieldwork and it has utilised two different techniques; snowball sampling and photo elicitation. Ingold (2013) pointed out that an individual learns by watching, listening, feeling, and paying attention to what the world says. Therefore, ethnography is a study about its enduring products, which serve a documentary purpose (Ingold, 2013).

I used ethnography in my journeys to inform my research into traditional Omani jewellery. This was not easy due to a lack of documentation about the contribution of Bedouin women to traditional Omani jewellery. Thus, to explore the sources used for preserving traditional jewellery, I used ethnographic research to define and clarify the research problem. This type of research purpose, according to Hammersley (2005), is to give a researcher a better understanding of the problem. In my case I found very little existing research on the subject matter, so to gain information about Omani traditional jewellery characteristics, I conducted a literature review and then used field research to gain physical evidence. I found the original materials that were used in traditional production practice and enriched my awareness of the cultural and social aspects of Omani Bedouin life.

“Ethnography studies usually try to understand the changes in the group’s culture over time” (Williams, 2011). For example, in the Omani context changes happen when nomadic groups settle. The effect of modernisation has an impact on the specific area of the Omani Bedouin costumes and especially the jewellery. The traditionally spiritual, religious and symbolic values of the jewellery have changed to values which are now simply more material in nature, as they have lost their essence. This phenomenon can be seen in the relationship between Bedouin communities and their jewellery.

3.3.2 Auto-Ethnography

- ***How can the auto-ethnography approach be explained?***

Auto-ethnography is the study of a researcher's observation and experience in a specific culture. In general, auto-ethnography can be perceived as observing the lives of other and/or different people while engaging one's self in the process. It is a research approach, which seeks to describe and analyse personal experiences systematically to understand the culture. This approach is likely to challenge canonical ways of doing research and representing others as a political, socially-just, and socially-conscious act (Harwood and Eaves, 2017). Auto-ethnography is both process and product since the researcher uses the tenets of autobiography and ethnography to perform auto-ethnography (ibid). Rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they do not exist, this approach acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the influence of the researcher on the current study.

3.3.3 Participatory action research (PAR)

- ***What is meant by participatory action research?***

Participatory action research (PAR) refers to an approach taken within groups that places particular emphasis on partaking and engagement. It attempts to inform design with collective effort by engaging in a reflective process. PAR focuses on collective investigation and practices that are based on experience and the social past. Within this context, communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers (Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

PAR researchers consciously attempt to incorporate three core elements of participation, engagement and reflection into their work; partaking (both socially and democratically), being engaged with the past, and researching sufficiently to have a strong grasp of the subject matter through the expansion of their own thought processes (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013). The manner in which each individual element is interpreted and the focus placed upon it differs between different PAR processes and their practical application. Thus, it can be said that PAR does not incorporate an individual set of thoughts and procedures but instead provides a wide-ranging body committed to forming knowledge and

implementing changes within society (Chambers, 2008; Allen, 2001; Camic and Joas, 2003).

3.3.4 Snowball Sampling

- ***How is data collected in snowball sampling?***

Snowball sampling is a data collection technique that uses interviews or surveys to identify and select respondents with particular knowledge, skills or characteristics. These respondents are recruited as part of a committee and/or consultative process. This technique is based on locating information-rich key informants (respondents) (Patton, 1990) by starting with one or two initial respondents, who refer the researcher to other respondents for the study. This method helps the researcher to find research subjects. The researcher might struggle to locate the first case (respondent) who suits his/her needs for his/her project or process. This initial case provides the reference (name) of another respondent to the researcher, who in turn gives the reference of the third respondent, and so on (Vogt, 1999). Snowball sampling is often situated within an expanded set of link-tracing methodologies (Spreen, 1992), whose social networks of identified subjects provide the researcher with a wider set of potential contacts (Thomson, 1997). This approach assumes that there is a link or a bond between the initial sample and others in the identical target population, which allows a chain of referrals to be created within a circle of acquaintance (Berg, 1988).

The main advantage of snowball sampling is that it helps in gathering participants where they are few in number (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). The researcher is also imbued with similar characteristics by using chain referral and becomes a group member or an insider. This strategy helps in the identification of those with the characteristics and skills required.

The snowball sampling method was used in my project, and it is shown in **Error! Unknown switch argument.**. It lists the participants in accordance with the places they come from, and shows their links to both the lead researcher and to each other. The only criterion for creating this sample was that the women came from the governorates of North A'Sharqiyah and South A'Sharqiyah in Eastern Oman. The specific choice of these two governorates

and their relevance to this study was based on the study's overall rationale (see section 1.6).

In figure 3-2, different colours are used to represent the different villages in the two governorates. All the participants came from villages in three wilayats, Ibra, Al Qabil and Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi (see section 1.7).

For cultural reasons, the women preferred not to openly disclose their names, and so neither their names nor their villages will be identified, to ensure anonymity. To distinguish between the informants, however, identification codes such as W1, W2 etc. will be used. With respect to relationship, W1 is actually my own grandmother, and my reason for starting with her relates to my childhood story in section 1.6.

W1 guided me to W2 who had previously bought some of my grandmother's jewellery. Unfortunately, W2 had sold all that jewellery two years before (she needed money to go to *hajj*), and this posed a challenge to my snowball sample because it meant that neither of my first informants had any traditional jewellery left. At the same time, it provided an interesting insight into the extent to which such jewellery was still considered to be a tangible asset - valued more for its intrinsic worth than for any sentimental reason.

An immediate benefit of W2, moreover, was her extensive social network. She took me, and W1, to meet W4 and W5, who lived in the same area. It is worth mentioning that W1 also introduced me to W3 (from the South A'Sharqiyah governorate) and she, in turn, introduced me W9 from the same region. W9 then introduced me to W10 who came from the North A'Sharqiyah.

This is a reflection of how strongly interconnected these women are, but it may also suggest a weakness in the snowball sampling approach. Using snowball sampling, I was eventually able to recruit sixteen women to act as my informants. As shown in Figure 3.2, they were all interconnected through friendship networks, but there is no guarantee that these women were either the best informed, or the most expert, in their craft knowledge. A different group of woman might have given my research a different turn.

A second weakness with this particular group of sixteen women was that liaison was rather difficult. Several of the older women had no phones, and so

messages had to be relayed to them, as opposed to contacting them directly. Secondly, because the women came from A'Sharqiyah North and A'Sharqiyah South, it was physically difficult to organise meetings. The women had to travel considerable distances and meetings had to be arranged at times that were convenient for the majority of the participants.

That having been said, the snowball sampling approach justified its use in the following ways. Firstly, it enabled me to identify women who had knowledge of traditional Omani jewellery, either because they had worn it in the past, or because they still had a collection of such jewellery. Secondly, snowball sampling enabled me to contact women who still used traditional craft techniques and who made traditional Omani head-dresses.

The snowball sample also produced a variety of women, from different communities, each of whom brought with her an individual narrative. These women kept their jewellery in different ways, they had collected it from different sources, and many of the pieces had their own narrative. The economic status of the women also differed. Some were visibly financially better off than others, with the result that their jewellery was valued for its aesthetic or sentimental value, as opposed to being, in some cases, a financial resource.

Finally, the mix of women from the North A'Sharqiyah and those who came from the South A'Sharqiyah suggests that snowball sampling could be a useful approach if this research were to be extended into different areas or regions of Oman. Gaining the co-operation of trusted local informants is clearly an effective approach.

Turning now to planning, at the start of my study. I realised that the current literature on Oman has no anthropological research on the role of jewellery in Omani culture. For this reason, I approached my grandmother, hoping to be put in touch with other women of her generation; the last people to own and actually wear traditional Omani jewellery.

As explained above, this initial approach led to the creation of a web of informants, including one woman who was expert in making headdresses. This interaction led to collaboration in making a headdress, and it also gave me the idea of learning traditional craft techniques, so that they would not be lost, and so that they could be passed down to a younger generation.

Upon reflection, I decided that this transmission of skills would be best accomplished through a co-creation workshop, in which different talents could be pooled, practised and passed on. I then decided to use photo elicitation to awake the dormant memories of the women who owned jewellery, and also to discover if there were any discrepancies between their recollections and the way in which outside sources had displayed traditional Omani jewellery.

During the co-creation process, I was prepared to allow for both change and improvisation. I had not anticipated that a man would express interest in the work, but in the event, his participation caused no controversy. He was related to one of the women in the group (W7) and he worked on his own, and so he was effectively a tolerated outlier. Had this participant been a strange man, however, it is more than likely that the women would have rejected his inclusion in the co-creation group.

This raises the importance of kinship. I believe very strongly that much of the co-operation I received from my co-creation group was based on the fact that I am my grandmother's grand-daughter. To that extent I was regarded as a known quantity, and the women also appreciated the fact that I took time to talk to them and to explain my research aims. They knew what I was looking for because I was open, and told them that I would like to meet women who had particular knowledge or craft skills, and who still kept silver Omani jewellery. The women were then asked to identify other such women and introduce them to me.

In fact, there were very few women to choose from, because most of the generation (over 60 years' age) have died. For this reason, I found it impossible to meet a woman who was skilled in modifying silver jewellery. I found no one who was expert in weaving the thread required to link silver components together, and so alter the form as structure of, say, a necklace. I was, however, fortunate when W5 helped me to find W7, who was skilled in making *shaabook*.

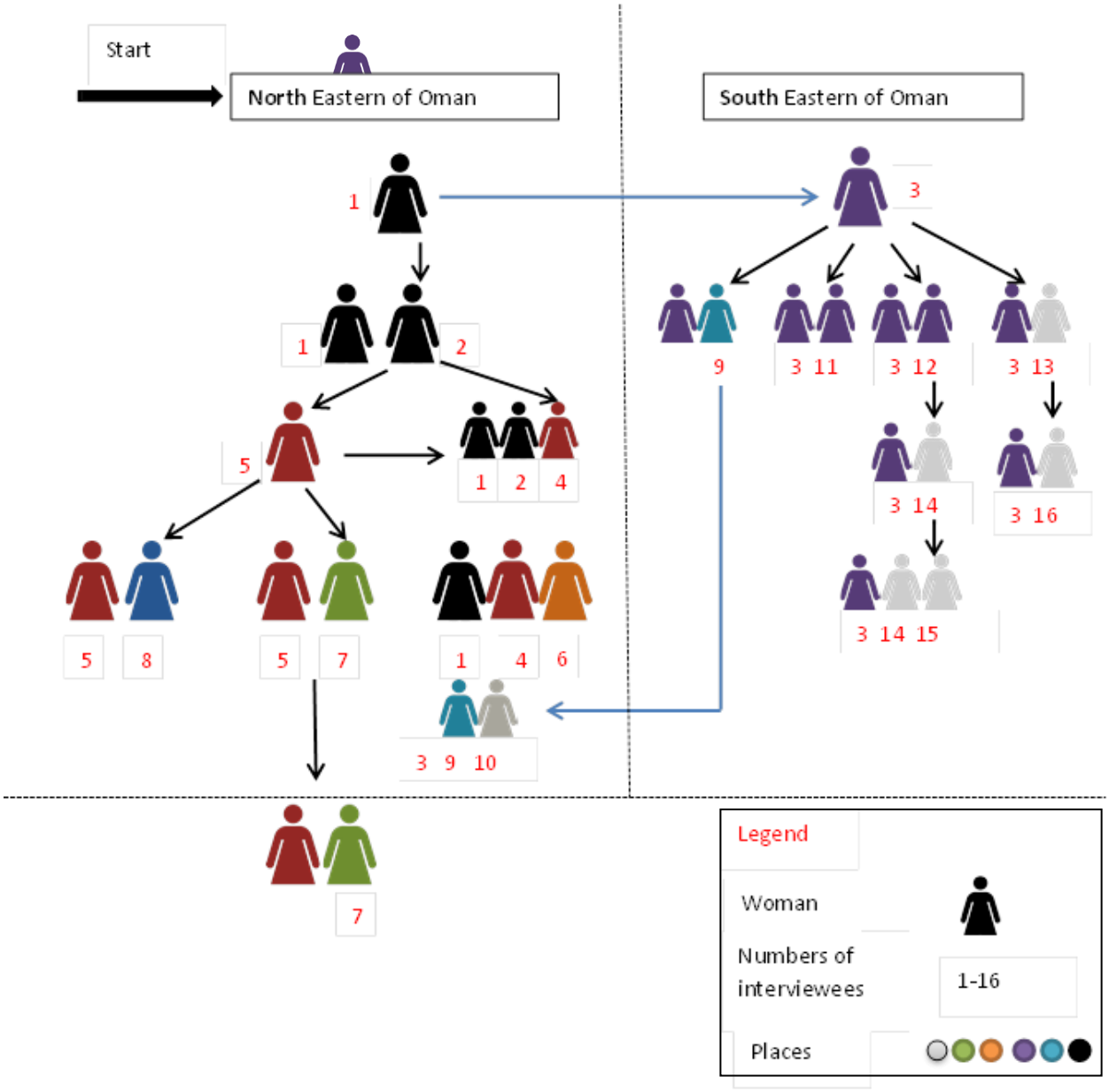

Figure 3-2 Visualisation of snowball sampling

The fieldwork 2 was located in Wilayat Ibra in A'Sharqiyah North by identifying that woman. In addition, the process allowed me to learn details about the value and details of *shaabook*, and one was then designed in collaboration with W7. W7 did the tanning to produce the leather for the next workshop and she was also part of the co-creation group.

3.3.5 Photo-Elicitation

- ***What is the photo-elicitation method used for?***

Photo-elicitation is a qualitative research technique broadly used in the social sciences. It guides and prompts in-depth interviews by using images. According to John Collier (1957), the technique of inserting a photograph into a research interview is termed photo elicitation. It is based on the simple idea of using a photograph during a research interview. This allows the photo to create a point of commonality between the respondents and the researcher to permit communication between the two parties to flow more easily (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004).

The aim of introducing photographs into interviews is to create a platform for the respondents to share their knowledge. This method encourages the participants to recall memories and narrate their experiences.

For instance, on one occasion when I met a participant, I used the photos from Morris and Shelton (1997) to elicit the participant's memories and experiences of traditional Omani jewellery. The photos of Morris and Shelton (1997) present traditional Omani jewellery as worn by the Bedouin women in Oman. On seeing these photos, the participant expressed some surprise that documentation existed for such old jewellery. This scenario prompted the participant to open up a discussion on the documented photos and to name the jewellery. Afterwards, the participants discussed their own piece of jewellery with me (the researcher of this thesis), and also presented their own jewellery. Thus, trust was established before the Bedouin woman presented her jewellery, which she had owned for about 50 years. She said that she had not worn it for most of that time and it was clear that the shiny silver had tarnished.

However, this experience was a challenge for me because these women were, understandably, unwilling to show their jewellery to a stranger, hence photo-elicitation. This is the advantage of this technique: where photos are selected from the literature to bring back memories, to start possible discussions and to build trust with others. In addition, the benefit of this approach is that W1, W2, W3, W5, W6, W7, W9, W10, W11, W13, W16 spotted the jewellery that was being worn incorrectly and they asserted that this was not the culturally correct way to wear the jewellery.

3.3.6 Co-creation

- ***Which technique is used for producing new values?***

Co-creation is the joint, collaborative, concurrent, and peer-like process of producing new value (Brunner, 2016). Co-creating spaces is essential in exceedingly complex spaces and areas that fuel individuals' interests. Co-creation can be defined as a management initiative that brings a unique blend of ideas from different viewers or experimenters to generate new ideas. Within design, it provides the prospect of extensive change as it alters the tools, methods and nature of design (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Figure 3-3 illustrates the change in thinking of different individuals at different times from 1980 to 2000. The planners progress toward becoming translators of individuals' needs and not only the makers of artefacts (Sander, 2005). People can be inspired by the influence of others and can benefit from a collaborative collection of different ideas through co-creation (ibid).

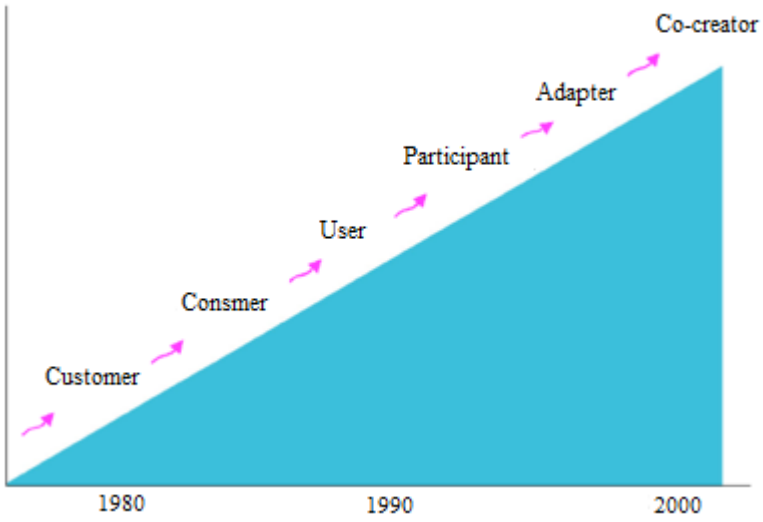

Figure 3-3 Changes in the way we think about people (Sander, 2005)

Figure 3-4, illustrates my 'co-creation' group. I used the snowball sampling method to reach my participants. I started from the two elder women W5 and W7 from fieldwork 1. W7 accompanied me to meet a young woman who was skilled in *siim* (WS). W5 introduced me to another young woman skilled in *tali* (WT). W5 and WT introduced me to another young woman who was skilled in *sifah* (WF). A male participant (MB) was skilled in making basketry for collecting dates. He was interested in the co-creation group's interaction, and voluntarily offered to join the group. Our co-creation group was thus composed of six participants, excluding me, who were somehow biologically related to each other. That is normal, due to the family structures within the Bedouin community.

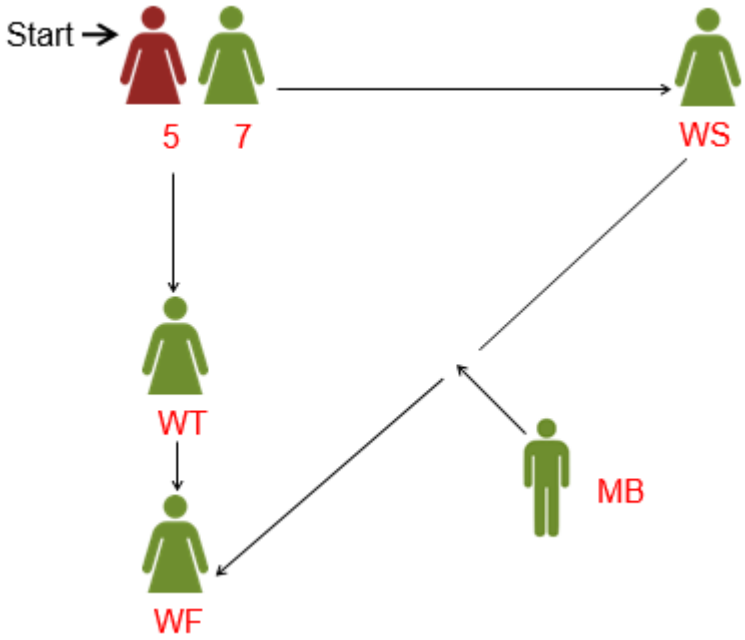

Figure 3-4 Visualisation of the co-creation group

3.3.7 Observing, thinking, making, interacting and reflecting

Reflexivity is a step beyond reflectivity, which involves thinking from experience (Bolton 2010). It also involves the search for an approach that allows us to question our habitual actions. Macbeth (2001) defines reflexivity as a deconstruction exercise for locating the intersections of author, text, and word. As an artist, I am very much positioned within research and my practice is implicitly interwoven into my representations and research methodologies in many ways. The foundation of my research began through the evaluation of my own praxis and the practice of my contemporaries within the field.

On first embarking on this form of practice-based research, I faced the challenge of how to communicate an experience while living it. This is relevant to my work as practicing something in the learning phase resulted in better outcomes. As part of the outcome of this research I have produced a body of work within my studio practice. My experiences within my studio practice, combined with knowledge gained in the fieldwork, have contributed significantly towards my research. They brought insights through experience. I had to be methodically reflexive about developments at the bench. The recording methods involved in this (e.g. photography) act as structured and deliberate auto-ethnographic research methods.

I have investigated approaches, processes, techniques, and materials through experimentation and the development of practice within the wider contemporary context. As a reflective practitioner, I have an informed perspective on issues relating to practice, and my practice provides the means to explore the knowledge embedded within objects. It greatly contributes to the wider development and understanding of process. This ongoing reflexivity gave me the insights that were needed to study the subject in-depth from the perspective of a maker and they were robustly informed by my academic and theoretical research and writing.

Schön (1983) introduced the idea of reflective practice. As a reflective practitioner, Legg determined that it was important to take a participatory role as an artist as well as the project designer/curator (Legg, 2012). I have illustrated the drive and processes involved in my own working methods in Figure 3-1 alongside those of others through reflective practice as shown in Figure 3-5. The idea of the researcher as a participating artist is in line with the recognised type of multiple research roles that are themselves in keeping with the diversity of exploratory practices pursued by many researchers. My multi-method approach is tailored to my specific project, providing me with what I believe to be a rich information source for the field as a whole. This approach is characteristic of Artistic Methodology, which involves diverse and experimental research methods and techniques. Whether working in the studio, in the museum, in the classroom, or on the internet, particular approaches prevail and these include; visualising, sensing, intuiting, focusing, reasoning, questioning, grounding, comparing and interpreting (Sullivan, 2010). These are the kind of capacities that characterise the way that artists work and are also the attributes needed for conducting effective research in the field. This multi-method artistic approach has engaged me in;

- The generation of research material in the form of artefacts through an active creative process.
- The facilitation and management of specific projects.
- The observation of others in order to place my practice and my research in context and to gain insight into other possible perspectives through interviews.

- Self-observation through reflection in action, which is developed through communicating with others.

I created my own diagram to illustrate the development of my method during my PhD period (see Figure 3-5). As shown in the drawing it moves frequently between east (Oman) and west (UK). The first step in this process was in 2014 to observe jewellery issues in Oman by visiting traditional souqs such as those in Nizwa and Muttrah and visiting the Bait Al-Zubair and Bait Muzna museums. I found the National Museum closed for maintenance in 2014 but visited it later (in 2017). In addition, I visited some fashion designers' boutiques. In the same year I went to the UK to make some prototypes using information I learned from the literature review about traditional Omani jewellery. After a careful analysis, I decided to change the original plan of focussing on cities and fashion designers as interviewees and I decided that, instead, local Bedouin women would be considered for the actual targeted interviews.

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was sought from Sheffield Hallam University. In 2015, in fieldwork 1 I collected data from 16 participants. I took the data back to the UK to prepare a reflection design in the SHU studio. A major advantage of fieldwork 1 is that I interacted with an expert woman (W5) who crafted the traditional *shaabook* headdress. That led me to think about the next fieldwork. On completion of fieldwork 1, the sampling method was carried out for fieldwork 2 in 2016 to select the workshop participants. I organised a co-creation workshop, involving 6 participants, to create jewellery using traditional craft skills. Reflection work was then done back in the UK. In 2017, with a growing awareness and interest in incorporating hybrid elements as part of traditional practice I collected objects from the A'Sharqiyah South coast. I took the collection of objects (the tops of 400 bottles of water) to the SHU studio. The outcome was the culmination of all my experience through my research.

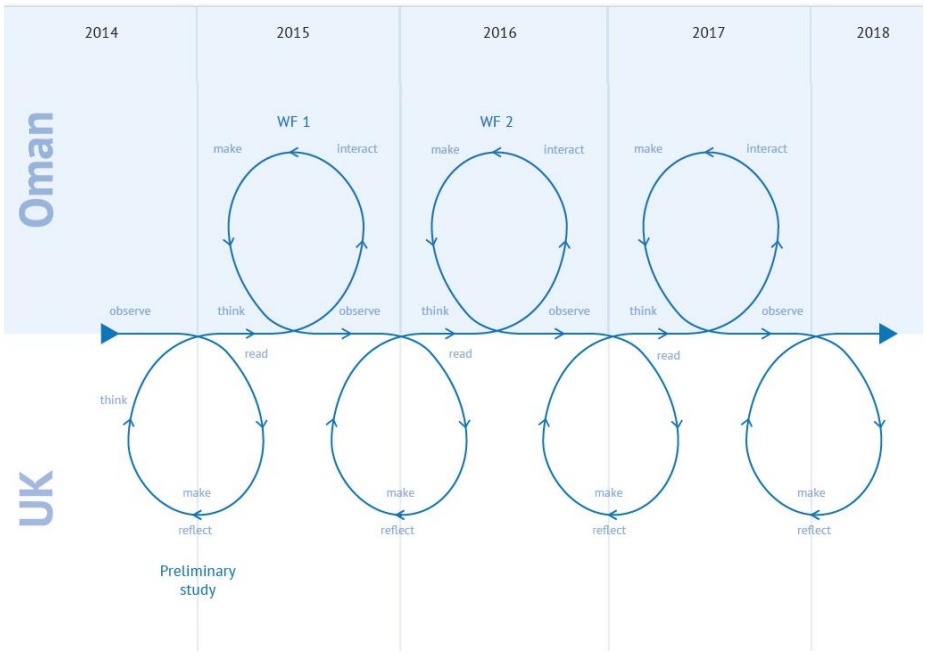

Figure 3-5 Research journey between Oman and UK

3.4 *Visual Data*

I started my photography practice at the undergraduate stage by participating in the photography society at Sultan Qaboos University. This participation enabled me to photograph the research stages. Most of the photographic images in this study have been taken by me, mainly during the interviews and the practical investigation. One advantage of this was the ability to build trust between me and the participants. Bedouin society is a conservative community and working with women requires the building of trust. Using my own camera while I am talking with women provides comfort and trust among these women. Also, the talk becomes more organised because we talked about each piece of jewellery and I photographed it. Then we moved to another piece.

Another advantage of the photograph is recording the owner and wearer of jewellery in the present day. Anthropologists have documented traditional Omani silver jewellery from the nineteenth century until 1970s. This study updates our knowledge of Omani jewellery.

More than that, my use of photographs is part of my investigation and analysis. My lens captured the woven thread and leather in the silver jewellery and that became my focus. I kept looking for women who still had skills in threading. Unfortunately, those women had all passed away, but I did find a woman who was skilled in weaving leather.

A major advantage of taking photographs by myself is that it is part of my creative work. I selected and organised a collection of photos taken during the PhD period in one book. It is a visual document that comes with the written thesis. I included photos from my primary research, interviews, co-creation workshop, sketches and my practice steps in my workshop.

3.5 *Ethical Issues in this Research*

- ***What are the ethical issues faced during this study?***

Ethical considerations were an important part of my research as I had selected some methods that would require direct communication with people. Applying for Sheffield Hallam University's "Ethical Approval Form for Post-Graduate"; took place after the Interim Assessment and approval was granted. I explained the consent form and its guarantee of confidentiality to the participants. Anonymity had to be maintained regarding the names of female participants and their locations. After the interviewees agreed to participate in this research, I asked them all to sign the consent forms. However two of the interviewees (both Bedouin women) only gave me verbal consent. They are very old and they were not able to physically sign. These two women agreed to be part of this research due to the hospitality and confidence that I had been able to established with them.

Photography and audio recording was discussed with the participants and they consented for me to use this material as part of this thesis. The confidential and anonymous participants' data are considered as a part of the research. Participants, especially women were assured that all their personal details and information, together with the data they provided would be treated confidentially and only with their permission.

The participants in this research were also asked to sign the Participant Consent Form for the use of images (See appendix.) Also, for the copyright of images used in the thesis permission was taken from people themselves, from museums, instagram accounts, puplisher and websites.

In addition, I use the SHU Research Store and the SHU Research Data Archive to store my research data. Most of that data is in the photo book which I plan to publish, thus ensuring that there will be a permanent record of my findings.

During the first fieldwork, I purchased one piece of jewellery. The owner was willing to sell it to me for the purpose of the research. In the spirit of the nomadic Bedouin where deconstructing and reassembling of jewellery was a common practice I used some of the silver components of the purchased piece in my contemporary designs with the aim of creating a link between the past and the present.

3.6 *Summary*

This chapter has presented the methodology used in this work. The chapter employed a practice-based research approach that is based on the knowledge of fieldwork. This approach is associated with two stages of fieldwork that include the ethnographic and the auto-ethnography research methods. This type of method is associated with the creation of a creative artefact, or artefacts, and leads to new understanding, regarding the practice. The study uses an ethnographic approach that is further associated with two different techniques, namely snowball sampling and photo elicitation. Snowball sampling involves interviewing selected respondents with particular skills and knowledge. The technique of photo elicitation, a qualitative research technique, is broadly used in social sciences. Chapter 4 will present the investigative part of this work, the data and design.

Chapter 4: PRACTICAL INVESTIGATION

Chapter 4 PRACTICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 *Introduction*

The previous chapter discussed the methodology used in this project. The research journey between Oman and UK (Figure 3-5) helped to structure chapter 4. This chapter will present the new designs of contemporary jewellery proposed in this project. These designs are associated both with the sources that were discovered in the literature review, and with the events that occurred during the visit to the sites with participants. Section 4.2 describes the background of the project. Chapter 4 discusses five themes I have addressed in my jewellery making practice. These are:

- Jewellery and materials (4.3)
- Jewellery and mixed cultures (section 4.4)
- Jewellery and social practice (section4.7)
- Jewellery and recycling and sustainability (section 4.10)
- Jewellery and technologies (section 4.11).

4.2 *Project Background*

This project was formally initiated in 2010, when the researcher conducted her study in the field of art and design to develop contemporary jewellery while doing her Master's degree course at Coventry University. Several pieces of jewellery were then designed at key stages of this PhD project, using the above-mentioned methodology (Chapter 3). Some designs were developed following the literature review using metal combined with wood and paper for prototyping. The jewellery designs during the two stages of fieldwork, use leather for interpreting Omani traditional jewellery, and the internal parts of animals for interpreting the concept of the disappearance of traditional jewellery. The final work combines metal, leather, plastic, hair and wood and is a synthesis of the experiences and knowledge gained from these different stages of the project.

The table below (Table 2) summarises my PhD study period from 2014 to 2018 in terms of action and themes. The following sections will follow the theme and timeline depicted in the table.

Table 2 PhD timeline

Year	Place	Action	Themes
2014	Oman UK	Preliminary research Reflection	Jewellery and materials
2015	Oman UK	Fieldwork 1 Reflection	Jewellery and mixed cultures
2016	Oman UK	Fieldwork 2 Reflection	Jewellery and social practice
2017	Oman UK	Collect and create Reflection	Jewellery and recycling and sustainability
2018	UK	3D print	Jewellery and technologies

4.3 *Theme 1*: *Jewellery and materials*

In contemporary jewellery, the material used can be a prominent part of the overall concept. Such material is frequently the core of the art piece. In this stage, I explored traditional materials such as metal alongside less conventional materials such as wood, plastic and paper. In later stages, I used leather, pipe cleaners, a mixture of metal and leather along with plastic, hair, wood, nylon and even animal intestines, stomachs and livers. These materials inspired me to create both permanent and ephemeral jewellery. As the research progressed, the material itself became a focal point of my work and a tool to convey my concept. For example, the use of leather in my work became a central concern in designing, making and as a symbolic reflection on the Bedouin community identity.

4.3.1 Oman (2014) Preliminary research

The first step in this process was to read the previous studies documenting traditional Omani jewellery as described in section 2.4. Also, I examined the jewellery that is currently on sale in Oman by visiting traditional markets (*souq*) such as those in Nizwa and Muttrah, and then I visited the jewellery collection in the Bait Al-Zubair museum and Bait Muzna gallery. I found the National Museum closed for maintenance and then officially open in 2016, so I visited it in 2017. I also visited some fashion designers' boutiques such as that of Alaa Al-Siyabi. The first question that resulted from these preliminary investigations was to determine my research direction, that is whether to deal with the *souq*

salesman, the museum curator or the fashion designer?

4.3.2 UK (2014) Reflection

Prior to the fieldwork, which was related to the development of my practice-based research, I designed three different rings, named Time Travel, Domes, and Memory. These concepts came from working with ideas relating to Islamic and Omani identity. These prototype designs were based on the knowledge acquired during the literature review relating to traditional silver jewellery (section 2.4.1.1) and were designed without involving participants.

4.3.2.1 Time Travel

The *shahid* is a ring usually worn on the index finger (Figure 4-1) to imply a core Islamic declaration of witness (see section 2.4.1.1). It presents a clear example of jewellery that has a strong association with the Omani identity and this was discussed earlier in section 2.5.1. The traditional ring has two shapes, either a tear-drop or a circle surmounted by lozenge-shape decorated with leaf and floral patterns or with geometrical patterns. The ring I produced was designed in three different dimensions: tear-drop shape, geometric pattern (i.e. Islamic), and the final shape and design is illustrated in figure 4.2. Muslims usually point the index finger upwards while praying to imply that there is only one God. When Muslims witness the shahada (a statement that "there is no God but God, and Mohamed is the messenger of God"), they point their index finger. Thus, this ring draws attention to this finger, reminding them of this statement. Therefore, my own three design rings were named time travel to imply the past (flat shape with pattern), present (only flat shape without pattern), and future (3D shape with pattern) (Figure 4-2).

Figure 4-1 *Shahid* ring purchased from a silver shop in the North Sharqiyah of Oman (6×3×2 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Time Travel is a contemporary version of the *shahid ring to be* worn on the index finger. I used laser cutting and engraving techniques in plywood. *Shahid* ring designs have been maintained for a long time without any change. This design demonstrates a change in understanding of the meaning of Omani jewellery between the past and present and, perhaps, the future. For instance, within the two layers, the lower part which has the pattern on it represents the past, but the middle design features a top layer which does not have a pattern on it. It reflects how people in recent times have forgotten the meaning of the *shahid* ring. In the third ring, I made several gradual changes in the material, form, techniques and pattern.

I changed the form of *shahid* design from flat to 3D design. Also, I used an Islamic geometric pattern to reflect the Islamic concept. The 3D dimension of the third ring emphasised this idea, as the application of Islamic patterns to the surface reinforced the original message of such rings. I made these changes to explore how the traditional ring could inform new designs. However, I kept the original shape of the ring and the concept without change. In the early stage of my practice I did not make very big changes but only gradually developed my design.

Figure 4-2 Time Travel (Image from lift to right (a, b, c), (a) Time Travel (past) 4×4×3 CM, (b) Time Travel (present) 4×4×3 CM, (c) Time Travel (future) 4×4×5,5 CM, Plywood, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2014)

4.3.2.2 Domes

Domes are a series of metal rings made from copper. I used an etching technique for their architecture designs, based on an Islamic mosque. The *shahid* design surmounted by a lozenge-shape decorated with leaf and floral patterns was repeated using CorelDRAW graphic design software to develop the design. The shapes are joined together to form a dome, which represents the past, mixed with contemporary architecture (the domes of Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque (SQGM) in Muscat, Oman, which opened in 2001) as shown in

Figure 4-3. The present architecture of that mosque makes its own references to the past, so more discussion of this dialogue between past and present is depicted in my own work and in the national public identity discourse. The domes were shaped by cutting their edges to imitate the outline of the domes of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. I chose this title because my designs look like a dome, which is inspired by the architectural feature in the mosque.

Figure 4-3 Domes Image from top to down Domes rings (a, b, c), (a) 4×3,5×5 CM, (b) 4×4×5 CM, (c) 5×5×4 CM, Copper, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2014)

4.3.2.3 Memory

The structure of the Memory ring is made from laser cut Arabic calligraphy of some personal narratives using paper similar to that used to print Quranic verses. These verses used to be written by Muslims and worn as protection. They used to be beautifully printed on paper, using saffron, and are named *hirz*, an Arabic word which implies protection power. They were believed to be powerful enough to protect the wearer from many diseases, including psychiatric problems.

This design reflected the idea of visibility and invisibility. The *hirz* itself is a case, which you can observe but you cannot read what is inside it. I explored this idea in my design to show the writing inside *hirz*.

Figure 4-4 Memory (6×3×6 CM, Copper & paper, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2014)

At the end of this year my report focused on jewellery that could be found in the cities and fashion designers' boutiques. As my research developed, I decided to change the plan to work with the local Bedouin women as the actual targeted interviewees in order to more fully explore the traditions that underline Omani jewellery

4.4 *Theme 2: Jewellery and mixed cultures*

Although my background and culture is rooted within Islamic traditions I have had a lot of interaction with global culture as a consequence of studying in the Western world. Thus in my current position, I could see from a wider perspective, that within Omani society, in recent years, there has been a shift in the meaning or value of jewellery. New jewellery produced in Oman typically maintains the old designs without growing or developing them. I feel that this can still be regarded as creative, as it is an aesthetic and social response. It reflects human values within one particular social dimension.

I realise that the jewellery that I make can be regarded as a meaningful structure that represents my world view, not just as an individual, but as representative of my community. As I live abroad and I am jewellery designer, I have the potential to explore social reality through my work, which is a factor that those living entirely within Oman may not consider. What is considered "normal" in Omani society holds deep meaning and is open to a variety of interpretation, depending on standpoint. The same is true of jewellery. At one level, its purpose is purely decorative, but jewellery can be a 'mini social record' that provides a lot of information about the structure of social life in certain communities. It involves many aspects, especially social, cultural, economic and even political factors.

4.4.1 Oman (2015) Fieldwork 1

- ***Creating a network of informants***

The journey of the development of the three jewellery items I created in the initial stage of the project has been described in the previous section in terms of my theoretical and conceptual approach. I had been reflecting on this approach by reading about manifestations of Omani identity to find a conceptual and practical link with 'living' and developing traditions. This provided a dialogue between past and present ways of life as embodied in the making and wearing of jewellery.

This section describes the first fieldwork that was conducted prior to the start of the reinterpretation of *shaabook* and *mulwiyah* in my work. This stage led to the creation of three further rings made from the leather thread, normally used to produce *shaabook.*

"En Afrique, quand un vieillard meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle" is a quote from a famous African writer and ethnologist, Amadou Hampate Bâ (The African Studies Centre Leiden, 2018). It is translated as "when an old man dies in Africa, it is a library which is burnt down". By collecting and translating oral and ethnological texts, Amadou managed to produce a medium for preserving and transmitting/translating oral knowledge and art in Africa to various audiences without reviewing written literature. Inspired by Amadou's ideas related to oral knowledge, I collected oral knowledge about traditional jewellery from settled Bedouin women. Such knowledge was employed to explore traditional jewellery owned by Omani Bedouin in order to create contemporary jewellery.

My qualitative research adopted a snowball sampling approach and a photo-elicitation technique to collect oral knowledge of traditional jewellery from Bedouin women after being inspired by Amadou's ideas related to oral knowledge. Such knowledge is employed to explore the traditional jewellery owned by Omani Bedouin to create contemporary jewellery that represents aspects of Omani national identity. It develops an association between past and present ways of life as embodied in the making and wearing of jewellery.

4.4.2 Method used for fieldwork

This section provides the methods adopted for creating different types of rings, which were made from leather thread following the snowball sampling approach. The snowball sampling approach was started with the first participant, who directed me to the next participant. Sixteen women participated in the research via this method, and this helped to provide a geographical spread of these women in Eastern Oman. This process allowed me to learn the value, the creation process, and the finer details of a *shaabook* as it was designed as a co-creation with one of the interviewees who was able to provide expert knowledge of making *shaabook* headdress. Expert knowledge is particularly beneficial in undocumented situations similar to the current project.

The Photo-elicitation methods encouraged my participants to reminisce and tell their own narratives and experiences. These narratives and experiences are important for drawing attention to the fact that the source of expert knowledge has been identified during this process. Photo-elicitation is therefore a useful technique as it can enable collaboration with the so-called expert which will then help in the next step of creating jewellery, i.e. to produce a *shaabook*.
The findings from the participants were discussed in depth in conversations between each individual and the researcher during the field research held in July 2015. As an insider researcher (an Omani woman from this region) and a speaker of Arabic and the local dialect of Arabic, I had the privilege of accessing the conservative community of the Omani-Arab Bedouin women. It is important to note that mixed company with anyone outside the family would be unusual in Oman, and therefore access to these women was only possible because I am a woman. This privileged access as an insider was particularly evident when the Bedouin women sang the delicate Bedouin poems, which then became part of the contribution to knowledge (see section 4.6.1.2). This could have been very challenging for an outside researcher who did not share the women's ethnic roots, language and Omani nationality. This allowed me to investigate how social contexts relate to the traditional and cultural identity before designing the rings described in the next sections.

The outcomes of this study after conducting sixteen interviews revealed that some of the interviewees still owned most of their traditional silver jewellery. However, some others owned only a part of their traditional jewellery or no

jewellery at all. Based on the oral knowledge acquired through these informants, it became possible to estimate the value of traditional jewellery to its traditional owners and users.

4.4.3 Fieldwork – The First Stages

- ***What procedure was followed during the fieldwork?***

The fieldwork started in July 2015. This initial scoping trip was important in beginning to understand and develop academic knowledge about the study of settled Bedouin women's jewellery in an Omani context. The second stage of the project was concerned with identifying suitable partners to construct theoretically meaningful co-creative participatory activities and workshops. The research methods included observation and qualitative research. The key informants were identified using the snowball sampling technique and from the semi-structured interviews conducted between 18th July and 31st August 2015 in Southern and North Eastern Oman with 16 participants. As a result of these activities, I designed three different types of rings, titled Domination, Peace, and Sound (see section 4.6.2). I also adopted a photo-elicitation technique in order to acquire oral knowledge during the interviews conducted with the above participants. Based on the knowledge acquired from the literature review, the photo-elicitation techniques also formed part of the main study of this project.
The snowball sampling method allowed me to find one woman who was a maker of headdresses (*shaabook*). She was able to provide expert knowledge of *shaabook*. I learned the traditional weaving techniques of *shaabook* from W5. We made a small *shaabook* together. Expert knowledge is particularly beneficial in undocumented situations such as in the current project (McBride and Burgman, 2012). This woman was selected as a key to the next fieldwork. The participants are shown in

Table 3:

Table 3 Sampling

Participant	Number	Ethnicity	Region
No longer own their own traditional Omani silver jewellery	8	*Hadher*	Eastern Oman (North A'Sharqiyah and South A'Sharqiyah)
Own some of their traditional Omani silver jewellery	3	Born as Settled Bedouin but still known as Bedouin	
Own most of their traditional Omani silver jewellery	5	Born as Nomadic Bedouin and now settled	

4.4.4 Snowball Sampling

The snowball sampling approach started from the empty box in which my grandmother used to keep her jewellery. My grandmother currently lives in Al Nasib village, where she moved from her home town of *Sabt*. She sold all her jewellery 20 years ago except one necklace. This is one important reason why we lost our family heritage. Another reason is that she is an example of a nomadic woman, who married a non-nomadic settled man. Richardson and Dorr (2003) asserted that tribal and regional structures directly influence crafts industries in Oman. One of my personally motivated research methods was to set off on a journey, crossing the Omani desert to fill my grandmother's empty box through my contemporary designs (Figure 4-5).

Figure 4-5 The empty box (60×80×50 CM, Wood& copper, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.4.5 Photo Elicitation

I used photo-elicitation and objects as probes to provoke a conversation with each individual during the field research. The photo-elicitation method encouraged my participants to bring their memories back and to share their narratives and experiences. It allowed collaboration with the so-called expert in order to produce a *shaabook* headdress. I put the objects and photos in one box. I used real jewellery, such as rings, *hirz*, *kohl* sticks, and necklaces which were collected from the silver market (Figure 4-6). I needed to be careful to choose the right photos and objects belonging to Eastern Oman, particularly Bedouin jewellery. The photos were taken from the study conducted by Morris and Shelton (1997) because the photographs display traditional Omani jewellery. Through interviewing the women I collected more objects from the participants such as necklaces, bracelets, and headdresses (Figure 4-7). The necklace was given to me. The bracelet was found in the *wadi* (riverbed) and I bought it from W3. I bought the *nis'ah* headdress from W 11.

Figure 4-6 Objects and photos in one box (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-7 Necklace, bracelet, and *nis'ah* (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.5 *Key findings from the semi-structured interviews*

During the course of the sixteen interviews, I discovered that eight of the women no longer owned their jewellery, three owned some of their jewellery and five still owned most of their jewellery. It became possible to estimate the

value of traditional jewellery based on the oral knowledge acquired through these informants.

4.5.1 Participants who no longer own their jewellery (first group)

It was noted that jewellery was sold to the traders who took economic advantage of the sellers. At no time did the traders consider the jewellery's heritage or cultural significance when setting a price (Morris, Shelton, 1997). The traders purchased the jewellery based purely on the weight and value of the metal, not on its heritage and craftsmanship. This was the main reason for the disappearance of such heritage (Forster, 1998). I learnt that the sellers (first group) realised that they had lost their family heritage. It is important to distinguish between the different types of values. The current economic social context having changed, the sellers now realise that the monetary value of their jewellery was even higher than the value they were given at that time. However, the value in terms of intangible heritage is also a significant loss. It is important to distinguish between the different types of values. This trading phenomenon still exists and traders continue to target settled Bedouins, who still own traditional jewellery. Moreover, it was also learnt that other sellers still traded their jewellery to markets (i.e. Nizwa market) where tourists frequently visited.

On one occasion, I met a woman who had bought my grandmother's jewellery. She explained that she had sold the jewellery to a silver shop in Nizwa market two years before. The jewellery had been valued on its silver weight. Her explanation recalled the summer of 2014 when I visited the market. I saw old silver jewellery was still sold and that tourists were interested in it and bought that old silver jewellery. Oman has occupied a prime position in terms of the economic, social, and developmental advances in the Gulf in the last three decades, but most of the literature mentions that the value of Omani silver jewellery decreases with time (Baporika, 2015; Al Balushi et al., 2014). Even so, one proprietor was found in the Sharjah Souq (a market in the United Arab Emirates popular for buying jewellery), who gave a high value to the older Omani silver jewellery. He estimated the age of the jewellery according to the tarnishes and the indents created as a result of wearing the jewellery. The trading practice of Sharjah should be applied in Oman to preserve the remaining old jewellery and to look at historical value rather than surface value, which is the weight of silver.

4.5.2 Participants who still own some of their jewellery (second)

With regard to the second group of Bedouins who owned some of their jewellery, it came to my attention that the jewellery was sold in stages. This is because of the Islamic religious command, which requires that an annual obligatory charity[1] is paid for silver jewellery. The owners had to sell some of their jewellery so that they did not have to pay the annual obligatory charity for jewellery that was worn. In some cases, when jewellery is owned by wealthy people, it is secured as family wealth and is considered as heritage in Oman as it can be used for dowry. Therefore, the selling is triggered by financial difficulties in a family, and, in one such instance, I was actually able to purchase one piece of jewellery during the visit and interviewed the previous owner. Here, it is important to note that such charity is based on the weight of the silver; therefore, the silver components might be disassembled from non-silver objects during the weighing process.

4.5.3 Participants who own most of their jewellery (third group)

The third group of Bedouins who still own most of their jewellery have high social status and they were interested in keeping their heritage. Five of the women had sufficient income to afford the annual obligatory charity and to keep their existing wealth. At the same time, their decision might be based on personal value and meaning, which is realised as memory and family heritage. According to Ahde-Deal “Pieces of jewelry often act as mediators between people, generations, and eras” (Ahde-Deal, 2013 p 23). This third group decided to keep their jewellery until now because to them the jewellery was more important than other objects.

W10 hoped that she would get her headdress back. It was a *shaabook* that had been sold to a man who collected jewellery from different women and displayed it in his private museum in Al Kamil Wal Wafi, North A'Sharqiyah Governorate, Oman. The same person asked W11 to sell her *nis’ah* to him but she refused. Later, she sold it to me for the purpose of research. However, six of my

[1] This is known as Zakat in Arabic, and an obligatory, not a voluntary charity. It forms part of the third pillar of Islam. “My mercy encompasses all things, but I will specify it for the righteous who give Zakah” (Quran 7:156).

interviewees strongly rejected the idea of selling what they still had, especially all the silver jewellery. They would not sell anything as they felt guilty. The jewellery did not just remind them of their life story and experiences but also was part of a cultural heritage to be handed to the next generation. This is an interesting finding, which tends to reflect on my own impact as a researcher in raising their awareness of the value of their craft and their adornment heritage.

The third group was also motivated by religious commands, which require a will. In Islamic law, a will is a legal declaration which signifies the intention of the testator (the maker of the will) with regard to the distribution of his/her wealth, and who is not entitled to inherit anything. A will comes into operation after the testator's death. Bequests may not exceed one third of the wealth and it is an obligation for anyone who has wealth worth bequeathing. The will is executed after payment of debts and funeral expenses.[2] Therefore, they did not sell their jewellery as parts of the divine commands, which necessitate that they keep their jewellery for the future generations as part of the family heritage. Moreover, this group kept the jewellery for display purposes, which are economically and culturally beneficial during heritage festivals (Figure 4-8).

Figure 4-8 Jewellery as a family heritage (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

As mentioned in the literature review, there are two headdress types made of leather and silver which are *Shabkah* and *nis'ah*. The third group explained that there are actually four types of the headdress made of leather and silver. They are *shabkah* or *mins'aa*, *shaabook*, *nis'ah* and *nisfay.* The following information came from Al-hashmi (2017) who is the head of the Old Castle Museum in Al-

[2] Anande Tripathi, 'The Concept of 'Will' Under Muslim Law: A Study' International Journal of Law and Legal Jurisprudence Studies 4, no. 3 (2017): 70-83; David Stephan Powers, 'Inheritance', in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 520.

Kamel. The headdresses were widely worn in North A'Sharqiyah and South A'Sharqiyah. There is a slight difference between these types. The smallest headdress is called *nisfiy* (Figure 4-9). It is worn at the front of the head. The second type is called *shaabook* (Figure 4-10). It covers the upper half of the head. During the workshop, the Bedouin women explained that *shaabook* was actually derived from “entanglement” in Arabic, a reference to the complex weaving technique. The third type is *nis’ah* which is worn on the lower half of the head (Figure 4-11). The biggest type is called *shabkah* or *mins’aa* (Figure 4-12). *Shabkah* referred to a net in English in previous studies (Richardson and Dorr 2003; Morris and Shelton, 1997). The popular name for *shabkah* among the interviewees is *manisa*. *Manisa* is a combination between *shaabook* and *nis’ah* as explained by W14, W10 and Al-hashmi (2017).

Figure 4-9 *Nisfiy* (25×12×.5 CM, Silver, gold, leather & cotton fabric, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-10 *Shaabook* (image from Old Castle Museum by Al-hashmi, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017) permission from Al-hashmi

Figure 4-11 *Nis'ah* (image from Old Castle Museum by Al-hashmi South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017) permission from Al-hashmi

Figure 4-12 *Shabkah* or *manisa* (image from Old Castle Museum by Al-hashmi South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017 permission from Al-hashmi

4.6 *The Value of traditional Omani jewellery*

4.6.1.1 Evolution of jewellery value from functional to decorative (function)

Akam is a piece worn underneath the chin and hooked on either side of the face into the veil wrapped around the head (

Figure 4-13). Each woman has a different size, as it holds her scarf tightly and does not reveal her hair. However, Figure 4-14 has shown how the thread has been replaced by a chain made of silver, gold, or other metal. It is not for holding the scarf, it is for decoration and is not made in a particular size for each woman.

The concept of wearing a piece of jewellery as a unique item for a particular woman seems to be missing in recent times, whereas in the past, the self-ownership carried more identity for the person. Exploring traditional jewellery

gives more self-esteem to women because it links them to their traditional culture and heritage. It also suggests that such jewellery has a richer and significances such as to show social status personal taste/identity (Mazumbar (2014)) and spiritual dimensions than cheap, mass produced, imported commercialjewellery.

Figure 4-13 *Akam* holds the scarf tightly in place (19×5×.5 CM, Silver & Black cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-14 *Akam* (the thread has been replaced by chain made of metal) (image from Al Ghafri, 2017) permission from Al Ghafri

4.6.1.2 Oral song by Bedouin women (Poem)

An example of singing related to jewellery, which has not been found in previous studies, is worth documenting. I will provide it in Arabic as well because this song uses very local Omani Arabic dialect words. The translation is provided to give the meaning of these sentences. The Poems are translated by Al-Sarmi (2017).

{1} (W9, 2015)

يا أمي غابت نطلتي علوي حصن البلوش

ويا سعد من لقطها لقط خزين قروش

لقطها ولد سليمة سفافة العقوص

بتسف لي حديدة وبتسف لي شابوك

بلبسهم يوم الغية غية بنات حبوش

يوم العريش مشيد والجوذري مفروش

يوم الكرمة مغطاية وفيها الزبادي يفوح

كمة أخوي حريرية بطويها وأشلها

زريها باجي باجي مثل النخل متلاجي

نخلكم وانخلنا نخل هالصالحين

O mother, I lost my anklet somewhere near Al Balush Tower

Happy is the one who has found it as he has found a fortune.

It was found by the child of Salimah, the hairdresser

She will weave for me *hadida* and she will weave *shaabook.*

I will wear them on the wedding day, the wedding of Haboosh girls.

When the bower is built and the *godhari* (a piece of clothing) is laid as a carpet,

When the bowl is covered and the yoghurt spills out of it,

My brother's *kummah* [cap] is made of silk, I will fold it and take it with me.

Its embellishment shines like the fruit of the palm tree

Your palm trees, ours or the palm trees of good people

{2} (W5, 2015)

وحنيحنن بعمورة واشتريت لك منثورة

I bought for you two items: *al hanhun* with Amor (necklace) and *manthora* (another type of expensive necklace).

{3} (W7, 2015)

عود الشكل لاوي ومحلاش يالفضة في صدور البداوي

عود الشكل لاوي ترخص الفضة ويدوربها شاوي

The branch of the “ziziphus spp” is twisted. O Silver, you look pretty on the chests of Bedouin girls

The branch of “ziziphus spp” is twisted. Silver will become so cheap that a shepherd (*shawi*) may move around wearing it.

{4} (W5 and W7, 2015)

وأكثر فؤادي يختشيبة لابس حرز وحنون

وأكثر فؤادي يختشيبة وأشوفة مزين ومزيون

My heart is more nostalgic for she who is wearing the necklace called "Hirz" and "Hanhun"

My heart is nostalgic when I see her fully adorned

This song is interesting because to a certain extent it echoes the theme of loss and regret which are frequently found in traditional Arabic poetry. It is also interesting because of its specific use of the term “*shaabook*” which is not commonly used. “*hanhun*”, “*manthora*” and “*hirz*” are terms in common use, but it is still unusual to find them grouped together in this way.

The song is also a narrative which looks towards a better future; a time in which silver will be so cheap that even poor shepherds can wear it. What is also interesting is that the song specifically describes the ornamentation of the silver jewellery “*al hanhun* with *Amor*”, and also describes how it is worn “on the chest of Bedouin girls”

4.6.1.3 The power of silver jewellery (power)

It was further learnt during the field study that using a silver box containing *hirz* (Figure 4-15) for the treatment and protection of people is still very precious and its value persists. In fact, the phenomenon still exists; although the silver box is kept empty and most people actually visit their general practitioners when they are not well. It is also still true that some Bedouins still believe that the power

of silver can help to treat incurable diseases (e.g. cancer). I observed the power of silver during an interview when part of a *hanhun* necklace was missing some Maria Theresa Dollars which had clearly been removed (Figure 4-16). Because a Bedouin woman had asked W14 to give her silver jewellery to use it for her daughter who had cancer. W14 gave her two MTD coins from her *hanhun* necklace and she told her to mix it in a cup of water and drink that water.

Another example came from the interview with W6. One of her relatives asked her for silver, to use for his wife because she wakes suddenly from sleep in a panic. He needed the silver for *estihwata* (ambiance and protective power) that could protect his wife from this sudden panic. So, she gave him the *akam,* which is a neck piece attached to the scarf to hold it in place (see Figure 4-13). W6 explained to her relative how *estihwata* works. She said, put the *akam* under your wife's pillow. Then say "May Allah protect you all who live in this house", and repeat it several times. Keep the silver *akam* until she feels well. Also, W7 gave her rings with a red stone to help people who were not able to sleep at night (see Figure 2-19).

These insights into the traditional purposes and meaning of jewellery correspond to the insights within the contemporary jewellery which I produce or propose. For example; I used the concept of religious protection earlier in my project *Memory* (section 4.3.2.3). More research, based on these insights, could be done in the future.

Figure 4-15 The *hirz* necklace (20×6×2 CM, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-16 *Hanhun* necklace (40×8×2 CM, Silver & Maria Theresa Dollars & colar, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.6.1.4 Storing Omani jewellery (storing)

Omani houses are characterised by a number of features, including fixed hangers, or hooks, on which clothes are kept. The hangers were also used to hang other objects, such as pottery vessels used to store drinking water, or for

hanging garlic and onions in the house or kitchen. They use wood from local trees to make those hangers (see Figure 4-17). Some of them use stones as hangers as shown in Figure 4-18. Omani *Hader* women have used the hangers in the old mud houses to hang the jewellery that they use on daily basis. Bedouin women hang jewellery on tree branches in their tents. Settled Bedouin live in cement house, but this phenomenon still survives. For example, W5 keeps her jewellery on hangers (Figure 4-19). In order to preserve jewellery from being broken or damaged; the jewellery is hung from the thread, not the silver, as shown in Figure 4-20. Another example was given by one of the interviewees, who used to hang her jewellery on the branch of tree where she lived; but today she hangs her jewellery on the wall, constructed of cement block.

Figure 4-17 Tree wood used to make hangers (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-18 Stones used as hangers (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-19 Jewellery on hangers (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

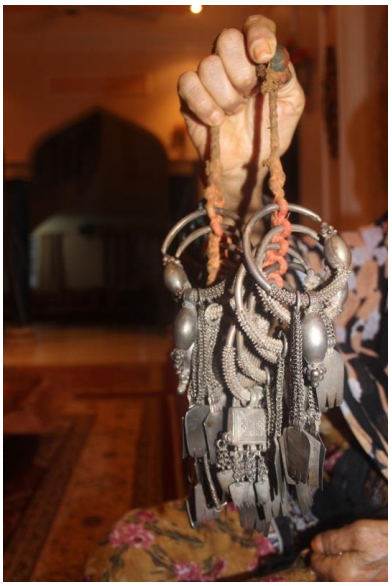

Figure 4-20 Jewellery hanging by its thread (22×7×3 CM, Silver & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

The women also used *al mndoos* to preserve their possessions, whether jewellery, clothing, or money (Figure 4-21). *Al mndoos* is a medium size wooden chest decorated with brass bushing pins. It comes as part of the dowry that was given on marriage according to Omani tradition. According to those customs, the bridegroom presents a gift to the bride and that gift includes the Bridal chest.

Figure 4-21 *Al mndoos* (65×87×50 CM, Wood & copper, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Some women also wrap their jewellery in a piece of cloth as shown in Figure 4-22. In addition, some women sew a bag of its own and keep their jewellery inside it (Figure 4-23). The fact that women do not wear silver has changed its original value and has reduced it to the value of savings. It is indeed regrettable that some women now keep their jewellery pieces in plastic bags (see Figure 4-24).

Figure 4-22 Jewellery in a piece of cloth (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-23 Jewellery stored in a handmade bag (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-24 Jewellery kept in a plastic bag (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

These different ways of storing Omani jewellery made me think of ways of displaying my work. For example, in the one-day exhibition at the Eid I presented my work by hanging it on the control mechanism for ceiling fan (the fan regulator) since more modern houses do not have wooden or stone hangers. Also, when I brought the outcomes of the workshop (cutting leather to thread) to the UK, I hung them on the studio wall to help me think and generate ideas.

4.6.1.5 Jewellery absorbs natural products (Smell)

W8 handed me her headdress. She said it had not cost a lot of money, but for me it is a treasure to have this antique piece. It had a strong smell that reminded me of the old days. In the past women were known by their use of different natural products. They used relaxing and attractive essences on their faces and their hair like sandalwood and saffron. During my interview with these women, they applied it to my face and gave me fragrances for my hair (Figure 4-25). These feelings inspired me to use leather for designing contemporary jewellery. I did many experiments regarding the use of leather in jewellery making and future experiments will be described to show the uniqueness and the usefulness of using leather in jewellery.

Figure 4-25 Applying sandalwood paste on the face (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.6.1.6 Jewellery marks of Bedouin life (Weight)

There was an interesting quote when W4 mentioned how women walked for long distances wearing their full heavy jewellery 40 years ago. It caused a 'mark of culture' on her body; W5 had a big hole in her ears because of the weight of the earrings she used to wear. When they became older they recognised how heavy the jewellery was. This can be said to be a sign of the hard lives of Bedouin women, but they endured it willingly. In the context of the product's value and materials, it can also be seen as a hidden cultural meaning when the product was worn. I reflected on the concept of weight whilst designing and making my own jewellery. This influenced my decision to create large scale, light weight jewellery, compared with the heavy traditional jewellery (see section 4.11.1).

4.6.1.7 Sustainability

The erosion of the Bedouin pastoral lifestyle has contributed to a reduction in the production and the value of animal-based products. It has also had a wider impact, not only related to the use of camels as a means of transportation, for example, but on culture itself. I observed an interesting example when a woman, W7, looked for another opportunity related to it. She tanned leather and made kohl pots (eye liner containers), money pockets, milk containers and jewellery (*shaabook*) by herself because she was motivated by a willingness to maintain tradition. This also raises concerns about Omani efforts in the field of tanning in Oman. Khan has said that Oman now is losing out on profits from the leather industry (Khan, 2014) see appendix. I observed that trucks came during the Eid and collect the salted animal skins from the slaughter house and transferred them to the United Arab Emirates as they have a tanning factory there. This observation leads me to discuss the possible opportunities to develop a tanning

industry in Oman (see section 0). My practice focuses on how using animal materials in jewellery can bring significant change to people' perspectives on Omani traditions, within a more contemporary style and context.

4.6.1.8 Structural form and assembly (structure)

The findings, particularly relating to the role of Bedouin women in their creative design of traditional Omani jewellery, make a great contribution to knowledge. To begin with, I have discovered that women were responsible for creating both the form and shape of their jewellery. For instance, one of the informants disassembled a necklace to weigh the silver components for distributing the value of these components properly among her heirs, in accordance with Islamic religious requirements. To reassemble the necklace, the informant had to find an expert woman. However, it was even hard to find someone who could structure the design so that the necklace could be reassembled in its original shape (Figure 4-26). The structures are not documented and the forms and shapes were rare (see section 4.6.1.9). This example provides an interesting insight into the way jewellery can embody traditions of intergenerational inheritance. It has a profound function far beyond decoration, highlighting the individual ownership of creativity, patterning, and arrangement.

Figure 4-26 Reassembling a necklace (34×11×2.5 CM, Silver & white cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.6.1.9 Link between jewellery components (thread)

Most Omani silver jewellery is made up of multiple components that are linked together with thread. The non-settled (*Hadher*) interviewees said that they asked Bedouin women to make the thread to link the components in their jewellery. The thread allowed them to take off the parts of jewellery and join

them again. This method of assembly has enabled me to reflect on the way women have engaged in concepts such as modularity and hybridity. From the perspective of modularity, the jewellery owners can add components from their grandmothers and others from the elder generation to their jewellery. In addition, jewellery identifies the age of a woman. For instance, a long necklace is worn by older women. Also, the concept of hybridity is seen in Bedouin jewellery. The thread allows them to join silver, leather, beads, bone (animal teeth), coral, and shells in their jewellery. I even found a combination of historical foreign currency coins such as Maria Theresa Dollar and Indian Rupees in necklaces. They also stitched silver discs into the headdress by combining silver and leather.

The structure was designed by women (Morris and Shelton, 1997) who could afford to buy individual components such as chains, beads, and pendants to create a necklace. Bedouin women assembled these processes together to produce different necklaces of different shapes and forms based on personal desires such as *digg* and *shibgat* necklaces. The Bedouin women's work (making jewellery) is related to one of the important components that is threading (twisting and weaving). Such work might be highly valued because it allows the wearer to inform the shape and the form of the necklace to hybridize the components based on their tastes. Moreover, they can add or reduce some of the components while keeping the assembled jewellery (necklace, earrings, headdress etc.) in an acceptable shape or form. In fact, one of the informants was found to have used one single thread to keep her earrings from her ex-husband, and her current husband, together. It illustrates how jewellery can function as an embodiment of personal narrative and history. The thread shown in one necklace (Figure 4-27) was twisted and woven by a Bedouin woman, who was expert in designing threads for this purpose.

Figure 4-27 Twisting and weaving by a Bedouin woman (22×7×3 CM, Silver & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

I used the silver component from the piece given to me in the final project to recall that period of time when Omani women were responsible for creating Omani jewellery. I extracted the old piece and I incorporated it into another design, which gave it a new life and meaning.

The absence of the 'handmade' tradition is one of the most important characteristics related to Bedouin jewellery today as handcrafting has now been replaced with machine production. The introduction of machines does not always support the production of traditional forms of jewellery. Loss of traditional craft skill is also an issue, for instance, during the process of assembly, jewellery needs to be fixed using solder. However, this requires a highly skilled jeweller in a studio. It is not a process that can done easily by machine. The *manthura* necklace with a manual/handmade thread link (Figure 4-28 Manthura necklace linked by a manual/handmade thread) has been altered with a new gold design using chains (Figure 4-29). The length of the silver *manthura* can be extended as required. Usually it becomes longer as the wearer becomes older. However, the *manthura*-based gold necklace is fixed in different sizes. Therefore, a woman can choose a particular size and she can replace it or buy another one in the future. It clearly shows that the meaning of the jewellery is different in this new commercialised and industrialised context. An artefact that was personal, and which told its own story, has been reduced to a potentially more valuable (depending on the fluctuation of the gold market) piece of mass-produced decoration. The form is fixed. The wearer has lost the ability to make her own enhancements.

Moreover, this threading activity by women was multi-fold. It was a security innovation that allowed the silver components to be secured individually. Its design was done in such a way that the thread is hidden (Figure 4-30) to give the impression of a new decoration. Sometimes beads are used to add more decoration.

Figure 4-28 *Manthura* necklace linked by a manual/handmade thread (image from Oman and Zanzibar virtual Museum, 2020) permission from the Oman and Zanzibar virtual Museum

Figure 4-29 *Manthura* necklace linked by a machine made chain (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-30 The hidden thread, image from left to right(a) 16×8×2CM, (b) 30×9×2CM Silver, beads & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Furthermore, this uniqueness is also related to the storage of jewellery

including rings (Figure 4-31). Women wear a set of ten rings with one ring on each finger. This then posed questions about the storage of these rings, and these were addressed by designing the threading structure. This technique was also used for transportation of jewellery during the nomadic era.

Figure 4-31 Storing rings safely (Silver & thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

In addition, threading is also used in creating clasps. The women's innovation was very simple. It included a ball of multiple threads wrapped together in such a way that it provides a natural clip to close the necklace (Figure 4-32). In the same way, beads can be used decoratively rather than the ball, and the threading is hidden inside the beads to close the necklace (Figure 4-33). The most complex design for the clasp is the one related to *shaabook* since the two leather threads braided (one on the top of the object and the other one underneath it) together must fit the head properly without falling down (Figure 4-34). The use of thread in embroidery is fine and unique work, but in this instance the thread is used in a manner that is closer to weaving. The threads, the silver components and the leather thread all mesh together for *shaabook*.

Figure 4-32 A ball of multiple threads clip (12×3×2 CM, Silver, coral & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-33 Bead clip (14×4×2 CM, Silver, coral, beads & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-34 *Shaabook* clasp (33×27×1 CM, Silver, gold, leather & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.6.1.10 The rattle of jewellery (sound)

There is another rationale behind the importance of using of thread to secure jewellery (Figure 4-31). This was related to the Islamic religion. Threading allows the movable silver components which might generate a sound to be fixed. This prevents the beads from making any sound if they collide with each other. "And they must not stamp their feet on the ground in order of their hidden adornment be known" (Quran, Part 18, Sūraẖ An-Nūr, verse 31). This verse's translation is a clear evidence of hiding any sound in the adornment for women. Even so, there are some pieces of jewellery that rattle such as elbow bracelets see Figure 4-35. According to Al-Kindi (2015) sound was used in the Omani context so that when men heard the rattle of jewellery they knew a woman coming. They could then look the other way until the sound disappeared. Al-Kindi's explanation is more relevant in the Omani context as it does not contradict Islamic law, but it does not reflect the situation in Oman today.

Figure 4-35 Elbow bracelets which rattle (8×7×3 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.6.1.11 Right way of wearing Oman jewellery (dress up)

The photo elicitation technique led to a clear analysis of jewellery production by women, its economic context and its function in the context of social interaction, together with the symbolic meaning of the jewellery. It further allowed me to discover some misrepresented information (like the way of wearing traditional Omani jewellery) because the photographs were taken by foreigners who may not have fully understood Omani culture and the Islamic religious context. It is very challenging for photographers to document relevant jewellery from women since their jewellery is usually hidden as per Islamic rules. This was clearly an issue with my own informants. When I was discussing the ethics of research, they expressed their indignation at the way their identity had been misrepresented in some of the photographs. For example, W2, W3, W5, W7, W9, W10 and W14 saw Figure 4-36 and Figure 4-39 when they criticised the way the anklet was worn. W3 said the anklet photos are contrary to our customs and traditions. In addition, W7 mentioned that whoever took this photograph did not have any background knowledge about Omani jewellery. W10 immediately tried to show me how this anklet should be worn. The reaction of the women confirmed the mistakes that occurred in research by Morris and Shelton (1997).

To display the jewellery to it best advantage, the photographer had carefully posed the model. Such pictures, however, do not reflect the reality; in fact, they are constructed pictures. In the terms of Edward Said (1995), regarding orientalism, the pictures reflect a western, eroticised viewpoint, but since a photograph is made evident, it is perceived by its viewers as a truth. Some

other examples were found in the study conducted by Morris and Shelton (1997) in where the anklets were wrongly displayed in photographs, and they did not show the design clearly (Figure 4-36). This publication was unique, because it showed the objects on the body. The anklets are also mistakenly presented in the National Museum of Oman (Figure 4-37), and they were incorrectly positioned in The British Museum in the exhibition “Adornment and Identity: Jewellery and Textiles from Oman” (see

Figure 4-38) (The British Museum, 2011). Another interesting example was when anklets were displayed on the ankles rather than being displayed partly underneath women’s trousers to prevent the trousers from moving. The correct position of anklets was explained by the Omani women. The traditional Omani trouser is called *sirwal*. It is hand embroidered by women using a silver thread (see Figure 4-39), although recently it has become more common to use gold thread and mix it with different colours see Figure 4-40. This change could be related to the replacement of silver jewellery with gold.

The jewellery is not hidden underneath the trousers, but to hold them. Furthermore, the objects themselves suffered from misalignment. The widest, decorative parts of the anklets should face each other (Figure 4-40). This proves that the display in the previous studies was misinterpreted. To address this issue I have drawn the correct way of wearing this anklet (see Figure 4-41).

Figure 4-36 Anklet is not hidden underneath the trousers (image from Morris and Shelton, 1997) permission from the puplisher

Figure 4-37 Display anklets (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, The National Museum, Oman, 2016) permission from The National Museum

Figure 4-38 Exhibition in The British Museum (image from The British Museum, 2011) permission from The British Museum

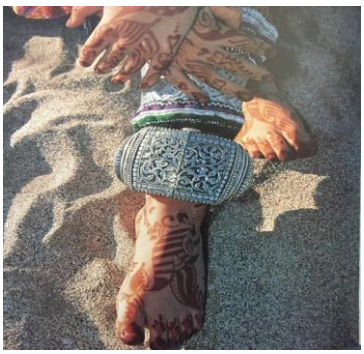

Figure 4-39 The direction of the anklet, is not properly set in the display (image from Morris and Shelton, 1997) permission from the puplisher

Figure 4-40 The correct positioning of anklets (8×7.5×3 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal AL-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

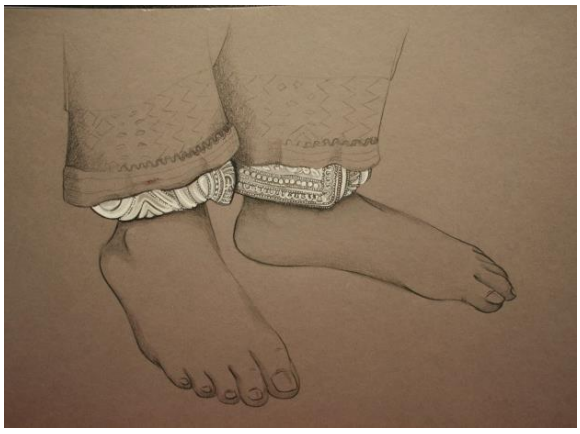

Figure 4-41 Anklets displayed partly underneath women's trousers (Paper, Pencil and colour, drawing by Amal Al-Ismaili, UK, Sheffield Hallam University, 2016)

Incorrect positioning was also evident in the display of earrings, which were worn in a hidden pendent position in displays in the National Museum in Oman and in the publication by Morris and Shelton (1997) (see Figure 4-42). They are normally worn more widely opened (see Figure 4-43) and should be covered when women go outside the home (see Figure 4-44).

Figure 4-42 The earring (image from National Museum, 2017 and Morris and Shelton, 1997) permission from the National museum and the puplisher

Figure 4-43 The earrings worn opened wide (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-44 Jewellery is covered when women go outside their home Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.6.1.12 Story behind jewellery (Narrative)

Each piece of jewellery has a narrative and the interviewees shared the stories behind their pieces with me. For example, W5 told a story about the bracelet shown in Figure 4-45. She said I remembered when I was five years old. My family asked me to go to a pasture with the animals. I was wearing a bracelet called *banjeree*. I lost it during my work. I kept going back to the same area to look for my *banjeree*. After fifty years, I found it in the same area. The top part had become red from the sun but the silver parts, which had lain on the sand, never changed.

My personal experience of the pastoral life has prompted this research by focusing on an animal material. This was an incredible experience for me and one which made me understand deeply that the relationship between the Bedouin and their animals is more than financial. W5 drove me across the desert to introduce me to other participants. During our journey, she did her duty as a herdswoman by using her car. Before the common use of cars, herders had to walk while working. During our interview, she was preventing her animals from going on the paved road. She asked me to help her look after her animals during the interview period and she told me a lot of stories relating to her animals. For example, she took me to places where two of her goats had been killed by cars. She complained about modernity and how it was a danger to her animals. One of her stories inspired me to create my design. She took me to the specific tree where one of her young goats had got his hair stuck in the

thorns of the tree. She was depressed as she tried to find him for five days, but he died. I designed the necklace shown in Figure 4-95 using W5's goat hair.

My experience with the Bedouin women highlighted how the harsh Bedouin life made them courageous and powerful. Some of the Bedouin community refuse to follow modern laws. One unforgettable occasion was when the police stopped us because W5 and I were not wearing seat belts. She has never, ever worn a seat belt. Also, she said to me "Do not wear the car seat belt, I do not allow anyone to wear a seat belt while I am the driver".

Figure 4-45 Lost bracelet (5×5×2.5 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Before Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970, Oman was relatively undeveloped. Omani men travelled to the neighbouring countries looking for jobs. It was the responsibility of women to take care of their family during their husband's absence. For example, W2 had two pieces of jewellery she purchased from two different women. The first one (Figure 4-46) was the elbow bangle from a woman whose husband went to Kuwait to work. She tried to support her family by selling her bangles and used that money until her husband come back from Kuwait. Another example is a *hirz* necklace (Figure 4-47). A woman sold this because she needed money to keep her children as they did not have food to eat. W2 did not need the necklace but she bought it because she wanted to help her.

Figure 4-46 Elbow bangle (8×7×3 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-47 *Hirz* Necklace (18×8×1.5 CM, Silver, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

4.6.1.13 Trading silver jewellery between women (purchasing)

During the interviews I observed that there are some women who have pieces they bought from other women in the same community. For example, W5 bought a necklace from a woman in the same village. Also, W10 and W6 did the same. It was very common for these women to buy from each other. It demonstrated that in this particular community, buying and selling was reciprocal among women, and this relates to the presence of distinctive jewellery styles in different regions. According to Hawley (2000), the distinctive jewellery styles have become blurred in recent times. Recently, the jewellery shop has become the source of buying jewellery. I also observed that nowadays there is increased competition between women to have a unique collection which is different from everybody else's.

Based on these findings, I found that both the object and the wearer contribute to the heritage of Omani society; therefore, it is important to place them in their social context in order to understand Omani jewellery in the contemporary context. This has inspired me to design contemporary jewellery to represent the

Omani identity without distorting the religion, the ethnicity, gender and hybridity. These findings enhance our understanding of the value of traditional Omani jewellery based on the knowledge acquired from interviews with 16 Bedouin women. The following diagram summarises the subjective values associated with Omani traditional jewellery (see Figure 4-48).

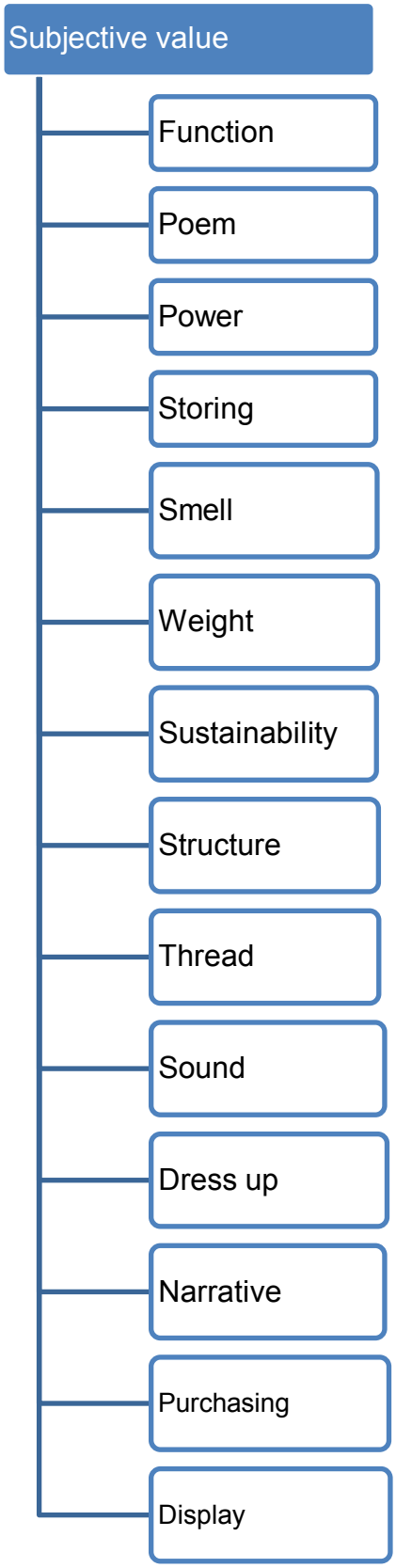

Figure 4-48 Subjective values associated with Omani traditional jewellery

4.6.2 UK (2015) Reflection

- ***What outcomes were obtained after completing the fieldwork?***

The headdress was a co-creation by me and the *shaabook* maker, and the remaining leather was collected by me. This allowed both the *shaabook* and the leather to be examined and analysed at Sheffield Hallam University. I attended a workshop conducted by Hanson and Hutton's (2015) entitled "Wearable Stories". In this workshop participants were encouraged to think deeply about the jewellery that they own and see. We were asked to take 50 photographs of different objects and things that have been placed on the body. Then participants were asked to reflect on the photograph by asking the following questions: What is a jewel? What does it say? Where is it placed on the body?

Another activity was to collect 50 objects / fragments of objects that represent, capture or communicate something about a place, a journey, an experience, a sensation, or other people. Then participants were asked to examine and manipulate these objects to create something new and find the link between them. At the end, participants should create a story based on the produced object. This workshop led me to analyse the photos I took in Field work 1 by asking myself the three questions above.

I examined the natural tanned leather material I brought with me from my field research in Oman. Testing indicated that the leather produced through natural tanning has a different material quality, compared to the tanning of chemical-based leather which was purchased ready to use. This testing included cutting, burning, ironing, wet moulding, colouring, laser etching, and weaving. The natural tanning leather is characterised by its hardness when it is dry. I needed to add oil or water to make it soft. The Omani women apply oil in their hair and the headdress(*shaabook*) which automatically makes *shaabook* soft when they wear it. Also, the leather became very soft when I added water to it, so it was easy to cut into threads and form it into shapes. Interestingly, the leather has a unique smell, perhaps coming from the desert plants used during the tanning process. Surprisingly, the leather has different shades of brown because of the animal type and the tanning process. There was also one negative result when I used the laser machine to perform a test. The leather started to smell as if it were burning. Also, it shrank and the machine could not cut it properly in lines.

The dried leather normally shrinks and becomes tough, so it is hard to shape in the form desired by the worker. Water was added to shape it when it became solid. Moisture turned the leather into soft material so that it could be shaped

and sculpted. The leather was then cut into leather thread, a process that the researcher learnt from the interviewees. The wet leather threads obtained were then wrapped around balloons and allowed to dry for almost one week. When the leather threads (which were chained together) dried, they remained in that form and were used later as the top part of the rings. The weaving was employed to produce the shank part of the rings.

The three rings, named Domination, Peace, and Sound (Figure 4-49, Figure 4-50, Figure 4-51), were designed to reflect different concepts informed by my understanding of traditional jewellery.

4.6.2.1 Domination

The ring was designed with a weaving shank and the top part of the ring was produced in two round spheres of two different sizes, with one size dominating the other size.

4.6.2.2 Peace

The ring was designed with a weaving shank and the top part of the ring was produced in three round spheres of three different sizes, with two of them being more or less the same size.

4.6.2.3 Sound

The ring was designed with a woven shank and the top part of the ring was produced in two round spheres of two different sizes. The bigger sized sphere completely covers and hides the smaller size sphere inside, in which a metallic bell is suspended to jingle as it moves.

4.6.3 Reflective Analysis

- ***How was reflective analysis conducted?***

Reflective analysis provides the opportunity to examine an event, memory or experience.

The researcher then reflects on the meaning or impact of the occasion. In this instance, my reflective analysis led to the creation of a project using natural leather as the raw material. The structure of the reflection cycle is illustrated in Figure 3-5. It was observing, thinking, making, interacting and reflecting. The following paragraphs explain these stages.

Observing: In 2015, in fieldwork 1 I interviewed 16 women. I observed that women played a major role in shaping the identity of traditional Omani jewellery.

Thinking: In fieldwork 1 I thought about concepts for creative making, which resulted in the three works; domination, peace and sound. Also, this fieldwork led me to think about the next fieldwork. The sampling method was carried out for the fieldwork 2 in 2016 to select the co-creation group.

Making: An expert woman (W5) who crafts a traditional headdress *shaabook* showed me her making skill. Then, we made the leather part of *shaabook* together.

Interacting: A major advantage of fieldwork 1 is that I interacted with W5. This interaction allowed me to know the process of making *shaabook* and how to prepare the leather material.

Reflecting**:** I took the fieldwork 1 data back to UK to do reflection designs in the SHU studio. The raw material used in this project is natural leather and it was specifically chosen through collaboration with W5. This material was tested prior to being used for the rings and proved to be satisfactory with respect to cutting, shaping (weaving), and smell. This reflects the value of the material in terms of texture, smell, colour, and feeling.

4.6.3.1 Domination reflection

- ***What was the impact of gender domination?***

As previously explained (4.6.2.1 Domination) the design of this ring explained its title (Figure 4-49). The literature reviewed indicates that men controlled in the production of traditional jewellery before oil was discovered in Oman (Morris and Shelton, 1997, Richardson and Dorr, 2003, Mongitti, Suleman and Meeks, 2011). A recent study conducted by Al-Mamari, however, (2012) has demonstrated the current predominance of women in the jewellery industry within Oman. That study suggested that women are now able to apply their own creativity, and their changing role in Omani society enabled them to enter the public sphere in areas such as fashion and design. For these reasons, the ring could be said to be unique. To reflect this change in the role of women, the two spherical forms of the domination ring were designed in two different sizes with one size dominating the other. When the ring is worn, the larger sphere is intended to sit in the palm of the hand while the smaller sphere remains on the back, which also reflects the present and the past respectively.

Figure 4-49 Domination ring (30×27×27 CM, Leather thread, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2015)

4.6.3.2 Peace Reflection

- ***How would you explain peace reflection?***

"Had you gone to the people of Oman, they would not have insulted or beaten you" (Hadith by the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Him.

This was heard from the mouth of the Prophet Muhammad when a man who he sent to one of the clans of the Arabs, got insulted and beaten by them. This Hadith indicates praise for the Omanis, and their merit is believed to exist today. Fortunately, this became actually apparent when Sultan Qaboos, the Sultan of Oman, became a model of peace keeping within the Arab countries. Some writers have suggested that one of the consequences of his reign is that religious denominations; Ibadi, Sunni and Shiaa cannot be distinguished within Oman (Leonard, 2015; Middle East, 2014). Furthermore, the region's education system attempts to install the values of love and unity into the hearts of young children. This has been successfully accomplished through education where Islamic religion books teach Islam in general (i.e. pillars of Islam, pillars of prayers, etc.) without imposing strict rules, giving equal value to all religious sectors and without discriminating against other religions. I would argue that the result is a great peace not only among religious Muslim denominations, but among different religious groups including Christians and Buddhists, and also atheists.

The peace ring (Figure 4-50) is designed with three spherical forms of slightly different sizes symbolising the three different religious denominations that exist in Oman. This form of representation was taken from traditional jewellery, where different coins were joined together in a chain. These coins might also reflect tolerance of different religions as Saudi Arabian and other coins were joined together. Some of the participants in this study appeared to support this idea. For example, W14 is Ibadi but she bought some of her jewellery from a Sunni woman.

Figure 4-50 Peace ring (45×40×40 CM, Leather thread, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2015)

4.6.3.3 Sound Reflection

- ***What is meant by sound reflection?***

The ring shown in Figure 4-51 was designed with a woven shank and the top part of the ring consists of three spherical forms of different sizes with two of them being more or less the same size.

Sūraḥ An-Nūr is an example of Islamic teaching about hiding sound in the adornment for women in public (Quran, Part 18, Sūraḥ An-Nūr, verse 31). One of the smaller spheres holds a metallic bell which was in turn hidden inside the largest sphere. This reflects the hidden adornment discussed earlier, which allows the sound ring to jingle as it moves (Figure 4-51).

Before closing this reflective analysis, it is worth noting here that;

(1) The spherical forms of the three rings reflect the moon, symbol of women, and the symbol of crescent moon; therefore, there is representation of the significant power of women in the design. The crescent moon is also a symbol of Islam itself. (2) The forms used also reference Oman's traditional pottery

vessels, which are employed for holding drinking water, particularly to keep the water cool. It was the women's duty to bring the water, hence women dominate again. The pottery vessels used to be hung on a branch of a tree or on a wall; this is naturally reflected by hanging jewellery on a tree or wall. The usage of water in the production of pottery is also reflected in the wet moulding technique used in the leather work of this project.

Figure 4-51 Sound ring (30×29×29 CM, Leather thread, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2015)

4.7 *Theme 3: Jewellery and social practice*

The social practice theme is strongly applied in my research (section 2.6.2). Starting from my family (my grandmother) and the women in the same village, I moved to other villages and then to another region. Moreover, I found one of the women who worked in craft, who led me to new thinking and working with a social group of women to create jewellery. My co-creation group applied different weaving processes (i.e. *sifah*, *tali* and *siim*) in order to achieve an effective outcome, see section 4.7.2. My engagement with these women played a major role in my practice.

4.7.1 Oman (2016) Fieldwork 2: *Reinterpretation of Bedouin shaabook*

It was previously seen that the social value, the creation process, and details of *shaabook* were learnt during the collection of oral knowledge from expert craftspeople with knowledge of *shaabook*. In this section, the design process and collaboration with one of these experts will be described. Although traditional jewellery has determined Bedouin style for centuries (Morris and

Shelton, 1997, Richardson and Dorr, 2003), it is in danger of vanishing (Rajab 1997, Forster 1998, Ruth 2000, Mongitti, Suleman and Meeks, 2011). I aimed to address this issue of maintaining tradition by reinterpreting the traditional techniques of Omani jewellery through contemporary jewellery to preserve some aspects of it; whilst also demonstrating the contemporary relevance of traditional craft by situating it within a contemporary context.

This research attempts to connect different crafts together to produce contemporary jewellery. It combines different techniques to celebrate the hybridity of the traditional Bedouin jewellery and explore the relationship between the past and present. The research process included sourcing materials, adapting them and reassembling them to represent the methods employed in the process of crafting traditional jewellery. The weaving leather thread acts as a metaphor for the jewellery worn by Bedouin from North A'Sharqiyah of Oman. Headdresses (*shaabook*) are examined to show how crafts employ different material sources that can be transformed into other forms.

4.7.2 Method

- ***What method was used in the reinterpretation of Bedouin shaabook?***

A co-creation workshop was established, involving six participants recruited through snowball sampling. The workshop lasted for one month and was conducted in W7's house, as she was the expert in *shaabook* weaving. The first objective was to produce leather thread, and then the workshop moved to weaving the thread that had been produced.

The methods employed in this workshop are described in this section and were photographed by the researcher to help the reader understand the methods used. A framework of a new design which represents the hybridity of the traditional Bedouin jewellery is also presented. It was possible to connect traditional Omani crafts together and translate the relationship between past (traditional jewellery) and present by employing the traditional *hiblah* as a chain. The function of *hiblah* can be changed from belts to chains, and a new design can arise from the hybridity of this *hiblah* with other components, including *tali*, *siim*, and *sifah*. In fact, the traditional *hiblah* is not worn much

nowadays so it can be used for a new site of jewellery to be displayed. Additionally, this can allow a slightly different function of the *hiblah*, while preserving the tradition practices of adornment.

Tali, *siim*, and *sifah* are traditional homemade trims, which contain a narrow strip of foil which is surrounded by a framework of braided threads to make traditional embroidery to be used as heavily embellished parts of women's costume. However, the *sifah* is used for both embroidery and date-collection baskets (Richardson and Dorr, 2003) (This has not been previously described in the literature).

The creative process included employing the animal skin to weave and produce leather thread and create different crafts (i.e. *sifah*, *tali* and *siim*) shown in Figure 4-52. The exploration was then organized in a co-creation group for the combination of the outcomes from each participant (see Figure 4-62) in a new hybrid form of necklace (see Figure 4-63).

Figure 4-52 (a) *sifah* from cloth threads, (c) *sifah* from date palm fronds, (b) *tali*, (d) *siim* (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

When one woman (WS) had completed the process of making *sifah* using new materials, she liked the result as it was completely different from what she was used to doing. I then visited the traditional women's markets, known as the Wednesday market. I presented her work to the women who sell the same type of decorated clothing to see their reaction. Some tried to discover what the material was. Others mentioned that people could never use this when making clothes. Some thought that it was strange to see it in leather; but other people said that it was beautiful. Some reactions were encouraging such as the ones

that made me confident about the creative collaboration, while other reactions were discouraging, such as the ones which mentioned that no one would buy it.

4.7.3 Animal Skin

The big challenge here was to obtain a complete skin from a slaughtered animal since the skin should not have holes and should not be damaged in order to maintain the integrity of the material. This starts at the slaughtering stage but the nomadic Bedouins were professional enough to slaughter and present animal skins that were good enough for tanning. However, it was not practical in the current work as all skins obtained from the settled Bedouins were torn. Fortunately, some women had sufficient tanning skills (as they were originally nomadic Bedouins) and they offered skins for this purpose.

Another issue is that these Bedouin women prefer to use sheep skins because of its softness. This is the reason it was used in the current workshop. This contradicts the information found during the literature review on Omani leather working, where goat skin is recommended (Richardson and Dorr, 2003) because it tends to be stronger for leather thread.

4.7.3.1 Tanning

Nomadic Bedouins (Richardson and Dorr, 2003) used to soak fresh skins thoroughly in a mixture of water and salt. The skins were then rolled and buried in the ground for at least two days until the hair fibres loosened. Prior to burying, a number of different tanning agents were used. The most common of these are the dried leaves and pods of indigenous acacia trees. These leaves and pods are then ground, usually between two stones, to obtain a fine powder, and this is mixed with water to form a poultice. The mixture was then applied to the inner and outer surfaces of the skin, which is vigorously kneaded to manipulate the skin and initiate the creation of leather. This kneading is an energetic process that can take up to one day.

It must, however, be emphasised that this is the traditional method of obtaining tanned leather. This process is in danger of vanishing for several reasons. To begin with, cheap, imported leather is more easily available. Secondly, the difficulty of obtaining undamaged skins, and the time consumed in preparing the skins and the tannins ingredients is disproportionate for the result. Thirdly, the younger generation have little interest in maintaining such techniques.

The final work, moreover, is the first example of a contemporary necklace produced using such traditionally tanned leather.

A specific desert plant called Pergularia Tomentosa (galqa) (
Figure 4-53) was ground, while still fresh, using stones (Figure 4-54).The plant becomes watery and sticky due to the milky sap which is emitted from its leaves. The ground *galqa* was used in a kneading process on the outer skin surface to remove the hair. This took nearly half an hour. The whole skin was then soaked with water inside a plastic container with the same *galqa* branches for one night. It is important to note here that these *galqa* branches function as a chemical and must be applied for one night only as a longer period might damage the skin. The effect of the *galqa* allows the skin hair to be easily torn out by hand.

Figure 4-53 Pergularia Tomentosa (*galqa*) (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-54 Grinding (*galqa)* (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

The kneading process is again repeated using a different plant called Acacia Nilotica (*qarat*) (as shown in Figure 4-55 and Figure 4-56) to further soften the skin. The clean skin (without hair) is then carefully washed and filled with ground *qarat* mixed with salt. This skin is energetically pounded (Figure 4-57)

to tangle and colour it to produce a final quality of the leather. The kneading is then completed by removing the *qarat* mixture from the skin before it is allowed to dry for a couple of days.

Figure 4-55 Acacia Nilotica (Qarat) (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-56 Grinding (*qarat*) (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-57 Pounding animal skin (Photographed by Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

4.7.3.2 leather thread

The dried skin, after tanning, produces the leather (Figure 4-58), which is used as the raw material or used to produce the leather thread that is obtained by cutting the leather into slim threads. This process requires its own skills since the skin is still hard and it needs to be regularly softened by slightly wetting it

with water, as shown in Figure 4-59. Additionally, not all the leather obtained is of the same hardness. However, the resulting threads need to be continuous and tight without loose links. The workshop participants were encouraged to choose the leather of their preference, because after tanning leathers are naturally different in texture, colour, and smell.

Figure 4-58 The dried skin (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-59 Cutting leather into thread (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

4.7.3.3 Weaving

The leather threads were rolled up to be used as raw materials for the weaving, as shown in Figure 4-60. All the participants were encouraged to use their skills to create objects based on their own weaving skills. One individual from the group was expert in leather weaving skills based on *hiblah*. That led others onto transforming *sifah*, *tali*, and *siim* for weaving by using the leather thread, rather than using more traditional materials such as silver thread, gold thread and date palm fronds (Figure 4-61).

Figure 4-60 Leather thread (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-61 (a) *sifah* (Leather only); (b) *sifah* (leather with date palm fronds); (c) *tali*; (d) *siim* (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

4.7.3.4 Contemporary Jewellery

The outcome was that these woven artefacts made by the group (Figure 4-62) were transformed into beads. These beads were then wrapped individually with *hiblah* as a chain to finally assemble and combine the different crafts in a hybrid form to produce the contemporary jewellery (i.e. necklace) as shown in Figure 4-63. The combined elements, such as the leather thread, were used to project a specific value or social context. The final artefact was a unique co-creation; the product of one specific group who combined their skills. This hybridity is grounded in previous artefacts, particularly *Samt* necklaces, where coins such as Maria Theresa Dollars, Saudi Riyals and Indian Rupees were utilized to create necklaces.

Figure 4-62 The outcome of weaving (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-63 Contemporary jewellery (necklace co-created by the author and her workshop group) (56×16×8 CM, Leather thread, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Fieldwork 2: Auto-ethnography - Before I started the workshop, I met with the woman who introduced me to the settled Bedouin in the preliminary research. We had several meetings where we discussed the possibility of my bringing the expert woman's relatives to conduct the workshop in her house. The research on co-creation needs to go beyond the individual customer's experience and the relationship with others (Helkkula et al., 2012). The date and time of meeting was organised in the expert woman's house. A total of 8 women attended the meeting when I explained the idea of the workshop and asked if they would be willing to participate. Firstly, I made decisions regarding how many people the group needed and who this group should be comprised of. We integrated the women in a social environment to create an informal atmosphere by sitting on the floor in a close circle and learning everyone's name, whilst sharing Omani coffee with dates and fruit. At this stage, I listened to the women's inspirations when they saw the material (leather), photos (traditional Omani jewellery), and objects (*shaabook*) and wrote notes about their responses.

For this research study a workshop was organised. W5 had been born a nomadic Bedouin, who was settled. In addition, the rest of the group members needed to be born and settled in Bedouin. All the participants were skilled in traditional crafts, and they cooperated together to produce the leather and then cut and weave it into thread. The workshop lasted for about 20 days, some 40 hours, in the period from the 1st of August 2016 to the 31st of August 2016 in

North Eastern Oman. After agreeing with the whole group on the date and time of the meetings of the workshop, I made a decision about the number of persons who had agreed to be part of this workshop. Also, these women did not have any extra work during that month because it was summer vacation. We integrated the women in a social environment based on their experiences (Sanders, 2001). In the adaptation and co-creation, the group's everyday activities were also involved (Sanders, 2001).

The first participant in the group was W5 from fieldwork 1. Meeting each woman tends to generate a random conversation. I linked their talk about their crafts (weaving) with the leather thread. The leather thread could be woven in other weaving crafts. I used snowball sampling again in fieldwork 2 to select another participant. Their conversation regarding traditions led me to select the second woman from the co-creation group who had a craft skill called *siim* (WS). The co-creation group was then expanded with other participants (women) besides the (WS). It was then noted that there were two more women who had skills in creating *tali* (WT) and *sifah* (WF). A male participant (MB), became interested in the interaction between the co-creation group's participants, and voluntarily offered to join the group. Our co-creation group was thus composed of five participants, who were somehow biologically related to each other.

I asked W7 to arrange a meeting with the WS. She said we could go at any time and that there was no need for an appointment. She said these people welcome guests at any time. The Bedouins believe that any guest is the guest of God, who is warmly welcomed. It took one hour of driving in the woman's car to reach the Bediyah desert. The landscape is beautiful, open desert; away from the city, where the camel and sheep were grazing (Figure 4-64). The community demonstrated their hospitality by introducing me to their relatives. The relatives knew that a guest was coming and we all shared our food together. This was a very kind gesture from this community as it gave a feeling of being at home. Upon our arrival, we were welcomed by WS who indeed demonstrated her hospitality. She first introduced me to her relatives who, according to Bedouin culture, had been informed about the guest's arrival. It was part of the Omani culture in general and Bedouins in particular. It did not take long to prepare lunch for the unexpected guests and we then all shared

and enjoyed our food together. Appreciating the methodological interaction is part of my approach in working with this community.

Figure 4-64 Open desert (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

The purpose of our visit was then disclosed to the woman and her entire family; and a discussion related to weaving was initiated. We were then introduced to the tools (manual machines and materials) for weaving, which are located in their house yard. Nylon thread is the main material used, and it makes the object as shiny as a manufactured product (Figure 4-65). Moreover, I understood that its gloss offers protection against decay and the colour is appreciated by those living in a hot, desert climate. Western perspectives might see this differently. Hanson and Levick-Parkin (2016) pointed out a similar observation when they mentioned a group of Zanzibar artisans and their most beautiful woven bags made out of natural materials. In their opinion, the object was then rendered less valuable, when it was sprayed with a high-gloss varnish.

Figure 4-65 Nylon thread (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

This was an interesting case, as the women themselves had identified a problem in selling the traditional crafts they made, such as camel trappings, camel neckbands, and saddlebags. WS said that the people would not easily accept changes in traditional form and colour. This was suggested by Al-Zadjali

(2009) in her thesis about Bedouin rugs. The methods for weaving these products are full of symbolism and meaning. In the last few years, the modernised carpets have forced weavers to abandon their craft, as it is not economically viable when forced to compete with the imported carpets industry. Additionally, local people seem unable to find rugs, which meet their needs from amongst the locally hand-woven products, and this creates a demand for imports. She also found that new motifs were not always welcome. These women decided to invent new functions of weaving, with cloth pieces called *siim* (Figure 4-66).

Figure 4-66 *Siim* is a cloth lace (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

One woman demonstrated the weaving process of her *siim*. However, after a careful observation, as a designer, I judged the trade-off between the object and the time and effort involved in producing it, was unbalanced in terms of outcome. She used nylon thread, which made the product as shiny as a manufactured product. Quite simply, the process took too long to produce an acceptable product. The success of this product will be temporary i.e. until a company can copy the design and sell it cheaper. It must be admitted, however, that the women's products were successfully sold and were popular in the market. I felt the women had created a very simple tool to do the weaving, which involved a lot of time and effort but the final product had little value because nylon thread had been used. The locally made tool was constructed from two pieces of wood sloped on two long steel tubes and raised on plastic cans. (Figure 4-67).

Figure 4-67 *Siim* tool (two pieces of woods sloped on two long steel tubes, stood on plastic cans) (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

There are other cloth pieces called *sifah* and *tali* made by women and they used industrial thread and were popular in the market because they copied the original design for a reduced price. This raises some interesting questions regarding intellectual property in the context of crafts, but that provides a subject for a future research project and academic paper.

Testing the concept of a product built or its early release, sample or model is a process known as prototyping. In such a process, the product designed is allowed to act as an object that can be either replicated, or some lessons can be drawn from it. For the purpose of this project, the initial model of the object design needed experience so that the designers (co-creative group) could be allowed to see the product in action before finalising and perfecting it. I planned to start with WS to make a prototype. Firstly, I showed her the leather thread. We held a discussion about the material as WS was unfamiliar with it. She did not know what the leather was, but her mother quickly explained. She said that it was leather that she used for tanning. The prototype involved the same techniques and tools but used leather thread instead of the nylon thread which she used to make *siim* (Figure 96).

Figure 4-68 *Siim* made of leather thread (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Presenting the prototype was very useful at this stage. First, it allowed the group to understand how to deal with leather. Second, it provided inspiration for the starting point for the co-creation workshop. It became natural for the group to ask me if they could use leather thread in their craft. “It’s not where you take things from – it’s where you take them to” (Luc Godard, 2017).

At the beginning, WS said that it was difficult to work with leather and that nylon thread was easier to weave. She said that it would not be possible to weave it and no one would stitch leather in their work. When she started to put the thread in her tool, firstly she was annoyed by the smell and texture of leather. The strong pressure that she used with the leather was the same as she used for the artificial thread and that caused the leather thread to break. In her weaving, she kept the work tight with a lot of effort. Then, the leather weaving part became noticeable. She was excited about the new result but she did not make a long piece of fabric as she believed it was useless to do so. She thought because no one would embroider leather in their cloth there was a greater chance of the fabric breaking (Figure 4-69).

Figure 4-69 The outcome of the *siim* (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

The dried skin after tanning produces the leather, and it is normally used as raw material or as base material for the production of leather thread. Leather thread is obtained simply by cutting the leather into slim leather strips. This process requires its own skills as the skin is still hard and needs to be regularly softened by slightly wetting it with water (Figure 4-70). Additionally, not all the leather obtained is of the same hardness but the resulting threads need to be continuous and tight without losing the link. In my workshop, although the group worked together, they were encouraged to choose the leather they preferred because, after tanning, leathers are naturally different in texture and colour, as well as smell. This process of producing the leather thread took a week and its outcome led to the next step.

Figure 4-70 Wetting the leather before using it (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

The activity of cutting the leather was a great icebreaker that put the women in a creative mood. We shared some personal issues. The women were fascinated to see that I was travelling abroad, to study, with my child but without my husband. They asked me a lot of personal questions and I was happy to answer them because this built up trust with the group.

tali - WT was a quiet 30 year old woman. While I was engaged with these women I came to know more about her. She did not cut the leather to thread with the group during the first week. I asked what more they could do but there was no response. The next day, WT, who had previously had some domestic problems, became more active within the group. She had previously made *tali* but had stopped after her domestic problems. That day, WT decided to bring her simple tool and asked me if she could use leather to make *tali*. She was happy to do it and she continued even when I was not there. WT's sister said to me that WT even did *tali* at night. Also, I asked her if it was possible to add another material to the leather. She added the thread which was used in *tali*,

which made her more interested. She made the longest leather piece (*tali*) of all the group.

sifah - WF also made decorations for Omani dresses. She tried to use leather rather than thread in her work. It was such a beautiful pattern. It is worth noting that this woman was not convinced about using such materials for designing *sifah* as she designs *sifah* for Omani traditional dresses. She believed that a leather dress would be heavy, it would be difficult to wash and it would smell.

In the current workshop, all the participants were encouraged to use their skills to create objects based on their own weaving skills. W5 was an expert in leather weaving *shaabook*. She also created another traditional craft called *hiblah* see Figure 4-71.

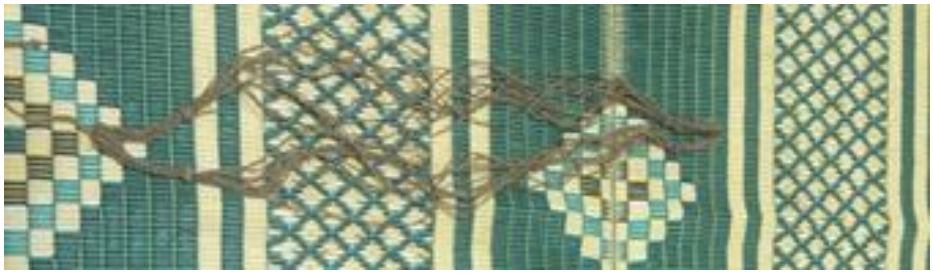

Figure 4-71 *Hebla* (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

The man who lives in the same house was interested about our work and at the end of August, he asked for some leather thread. One of his hobbies was making traditional Omani baskets. When he saw how we used leather in a different craft, this made him keen to try to make a layer of a basket using leather thread. I asked him if it was possible to mix the basket leaves with the leather together. At the beginning, he said that it might be difficult to get the same result but he was eventually interested about the work as I encouraged him. It is interesting to note that basket weaving is very closely related to *shaabook* in terms of *sifah* used in designing both the basket and the *shaabook* (Figure 4-72).

Figure 4-72 *Sifah* (from date palm fronds) (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

The outcome of cutting the leather was a brown coloured graded thread. The women used the thread in different crafts. I was watching them and I decided to work with them and make something. I thought about the way I had used the leather thread to form spheres in the reflection work stage after fieldwork 1. I tried to design similar pieces, related to the recent work we performed within a group. I showed the participants the technique I had used. It was amusing and fun: each one took a balloon and we blew them all to the same size. We each wet our thread, using different shades of brown and quickly wrapped it around the balloon. Interestingly each thread of beads was made by different individuals. Next day we met and the women were surprised to see the unique bead designs after they burst the balloon. The group consisted of six individuals, including me so there were six beads which I joined together with twisted leather thread made by MB (Figure 4-73)

Figure 4-73 The group's necklace of leather beads (56×16×8 CM, Leather thread, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

This section has discussed the inter-relationship and interplay of different craft techniques and materials. The ethnography and participatory research have provided the basic findings for this study.

4.7.3.5 Exhibiting Jewellery

It was important for my final design to test how the participants reflected on their work and how other audiences regarded their work. It is now quite common to exhibit new work in Omani art galleries. The contemporary context allows experimentation, even if the artist is using traditional materials, but in this instance, I chose to exhibit in a different venue.

The one-day exhibition was held during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, the two Muslim celebration events during the year. In Oman, most women wear their jewellery during these Eids. I displayed the necklace during Eid al-Adha in December after the workshop finished at the end of August. I presented the work in W1's house. I chose her house because she is a Bedouin and most women in the village and from outside area came to visit her. It is the habit on the first day of Eid for people to visit the elder people's house to greet them and share the happiness of this day. I hung the necklace on the wall to create a natural atmosphere in which it could be 'tested' and 'felt' by the local citizens who attended the W1's house during the first day of Eid (see Figure 4-74). I noted the oral opinion from the audiences. The attendance was up to 40 people from different ages. Their feedback is summarised as follows:

- The jewellery was related to the traditional silver necklace (*hanhun*)
- Its beads were related to beads of Misbaha[3]
- The judgment of colour, smell, and texture is that they were all unique
- The leather material resembled palm trees
- The weaving technique did not resemble the originality of *tali*, *siim*, and *sifah*

[3] Misbaha is an Arabic name given to a string of beads which is used to keep the count while uttering prayers.


Figure 4-74 Eid exhibition (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

4.7.4 Reflective Analysis

- ***What is the relevance of the leather thread in this work?***

The leather thread was critically investigated to discover its role in the social context and in traditional weaving. The investigation was to explore the specific value of different crafts which came together in a final creative synthesis, producing leather thread which was transformed into a tangible object-jewellery. However, the current work is not limited to the domain of the handcrafted object. In fact, it will be demonstrated how personal objects confirm, identify and validate the relevance of craft in the Bedouin social context.

Observing: By using the photo-elicitation approach, I was able to show some photographs of traditional Omani jewellery including *shaabook* to the participants. It was noted that the complete group of settled Bedouins had little or no knowledge of Omani traditional jewellery as opposed to the nomadic Bedouin, who had knowledge of the jewellery. One nomadic Bedouin woman had knowledge of *shaabook* as well; therefore, she was happy, in this workshop, to transfer her knowledge and skills related to *shaabook* to the rest of the team. Leather thread was used for the workshop as the main material for *hiblah*.

Thinking: I was thinking about the weaving technique found in *siim*, *tali*, *sifah* and the leather weaving part in *Shaabook.* It is possible to expand the functionality of both *siim* and *tali*, and also *sifah* from camel trappings, camel neckbands, and saddlebags, respectively, (Richardson, Dorr 2003) to the production of jewellery. The same weaving technique was thus interpreted, and

the same material used in *Shaabook* was employed to create contemporary jewellery.

Making: The co-creation team's skills were related to weaving by producing *sifah*, *tali*, and *siim* from traditional homemade trims and braided threads. In this way, the team was encouraged to employ the same material used for *shaabook* with their weaving skills to produce contemporary jewellery. This is what is referred to in this workshop as a metaphor, representing the relationship between the past (i.e. *shaabook*) and the present (i.e. necklace). This is because traditional heritage has been used to produce a more modern and contemporary product.

Interacting: the interaction between the co-creation group started when they were cutting the leather thread. Some of the women cut the leather so thin that it often broke and was impossible to weave as a continuous thread. For example, WS became frustrated with the process and wanted to stop. The expert woman then showed her how to cut the thread and explained that the trick was to keep the leather wet so that it cut easily. By contrast, WT used the opposite approach and cut the leather so thick that it could not be woven. Through interaction, the women learned the most effective way of cutting the leather, so that they produced a thread that could be woven.

Reflecting: The research investigated how hybrid materials can be synthesised to give a traditional context to contemporary art forms. There is a long tradition of hybridity within Omani jewellery, where women would build their jewellery collection through a combination of elements over time.

In the co-creation workshop, we endeavoured to develop a new form of hybridity. By utilising all the available participants' skills, we combined the crafts of *siim*, *tali* and *sifah*, with a chain of *hiblah* to create the final synthesised jewellery, in a new manifestation of craft hybridity. This design clearly replicated the traditional *hiblah* and other crafts (*siim*, *tali* and *sifah*) by using traditional materials (leather thread employed in *shaabook*) and occupied a gap between traditional and contemporary forms of expression.

The exhibition showed a shape of jewellery unfamiliar to the audience, but there was no rejection or objection to the necklace. The work created interesting conversations and each member of the audience had their own perspectives or opinions about the items. One of the opinions was the necklace

related to the traditional silver necklace (*samt*) suggesting a continuation of the traditional sense of jewellery in modern design.

This acceptance was meaningful in that the items did not appear to disrupt the existing culture, and they were accepted by the audience touching and wearing them. Additionally, the form, shape, colours, smell, and texture gave the items a 'sense of heritage' or classic feel. The most precious thing relating to this exhibition was that through this work I could provide the group with a sense of pride when they saw their designs receiving significant attention and being worn by others during the exhibition.

4.8 *An Interpretation of mulwiyah*

- ***What do you mean by mulwiyah?***

A result of being so immersed within the cultural heritage of traditional Omani jewellery prompted me to consider other significant and endangered traditions that might have relevance to this discussion. Just as the problem defined in the previous section related to traditional jewellery, so Omani traditional foods, including *mulwiyah*, are in danger of vanishing, due to a decrease in their popularity. *Mulwiyah* is the traditional Omani dish which is prepared from the internal animal parts (i.e. intestine, lungs, and stomach) when they slaughter animals including camels, cows, sheep or goats for the Eid celebrations (Figure 4-75). Such changes in food consumption reflect the ephemeral, fragile, and changing nature of traditional culture. I felt that there was a certain creative potential in the use of material that is usually regarded as food, and that it would be possible to transform the *mulwiyah* into contemporary jewellery (i.e. a wearable necklace). This would preserve relationship between the past (traditional dish) and present.

In the same way that traditional material, specifically the leather thread employed in the production of *shaabook* was used to create contemporary jewellery, the *mulwiyah* dish was transformed into a wearable necklace. The animal interior parts were woven, just like the weaving of leather thread, as a tangible object from a specific social context that reflects the constantly evolving nature of modern culture. Therefore, as with the weaving of leather thread, the twisting of these animal parts becomes a metaphor that has specific value in the Bedouin social context.

Figure 4-75 Mulwiyah is an Omani dish (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

4.8.1 Method

- ***What method was followed in representing mulwiyah?***

The methods included both seeking and deploying processes, which involved employing the internal parts of a slaughtered animal, weaving or twisting them, and producing wearable contemporary jewellery (i.e. a necklace). It is important here to draw attention to the fact that the final production was quite ephemeral. This is in fact the specific function of the design proposed here.

4.8.1.1 Seeking

Seeking is the process of getting the raw materials from the internal parts of animals that will be used in the next process. The intestines, lungs and stomach (Figure 4-76) were collected from animals that had been slaughtered by the families as part of the Omani celebrations ad the Eid. The intestines were ready for the next process just after they had been removed from the carcass and cleaned (Figure 4-77). By contrast, both the lungs and stomach needed to be cut into very long slim strips (Figure 4-78).

Figure 4-76 (a) Intestine; (b) Lung; (c) Stomach (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-77 (a) Cleaning inside the intestine; (b) Clean and ready for use (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-78 (a) Cutting the lung into strips; (b) Cutting the stomach into strips (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

4.8.1.2 Deploying

Another issue raised is the sustainability, recycling, and minimizing of waste in resource-poor environments. Perhaps there is something to be learned in the ways that these practices utilise available resources to the maximum. In the days before His Majesty the Sultan's accession to power (i.e. before 1970), Oman was a poor country, where all resources (particularly food) were valued. Traditionally, the Bedouin lived on the edge of survival, which forced them to utilize, or recycle, every resource. This in itself is a value, which can be related to identity in terms of self-sufficiency and independence. The concept of recycling and sustainability was later explored in jewellery products in a less ephemeral form (see section 4.10.3) by twisting or weaving the above acquired materials into long parts woven together to be used as a necklace (Figure 4-79 and Figure 4-80). The first necklace I made was heavy (see Figure 4-81). The challenge here is to cut the lungs and stomach into very long thin strips. The thinner they are, the lighter the woven parts will be (Figure 4-82). Consequently, it becomes practical or impractical to be worn as necklace.

Figure 4-79 Weaving the necklace (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-80 Continuing to weave the necklace (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-81 Heavy necklace (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-82 Light necklace (27×9×2 CM, Animal parts (i.e. intestines, lungs, and stomach, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

4.8.1.3 Exhibiting Jewellery

The exhibition of the jewellery prepared from *mulwiyah* was held during an Eid gathering but it included only family members to gain their opinions about the

new design, since the jewellery would get spoiled if it not quickly dismantled. The jewellery was then exhibited via a volunteer who wore it and the researcher was then able to record the viewers' oral opinions. Almost all viewers were confused about this design, and some compared it to the traditional silver necklace (*hanhun*). One of the viewers completely rejected the design and left the place where the necklace was being shown, but no other reaction was so extreme.

4.8.2 Reflective Analyses for the *mulwiyah project*

It is commonly understood that habits, customs, language, clothes/jewellery of a nation or its people as well as the food they eat, define their identity. This section will focus on identity through traditional food and identify Omani Bedouins through the *mulwiyah* dish.

Observing: I observed there were similarities between *mulwiyah* dish and headdress (*shaabook*). Both are prepared from animal products derived from goats and sheep. For example, the *mulwiyah* uses intestine, lungs, and stomach, while *shaabook* uses leather skin by-products. Both *mulwiyah* and *shaabook* require a long and slim thread. There are some similarities between the weaving and twisting of *mulwiyah* and *shaabook*. In addition, both have a distinctive smell, and surprisingly, both the headdress and the dish are designed to last. The *mulwiyah* dish is renowned for being preserved for up to one year by being salted and dried in the sun. The headdress is usually well-preserved for a number of years until the leather part starts to deteriorate through frequent wear.

Thinking: The links between national identity and food are well known, for example, the National Federation of Fisheries has said that "fish and chips are the undisputed National dish of Great Britain, becoming a cultural and culinary symbol of our country, instantly recognized as British the world over" (The Guardian home, 2016). Similarly, hamburgers are associated with Americans, while pizza and parmesan cheese are Italian specialties. This indicates that our meals can connect us to places we have lived in or travelled to, or to the rituals of former generations. These perceptions have been readily reinforced through media representations and marketing strategies.

In the current project, not only is a traditional Omani dish used to represent the identity of the Omani people, but also the smell of the dish is related to the previous research where the skin of slaughtered animals was used. It is interesting to note that *shaabook* reflected Bedouin tradition and this identity can also be reflected from the traditional *mulwiyah* dish, reinforcing the emphasis that this region places on heritage. The reflection of such identity of the Bedouins is further observed on the basis of the dish being prepared from animal parts which are twisted in such a way that they resemble the weaving of the *shaabook* by Omani Bedouin. This creative example of working with repulsive animal parts can be considered as an example of bio design, where the bio jewellery can be developed from specific animal parts or even human parts. Some previous examples in this context include the famous artworks of;

- France Fernandez (MTV, 2010) created a dress made of raw beef for Lady Gaga. This is known as the meat dress.
- Julia Lohmann(Lohmann, 2017), a German Artist who worked with animal materials (i.e. sheep and cow stomachs) to produce exquisite lamps.
- Victoria Ledig (Ledig, 2017), a German designer who worked with unusual animal materials (i.e. heads) to produce several works with leather and a collection with parchment jewellery and
- Cristin Richard (Richard, 2017), an American artist whose work involved animal intestines to create the idea of fashion as sculpture in art.

Making: The above artists used original animal materials in their work, rather than using synthetic material. However, my work is different from the examples cited as it is quite ephemeral. I consider the making of this temporary edible jewellery as a metaphor for the speed with which traditional culture can vanish. This parallels the disappearance of traditional Omani jewellery since the 1970s when traders travelled around Oman asking about silver jewellery and buying it from the owners at a low price, which put traditional Omani jewellery in danger of vanishing. It also references and draws upon skills of weaving leather in Bedouin culture.

Reflection: Magliocco (1998) asserted that the smell of dishes is part of identity. The smell of *mulwiyah* is thus related to both *shaabook* and *nis'ah* to

formulate and reflect Omani identity. Both *nis'ah* and *shaabook,* being produced from leather (produced from animal skin), absorb the smell of the women owners who wear them. '*mulwiyah*' however has the smell of animal meat and is eaten by all Omanis and is recognised as a part of Omani identity. At its most superficial, culture is often reduced to what we eat and what we wear, but in Oman there is still a living link between the preparation of *mulwiyah* and the wearing of *shaabook*, at least in the Bedouin communities. Therefore, to some extent, it can be said that both *mulwiyah* and the artefacts reflect the Omani national identity. There is also a close relationship and value between the Bedouin and their livestock, reinforcing the importance of concepts such as ecology and sustainability within this culture.

4.8.2.1 Construction and Deconstruction

The traditional Omani dish *mulwiyah* consists of both the stomach and lungs of cows that are then twisted with cow intestines, and normally preserved for up to one year till the following Eid. Although the dish can be prepared at any time, when it is prepared on the occasion of Eid, it is considered as an Omani tradition. The deployment of these traditional performances (i.e. seeking and deployment of *mulwiyah*) is considered as a special occasion for Bedouin women and men, and it includes grilling the meat followed by beautiful songs. They then preserve part of this dish to serve it to their future guests; this hospitality is a clear instance of Omani tradition. I am interested in the concept of temporary artworks as evidenced in work by Christo (2018). For example, the London Mastaba was a piece of sculpture. It was a pyramid weighs 600 tons made of 7000 barrels, that floated in Hyde Park in London. Also, in London, there have been temporary installations like Katharina Fritsch's Hahn/Cock (2013-2015) and Michael Rakowitz's The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist, both of which were placed in Trafalgar square.

The grilling process was conducted after it was tested as a necklace (by wearing it) before it was dismantled (Figure 4-83). Then, the professional grilled the necklace at the end (Figure 4-84) and it was eaten with rice or curry. I argue that this dismantling of the *mulwiyah* reflects the above-mentioned performance art or conceptual art.

Figure 4-83 Wearing the necklace (27×9×2 CM, Animal parts (i.e. intestines, lungs, and stomach, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

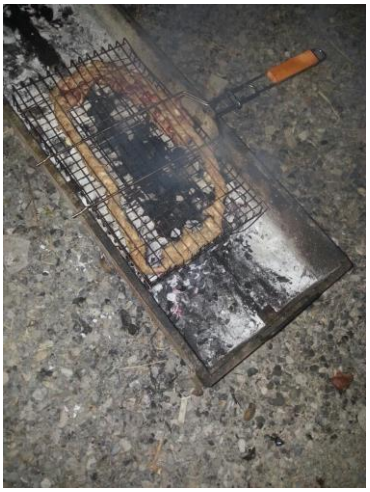

Figure 4-84 Grilling the necklace (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

This destruction of the necklace, and its transformation into food, was intended to be a metaphor for the disappearances of traditional jewellery. The grilling had a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it deconstructed the artefact and secondly it produced a dish which is associated with a special occasion. This, in turn, reinforces its Omani identity, as contemporary Omani jewellery is generally associated with special occasions.

4.9 *UK (2016) Reflections through practice*

The new designs that will be proposed here are focused on the reinterpretation of traditional Omani jewellery into contemporary jewellery. The main idea is to focus on applying the knowledge gained from interviews and conversations with respondents and developing a new form of contemporary jewellery related to Omani traditions. A secondary consideration is purely personal. Through working with the co-creation group, I gained new skills.

Observation: The research to inform the designs started with the observation of Omani Bedouin culture by interacting with Bedouin participants whose

lifestyle was nomadic, although they are now settled. This interaction allowed the building of a visual or material connection with them, after observing their particular culture. By observing these participants, my practice changed because they affected me. For example, some of the women had a strong relationship with their jewellery. Unlike many other women, they had kept their jewellery for almost 50 years. Furthermore, each woman had her own distinctive way of storing jewellery, with the result that some pieces had acquired a unique smell. Other pieces had been stored for so long they had turned black with age, but they were still treasured. This is why I can confidently say that cooperation with my participants was very important in order to for me understand their traditional culture.

Interaction: This cooperation gave me a feeling that the process of weaving should be conducted together in a team. I felt it should be a social function and that it was as important as making the final products. All the design ideas were related to this long journey involving this interaction with my participants. The influences came from our cooperation, and the knowledge gained from the literature review, as well as the experience gained from my practice in fieldwork 1 and fieldwork 2. A description of each design will be given in the next sections.

4.9.1 Drawing the misrepresented traditional jewellery

It is interesting to note here that the most challenging situation is to show jewellery pieces in media such as books and exhibitions, particularly when they are pieces, such as *shaabook* and *nis'ah* which are normally worn in the hair. In the literature review, such objects are often displayed without the wearer. This is related to the Islamic religion which does not allow a male to take photographs of the objects being worn by their wearers/owners' with their hair uncovered. In addition, the wearers would not allow photographs to be displayed in which their hair was uncovered. To address this problem, I personally, being a female researcher, requested one woman to wear her hair dress – *nis'ah*. Since the co-created group involved only women, she was willing to show the way of wearing it to the entire group. Rather than taking a photograph, I then made a full drawing (front and back) of the object (Figure 4-85).

Figure 4-85 *Nis'ah* (Paper, Pencil and colour, Drawing by Amal Al-Ismaili, UK, Sheffield Hallam University, 2016)

When jewellery, such as the author's jewellery designs, are photographed as objects, they gain a different meaning. They become isolated and removed from their normal context. Even so, the designs gain from the fact that the photographer has provided the viewer with credible living human beings, not models. This breaks away from the body as an object, and emphasises the individuality and personality of the wearer (den Besten, 2011).

Professional photographers, however, ask their models to pose. As a result, the photographers do not always reflect reality, and in the case of models posing with traditional Omani jewellery, they are sometimes an incorrect representation because they are taken without a full understanding of the subject. This is particularly true of the photograph showing an Omani anklet see Figure 4-39. The people see the photograph as a truth, but it is a construction. The anklet should be covered by the trousers as it relates to religious concept of hiding the jewellery. In addition, there is the function of this piece to prevent the trousers (*sirwal*) moving. The jewellery is not hidden underneath the trousers to hold them, rather it is worn above the trouser. I could not take such a photograph because nowadays the traditional *sirwal* have become tighter in the leg (see Figure 4-86) . Before the oil revolution, they designed and made trousers wide enough to fit with the anklet. In my research, I have drawn the correct way of wearing this piece (Figure 4-87).

Figure 4-86 Tight *sirwal* (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

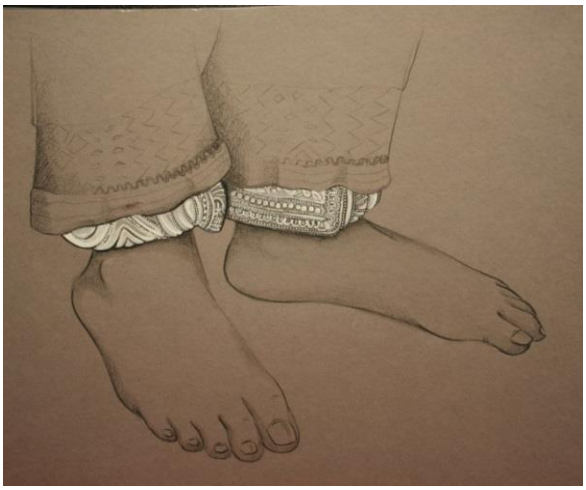

Figure 4-87 The right way to wear anklets (Paper, Pencil and colour Drawing by the researcher, UK, Sheffield Hallam University, 2016)

4.9.2 Leather, Copper and Leather and Copper Combination

According to Goy (2013), copper has been produced in the Omani mountains since the Iron Age (1250-300 BC). There is, in fact, one example of a man's dagger that is made entirely of copper (Morris and Shelton, 1997). However, the majority of traditional Omani jewellery is made of silver. Speaking personally, when I started investigating leather as the main source reflecting the Bedouin identity, both I and the informants were impressed with the silver component and how it became darker over time. This led me to investigate the metal that could be another source of cultural material, and I chose to use leather and subsequently copper to produce my designs.

The first two rings I designed were made from (1) Leather and (2) copper, both with the lower portion, the shank, made of silver (see Figure 4-88). The mixture of leather with copper was also used to produce a new design (e.g. third ring) (see Figure 4-89). Their dome shapes are the design which uses the same form

used in the components surrounding the *shaabook*, thus reflecting a traditional design.

Figure 4-88 Copper ring and leather ring (4×4×5 CM, Leather, silver & copper, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-89 Mixture of leather with copper ring (5.5×4×6 CM, Leather, silver & copper, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

4.9.3 Leather and Plastic

During my investigation, it was also noted that the lifestyle of nomadic Bedouins has changed from what is described in the literature. In fact, they have become settled Bedouins and have started to lead more modern lives (using cars rather than camels, their tents are replaced by houses constructed in cement, etc.), although they still keep some of their traditional crafts. However, the effects of modernity are also visible since they tend to use traditional materials, such as wool thread, alongside modern material, particularly nylon thread. Moreover, the tools utilised are cans and plastic bottles rather than the traditional wood constructions (Figure 4-90 and Figure 4-91). To reflect these changes, I designed necklaces using leather and plastic (Squishy plastic) to bring the idea of the mixture of industrial and traditional materials/tools together in my metaphor of making jewellery.

Figure 4-90 Plastic bottles construction (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

Figure 4-91 Cans used in construction (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2016)

"Squishy plastic, a Selfix Technology product, which is a specially formulated low temperature biodegradable thermoplastic, is used in a variety of engineering applications" (Abdul Hoque, 2017). Here, the plastic used has the same features as leather. Since the plastic material used was hard, it was necessary to soften it by wetting it in boiling water so that it could be shaped. It normally becomes solid when it dries. I then mixed the leather with the plastic and joined the two together (Figure 4-92, Figure 4-93 and Figure 4-94). This combination resulted in an outcome which is neither completely traditional nor completely manufactured jewellery. It is a rather more an organic shape reflecting a mixture of traditional and contemporary design.

Figure 4-92 Plastic mixed with leather to design a necklace (35×3×3 CM, Leather& Squishy plastic, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-93 Joining leather with plastic (13×4×3 CM, Leather & Squishy plastic, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-94 An Organic shape reflecting traditional and contemporary design (45×6×6 CM, Leather& Squishy plastic, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

4.9.4 Goat Hair

I described the story behind the necklace as shown in Figure 4-95 in section 4.6.1.12, when participant W5 drove me through the desert and took me to the place where one of her animals had died. As a result, I designed a necklace

using goat hair, employing the symbolism of the goat's natural colour. This piece memorialises the dead animal. Also, this necklace reflects the theme of death or recycling, as is suggested by the *mulwiyah* necklace (Section 4.8).

The interpretation uses the hair as a material which comes from the animal's body in combination with a woven mesh. The black and white hairs are woven on the mesh, and the parts sharply contrast with each other. I used these colours as they symbolise death in some eastern and western cultures. In the eastern culture, the people wear white as a sign of mourning. In contrast black is often in the west. I come from the east and I study in the west. In this necklace I tried to hybridise the two cultures by mixing these two colours.

Figure 4-95 Necklace made of black and white goat hairs (15×3.5×,3 CM, Goat hair & leather, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

4.9.5 Leather only

The women from the co-creative weaving workshop naturally sat on the floor in a close circle. They shared work between them. They took one piece of leather and they divided it between them. Cutting became quicker. They talked and sang while cutting. The outcome of this leather cutting workshop outcome was a long section of leather thread. I took this thread abroad with me to the UK. I hung it on the wall. I brought that group-constructed object with me like a portrait (Figure 4-96). I transformed their work into a bangle (Figure 4-97). The order was made according to the results of each participant in the group which cut the leather. Each woman could be identified by her work. The women produced threads of different length and width, and they coiled them differently.

Figure 4-96 Portrait (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-97 Bangle made of Leather (11×13×5 CM, Leather, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

4.9.6 Leather and Wood

The settlement of the Bedouin has disrupted the traditions of a (formerly) nomadic population. Most of my respondents indicated that they had difficulty maintaining their Bedouin identity. This was explained in a few replies that I got when I asked one woman from Al-Wahiba tribe living in the desert if she considered herself a Bedouin. She first said that modernity had forced her to become a settled (*Hadher*) human being, and not a Bedouin. She then expanded on her reply and said that she is still a Bedouin who has the feeling of being both Bedouin and *Hadher*. This was a profound statement, and it encapsulates the tension between two identities.

Settled Bedouins take advantage of their modern lifestyle and use electricity, cars, cement houses etc. However, among them, some families have children and they are forced to move to the closest cities during school time to access education and then return to their desert houses when the schools close. They also lack health facilities, but they take advantage of the closest health centres. They prefer, however, to live in their original homes, where they were born. One of the respondents mentioned that she is most comfortable sleeping on the ground in her house yard watching the clear sky full of stars and the moon. She was definite in her belief that, in contrast to a city, the fresh air with a night's breeze from the desert makes her fall into a deep sleep. To reflect these ideas of moving as nomadic and settled Bedouins, I used in my practice two rings with a square blue shape for men and a red circle for women (Figure 4-98). The shanks of the two rings are joined to their rings' heads using screws (Figure 4-99) ,allowing the heads to be removed depending on whether they are intended for men or for women. When not worn the two rings are supported by flat wood, and if the head of one ring is removed, they become unbalanced. As

can be seen inFigure 4-100 and Figure 4-101, the two rings are physically connected by a long leather thread. This connection is related to my experience of studying when separated from my family. It could be said there is an aspect of nomadism in travelling abroad to study.

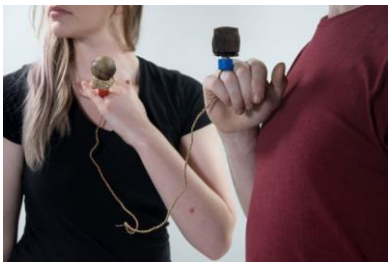

Figure 4-98 Rings with a blue square shape for men and a red circle for women (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-99 Leather rings' heads using wood screw (6×3×6 CM, leather& wood, Photographed by by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-100 The two rings supported by flat wood (6×7×5 CM, leather & wood, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-101 The man's ring has a long leather thread (6×3×6 CM, leather & wood, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

4.10 *Theme 4: recycled and sustainable Jewellery*

"Don't do things today that make tomorrow worse." (Shedroff, 2009, p 32). Sustainability relates to the human and natural environment and supporting the social and economic needs of present and future generations. In this study I focused on leather and initially I conducted an experiment in leather produced using chemical tanning because it was easily available. I then investigated naturally tanned leather which as described, has a more positive environmental potential. I helped to prepare this material with the Bedouin women and used it in my practice because of its rarity. Reference has already been made to Bartley's (2017) use of recycled plastic in jewellery, and of course it is well known that the planet now faces the problem of massive quantities of waste material. This has a negative impact on all of nature, but the problem of waste plastic is particularly acute in the oceans. The following section will demonstrate how it was possible to recycle waste plastic from the shores of Oman, and convert it into contemporary jewellery.

4.10.1 Oman (2017) Collect and Create

4.10.2 Saqla necklace

The materials used in the creation of jewellery have no single, fixed, absolute value. Makers of jewellery face the phenomenon of material that has value at one time, and another value at another time. Some materials suddenly become valuable because they are rare or now difficult to manufacture or the cultural value has changed, such as the natural tanning of leather. As discussed above, leather value has changed from semi-precious to a precious material. Some plastics are semi-precious nowadays such as toys, medicine jars, juice containers and grocery bags, but in the next century their value could be changed. During my journey to Oman in July 2017, I went to the coast at *Saqla* beach. At the beach, I noticed how the clean sand was dotted with the tops from discarded water bottles (Figure 4-102). Using my camera, I captured a conversation between contrasting colours; of blue (plastic) and brown (sand). I got a strong feeling that jewellery could be made from this plastic. I collected 400 bottle tops in three hours. These became the visual elements that evoke the identity of the Omani landscape in my work. Oman's coastline is 3,165 kilometres long, including beaches overlooking the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Straits of Hormuz in the North (Ministry of Tourism, 2016).

Figure 4-102 The bottle tops on the beach (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, *Saqal* beach, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017)

While collecting the plastic, I also collected what I was interested in from the beach such as the animal bones and fishermen's nets. I love the place and I stayed for a night at *Saqla* resort. During that day, I made a necklace with some

of the objects I had collected (fishing nets and animal bones) see Figure 4-103. Based on this experience, I would suggest that the easy availability of “found” materials- plastic; nylon thread from fishing nets goat hair- permits the creation of contemporary jewellery using unorthodox materials (see section 4.9.4). Obviously, this is not a new idea, and to certain extent, Omani jewellery has frequently recycled items like silver coins and silver beads. As I have also indicated, leatherwork could be replaced when the original artefact wore out. Even so, there remains the possibility for Omani jewellery to extend the use of found and unorthodox materials.

Figure 4-103 *Saqla*1 necklace (27×2×.5 CM, Fishing net & sea animal legs, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, *Saqla* beach, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017)

4.10.3 UK (2017) Reflection

All around the world people find plastic which has been washed up on beaches. There are certain issues regarding sustainability, recycling and incorporating ideas into the culture. For example, traditional Omani jewellery incorporated coins such as MTD coins which are valuable in any culture. This currency came to Oman through trading or other means and the silversmiths used it as a material source when making jewellery. Also, they used the coins as a modular element in necklaces. The bottle tops could have been washed up through the sea from another country before they reached Oman, which stimulated me to use them in designing jewellery. Overall, the MTD coins and the bottle tops could both hold the concept of continuity and hybridity in Omani jewellery. The inversion of the perception of value lies in the fact that the MTDs were incorporated for their monetary value at the time, whereas the bottle tops are

currently worthless discarded items, but creatively have an intrinsic and aesthetic value that I have exploited through contemporary work.

I also explored this dichotomy by incorporating semi-precious material such as a red bicycle reflector pendant in a *salwar* necklace (Figure 4-104). Incorporating found plastic objects also links to the material experiments with pipe cleaners and plastic. This work further developed the approach that I had first used when incorporating "found" plastic from a beach in Oman. The value of this material differs from person to person; some see it as rubbish and for others like me, it is a material with great potential for the creation of jewellery.

Figure 4-104 Pendant in *salwar* necklace (reflector; necklace, Oman, Nizwa, 1950s, image from The British Museum, 2019) permission from The British Museum

My design for this necklace is a hybrid between the *shaabook* and *nis'ah*. I used the woven leather technique as used in the *shaabook* (Figure 4-105). I stitched the small silver dome on the top of the woven leather part (Figure 4-106). The most surprising aspect of the stitching was how the back looked. I followed the same stitched line to be in the same harmony as in the *nis'ah* (Figure 4-107). In addition, I used part of the nis'ah as inspiration to structure the form of my design (Figure 4-108). I cut the plastic bottle tops into discs, similar to the silver disc at the end of *shaabook* and *nis'ah* (Figure 4-109). It can be noticed in the final design that the end line of plastic is a light blue. Those parts changed from dark blue because of the heat of the sun. This, in itself, could be seen as a significant environmental factor, indicating change. Then I joined the blue discs by using a riveting technique (Figure 4-110). Finally, I joined the leather part to the plastic with stitching (see final necklace in Figure 4-111). What is interesting about the necklace is that the leather chain has unique silver tubes (Figure 4-112). W8 sold most of her silver components in the *shaabook* except for some silver tubes. She gave me her *shaabook* (Figure 4-113) and told me that I could make something with it in my project. I used the two silver tubes in my *Saqla*

necklace. I am proud to use them in my design because it reflects co-creation. By joining a new generation of work with the previous work, I am giving another life to the traditional pieces, as shown in the *Saqla 2* necklace (Figure 4-114).

Figure 4-105 Weaving leather, similar *shaabook* weaving (Photographed Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-106 Stitching the silver domes above the leather weaving (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-107 The appearance of the stitched back (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-108 Part of *nis'ah* used to form my design (44×10×2CM, Silver& leather, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed Amal Al-Ismaili, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

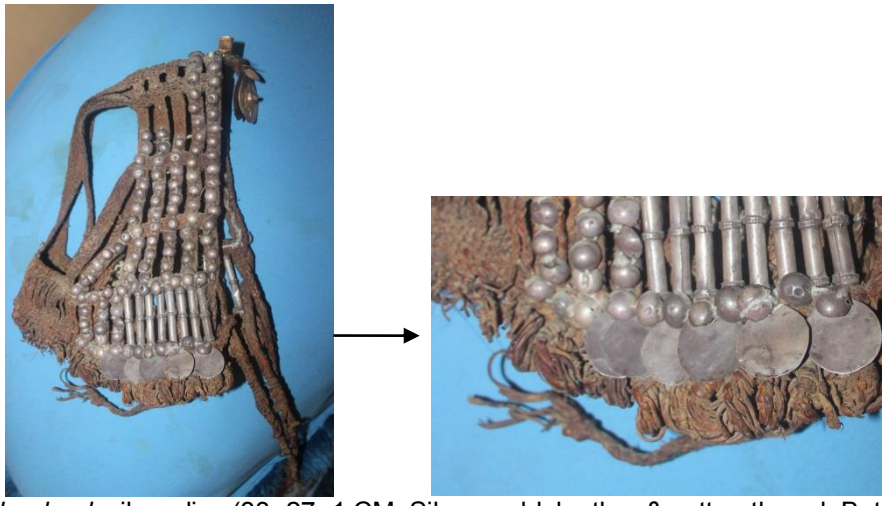

Figure 4-109 *Shaabook* silver disc (33×27×1 CM, Silver, gold, leather & cotton thread, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

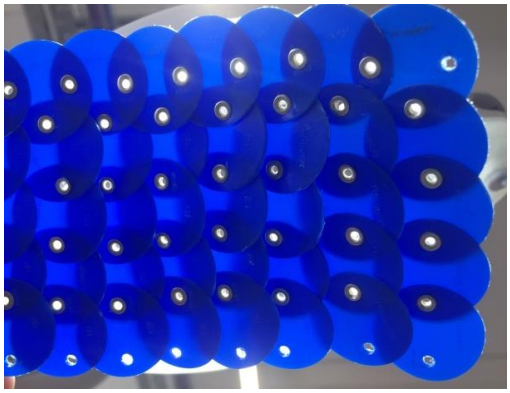

Figure 4-110 Cutting the water bottle tops into circles and riveting them (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-111 Stitching the leather part with plastic parts (27×2×.5 CM, Leather, silver& water bottle top, Photographed by Lampson, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-112 The two silver tubes in the middle of the leather chain(27×2×.5 CM, Leather, silver& water bottle top, Photographed by Lampson, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

Figure 4-113 *Shaabook* with silver tubes (39×28×1 CM, Silver, gold, cotton thread & leather, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

Figure 4-114 *Saqla*2 necklace(27×2×.5 CM, Leather, silver& water bottle top, Photographed by Lampson, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2017)

This combination of traditional silver, newly woven leather and recycled plastic redefines Omani jewellery. Traditional jewellery still takes its value from the weight of the precious material that it employs. This piece recycles effectively worthless plastic material, but it has the potential to accrue value because it is unique. In fact, the silver coins used in Omani jewellery are manufactured objects, originally created for a different purpose. They were produced as money, but the craftsmen incorporated them creatively in their own designs. I am following that tradition, in the 21st century, around the issue of environmental waste, but I am also exploring its aesthetic properties when combined with traditional materials. Also, it makes contact with global issues;

this bottle top could be local plastic or it could have come from Asia or Africa. I believe this work was a key piece in the series of work produced for my PhD but at the same time it is the starting point for future projects. It can function as a template for future projects about found objects, traditional practice, modularity, cultural hybridity and sustainability.

4.11 *Theme 5: Jewellery and technology*

This theme focused on using technology tools and material combined with traditional material and techniques. ‘‘Hands are needed though to make models and prototypes for industrial production, a computer model can never replace the inherent material and technical knowledge of a handmade model’’ (Besten, 2009, p.20). Balancing new technology and craft making is one way of developing tradition. Most contemporary jewellers who use new technologies (e.g. 3D printing) such as Ted Noten, Lynne Murray and Alissia Melka-Teichroew generally use the material provided by 3D machines without mixing it with other material. However, my work is differentiated because I weave leather with a nylon 3D model.

4.11.1 3D Printing UK (2018)

4.11.2 Leather and nylon

I have a strong personal interest in the anthropological and cultural aspects of the fieldwork 1, as evidenced in the jewellery I produced based on that experience. My interest is in both its ritualistic and symbolic use as well as its design aesthetic. One of the villagers found a heavy silver bracelet with some gold leaf parts. He found it in the *wadi* (riverbed) covered by water and sand. The people in that village all knew about me as a researcher; I came to meet women to talk about the jewellery and the man who found the bracelet sent his mother to show me the bangle (see Figure 4-115). I asked if I could buy it. He went to the silver shop to weigh it and sold it to me at the same price. The most serious issue here is that people are still trading their jewellery by the weight of the metal. In my opinion, estimating traditional Omani jewellery by weight without regard to artistic and historical value is a theft of our Omani heritage. It concerns me that such an obviously traditional artefact can still be traded in the souq purely on the value of its weight in silver. There is an ethical issue here related to the value of traditional Omani jewellery and this needs attention by

the Ministry of Heritage and Culture to avoid what happened after the oil revolution in Oman (see section 1.6 and 4.5.1).

Figure 4-115 Double bangle I purchased (8×8×2.5 CM, Silver. Photograph by Amal Al-Ismaili, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

The bracelet in question had been found, and it may be that the finder believed that he had no real right to keep or sell it. At the same time, he might have felt that it would be unfair to overcharge me, given that I was now one of his mother's friends, and he knew that my interest in the bangle was academic. The bracelet had been affected by environmental factors. The effect could be noticed as some parts of the gold plating were missing. The maker of the piece had used the repetitive ridges as a design feature. This reflects the environment of that village which is surrounded by multiple ridges. Only Bedouin women wore such double layered bangles. I observed the *Hadher* women wearing a single bangle (see Figure 4-116). The weight of jewellery also plays an important role in Bedouin jewellery. The majority of participants agreed with the statement that the harsh nomadic Bedouin life made them strong, and wearing this jewellery was not considered as heavy as we see it today. In contrast, the new generation of settled Bedouin today more commonly wear non-Omani light jewellery (2.3.4). This bracelet, therefore, is not simply worth the weight of the silver that was used in its manufacture. Its weight, design, and the subsequent damage or wear to that design all combine to make it an artefact that tells something of Bedouin history.

Figure 4-116 Single bangle (6×5×2.5 CM, Silver. Photograph by Amal Al-Ismaili, Between the eighteenth century until 1972, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2015)

The bracelet, and its history, were the starting points for my nylon bangle. I wanted like to add life to the nylon bangle by combining the nylon with leather thread. It became a theme for this jewellery to include leather as a feature and to incorporate the *shaabook* weaving technique. I sketched some ideas about weaving leather thread with a 3D printing design (Figure 4-117).

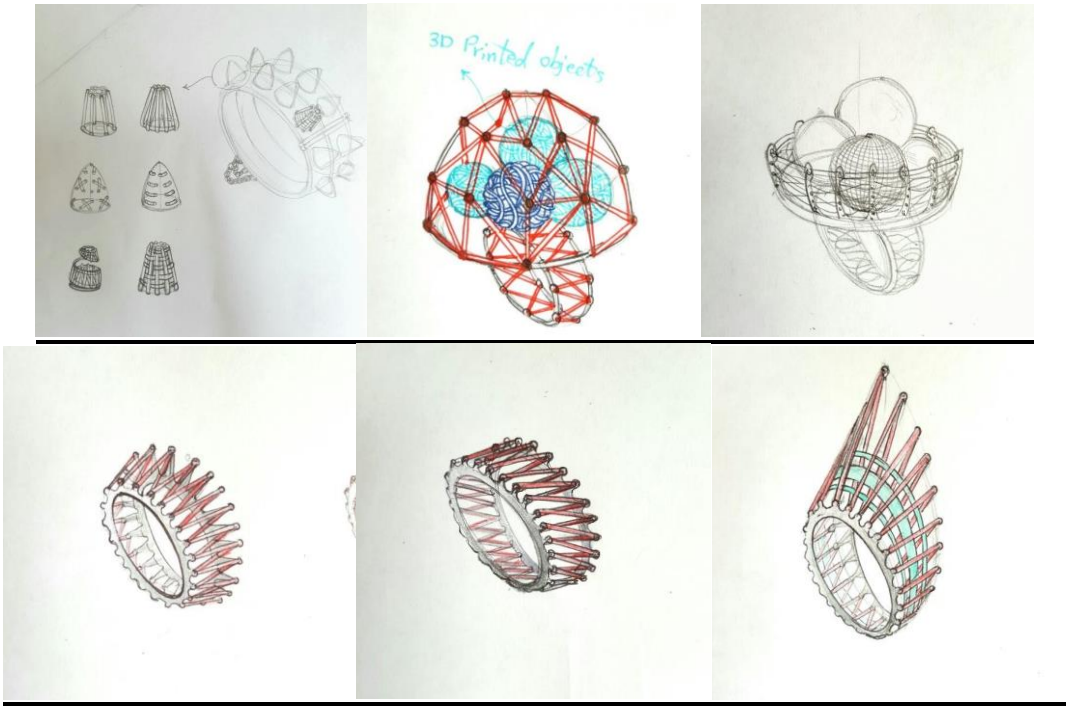

Figure 4-117 Sketches 3D with leather thread (Paper, Pencil and colour, drawing by Amal Al-Ismaili, UK, Sheffield Hallam University, 2016)

I designed two bangles with a mesh surface so as to be able to weave the leather through it (see Figure 4-118 and Figure 4-119). After the design was printed, I wove leather thread in the net surface of the bangles (see Figure 4-120). In this design I hybridised the natural material (leather thread) with the artificial material (white nylon).

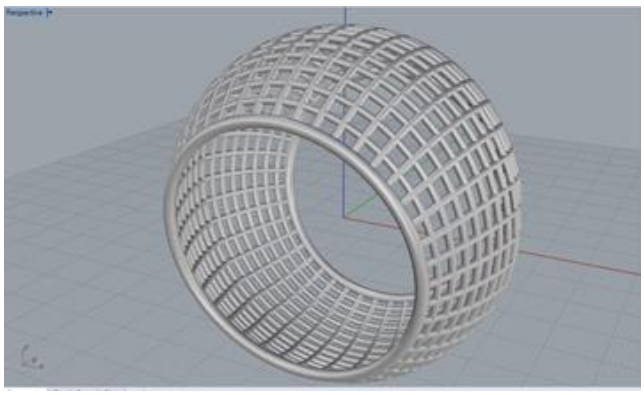

Figure 4-118 Rhino program bangle design for woven leather (9×6×.7 CM, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2018)

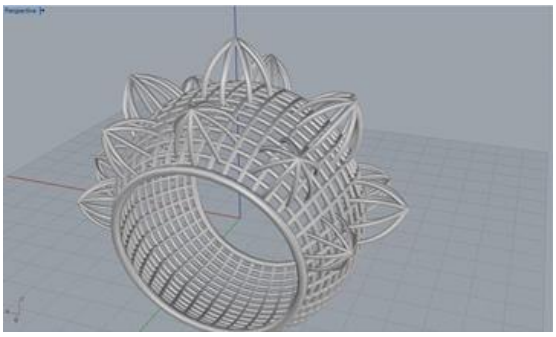

Figure 4-119 Rhino program bangle design bangle for weaving leather through (11.5×6×.7 CM, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2018)

Figure 4-120 Weaving leather thread in the 3D surface (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2018)

At the beginning of my research, it was a challenge to learn how to use the Rhino software. My determination was to explore this technology related to jewellery because it could have a big impact in Oman. In particular, 3D printed

jewellery is not yet familiar in Oman. Reinterpreting the traditional designs in combination with 3D printing could create interest from Omani society in new forms of traditional jewellery. This research with multi methods and materials could open many doors for other Omani researchers in this field. I have taken advantage of being able to travel and study abroad as a nomad, to learn what is available abroad and I can bring it back to my country.

4.11.3 Future project

I came to the UK and I always carried that “wadi” bracelet in my bag. I wanted to use it in my designs. I thought of making this heavy object as light as possible. I thought about 3D printing. I started by designing a copy version of the traditional double and single bracelet in Rhino (Figure 4-121 and Figure 4-122). I sent it to be printed in plastic by Shapways Company (Figure 4-123). The silver bangle is different from the nylon one in terms of the weight and the nylon could be coloured with acid dye. Traditional jewellery is silver and the Bedouin try to add colours, such as red beads or coral, to decorate the jewellery but there is limited choice. In my print design, I dyed it navy blue (Figure 4-124). For the dying process, I first boiled water in a pot. Then, I added a teaspoon of acid to the water. I let it boil and then I added the model for about 20 to 30 minutes. Finally, I turned off the heat and left it in the pot till cool. The outcome was a colourful and light bangle. It is one way of retaining traditional Omani jewellery to be worn in future. This design could potentially increase the popularity of traditional Omani jewellery forms for new generations.

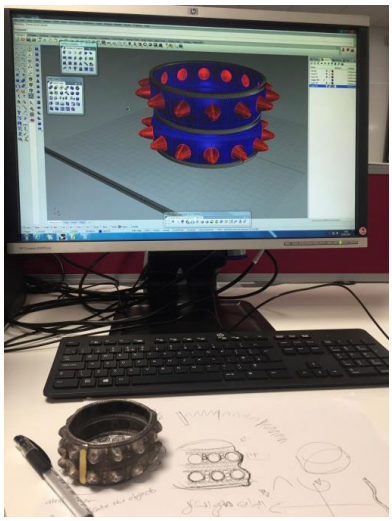

Figure 4-121 Rhino program design for the double bracelet (Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2018)

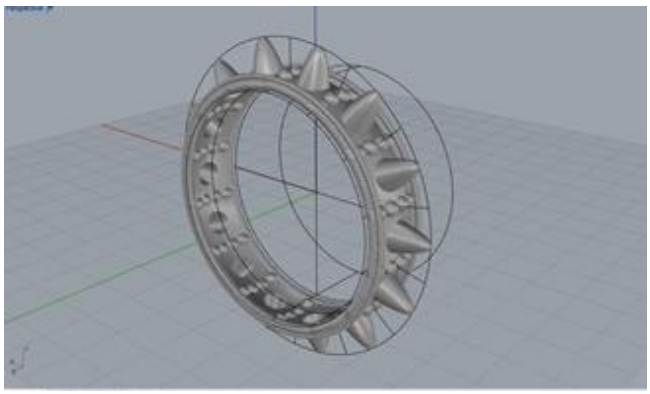

Figure 4-122 Rhino program design of a single bracelet (8×3×.3.5 CM, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2018)

Figure 4-123 3D printing bangles (8×3×.3.5 CM, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2018)

Figure 4-124 Coloured 3D bangle using navy blue (8×3×.3.5 CM, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2018)

4.12 *Summary*

This chapter explores the twin themes of Jewellery and materials. It explains how the initial fieldwork was conducted, and how, by using snowball sampling, I was able to contact a number of Bedouin women – both pure Bedouin and *hadher* – who were expert practitioners in craft skills. These women had different experiences with their jewellery collections. Some had sold their original jewellery, other had kept only a few pieces and some still treasured their

traditional jewellery, even though it became evident that they never wore it. This, in itself, provides interesting evidence of the subjective value of jewellery.

From these women I then created a co-creation group. Drawing on their individual craft skills, it became possible to design and manufacture pieces of contemporary jewellery, using old techniques. The first major piece was a necklace made from leather thread, which was exhibited in the house of one of the women on the occasion of an Eid. This artefact generated a good deal of discussion and was generally felt to be acceptable in terms of Omani culture.

The next artefact was a necklace made from *Mulwiyah* the ingredients of a dish that the Bedouin associate with Eid festivities. *Mulwiyah* is basically a meat dish made with the intestine and inner, edible parts of animal (rather like Scottish haggis). In this case, the parts were cut into long, thin strips, and initially displayed as a necklace. The necklace was subsequently grilled and eaten, acting as a metaphor of the transitory nature of some traditions. One visitor to the original necklace rejected the entire concept, and walked out, but others were more accommodating.

Continuing the theme of material, the chapter then describes contemporary jewellery that has been manufactured with mixed materials, found materials and hybrid materials. It describes the creation of a necklace made from goat hair, rings made from leather and wood, the creation of of one *Saqla* necklace of fishing line and animal bone, and finally, a second *Saqla* necklace that combined naturally tanned leather thread with traditional silver beads and blue plastic water bottle tops, that were recovered from an Omani beach.

This fusion of style and materials was then carried into work conducted in the United Kingdom, where 3D printing techniques were used to craft pieces that, again, incorporated naturally tanned leather with nylon, but which were based on traditional Omani patterns.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarises the main findings. The significance of this study lies in the understanding of the subjective value that grew from the Bedouin women (wearers, owners and makers) of traditional Omani jewellery. The outcomes of this study are based on fieldwork 1 and fieldwork 2. I draw my interpretations from the research findings through my practice. The structure of this chapter is the Finding Overview in section 5.1, the Concluding Remarks in section 5.2, the Research's Contributions in section 5.2 and Future Implications in section 5.4.

5.1 *Findings overview*

The study has provided a review of traditional Omani jewellery and has explored a range of issues relating to contemporary and traditional jewellery in Oman. It suggests that the very concept of "traditional" is open to discussion, as traditions vary from place to place, and they alter over time, the same is true of Oman. In some postcolonial countries, nationalist leaders have embraced the traditional as a form of self-identity, but I would suggest that Oman's self-image is deeply rooted in the national consciousness and that it is also prepared to accept the contemporary. Historically, Oman has always been open to new ideas, and geographically, the country faces outward-looking toward Iran, Pakistan, India and Africa.

Globalisation has affected the social structure in Oman. There is speedy change in the social structure in the Bedouin community from nomadic Bedouin to settled Bedouin. Jewellery can be viewed as a social record of these changes. This observation led me away from studying traditional silver Omani jewellery as objects and towards research examining the subjective value of the traditional jewellery. Thus, I decided to focus on the leather work of the Bedouin women's headdresses because I had never seen such jewellery before. These are personal pieces, but they are no longer worn. They involve complex weaving, and incorporate many silver components on their top surface, along with the smell of the leather and the scent of the owner. When I watched how *Shaabook* were made, I began to wonder if jewellery was only an object. Studying jewellery as more than physical pieces led me to a deep investigation

about the power of jewellery to reflect social experience and to be a social record of the role played by Bedouin women in traditional Omani jewellery.

The snowball sampling method (Patton, 1990; Vogt, 1999) was used to interview 16 women (field work 1) from North A'Sharqiyah and south A'Sharqiyah. A key finding from fieldwork 1 was information about the role played by Bedouin women in the production of traditional Omani jewellery. The field work informed my analysis of subjective values related to Bedouin women's jewellery. I have described these as: function, poem, power, storing, smell, weight, structure, thread, sound, dress-up, narrative and purchasing. My research has informed how theoretical understanding of the value of traditional jewellery of the Bedouin can be interpreted and developed based on social interaction with Bedouin owners of jewellery and/or Bedouin with expertise in the traditional jewellery. This has been discussed in the light of Rana's (2004) research (see p.79) but it has given me deeper insights into the real value of traditional jewellery and is an area of potential further study.

My practice has developed new forms of contemporary jewellery informed by traditional Omani jewellery. The subjective values identified through fieldwork have informed the creation of new jewellery that reinterprets the traditional forms and reflects on the values. The project was influenced by Hanson and Hutton's (2015) "wearable stories" workshop at Sheffield Hallam University. As it was mentioned in section 4.6.2, the questions and the activities that were part of the workshop helped me look at the project from different and new perspective. For example, through the photos I took in Field work 1 I realised the right way of wearing the traditional Omani jewellery comparing with the previous study. In practise, I found by moisture the natural Omani tanned leather turned the leather into soft material so that it could be shaped and sculpted. My practice has been focused around four themes which are Jewellery and materials, Jewellery and mixed cultures, Jewellery and social practice, Jewellery and recycling and sustainability and Jewellery and technologies. The key outcomes of each theme are:

1- Jewellery and materials: I explored traditional jewellery materials such as metal and unconventional materials such as wood, plastic and paper. It should be stressed that the metal used was almost exclusively silver,

which had intrinsic value and which was frequently re-used, as opposed to recycled, in conventional traditional Omani jewellery. In other words, this was not a “Junk-rubbish to gold” project (see p. 80). In this stage I created three works; Time Travel, Domes, Memory. In later stages and in line with Dormer and Turner (1994), I used leather, pipe cleaners, a mixture of metal and leather along with plastic, hair, wood, nylon and even animal intestines, stomachs and livers on the basis of the experience gained from the different stages of the project. Time Travel, Domes and Memory allowed me to explore the use of wood, metal and paper respectively.

2- Jewellery and mixed cultures: As an Omani woman who has studied jewellery design internationally, I have unique access and insight into the social and cultural issues related to Omani jewellery. I have the potential to explore social reality through my work. This social reality is a factor which has been overlooked in more general studies such as Hawley (2000), who examined Omani jewellery purely from the stand point of jewellery as artefacts created by male craftsmen. In Fieldwork 1 in Oman, I was able to contact a number of Bedouin women to understand the subjective value of the traditional Omani jewellery. In this stage in UK I created three works Domination, Peace and Sound. These three works were all constructed using Omani naturally tanned leather, and they were all rings. They therefore incorporated traditional forms of jewellery with the rediscovered process of leather tanning (*Shaabook*) and the weaving of leather thread.

3- Jewellery and social practice: From Fieldwork 1, I then created a co-creation group in Oman (Brumer, 2016). Drawing on their individual craft skills, it became possible to design pieces of contemporary jewellery. The first major piece was a necklace woven from leather thread, which was exhibited in the house of one of the women on the occasion of an Eid festival. The led to the subsequent *Mulwiyah* necklace, which acted as a metaphor of the transitory nature of some traditions. Continuing with the theme of material, I used my time in the UK for further reflection. To begin with I made drawings of the traditional jewellery that had been previously misrepresented, showing how it would have been worn in reality. I then created experimental designs, using a variety of materials-

leather, wood, copper, plastic, goat hair, in different combinations. This extended the range of my designs and allowed me to see what was feasible.

4- Jewellery and recycling and sustainability: This theme explored the recycling of waste plastic and animal bone from the shores of Oman and convertion into contemporary jewellery. I created two necklaces called *Saqla* 1 and *Saqla* 2. Both these necklaces incorporated found material that was directly linked to the sea. This builds on work developed by Bartley (2017), but in this case my work was more concerned with the material's durability.

5- Jewellery and technologies: Using new technology in order to develop traditional techniques I produced three bangles using 3D print technology. I incorporated naturally tanned leather with nylon based on traditional Omani patterns. This allowed me to incorporate traditional Omani design and natural materials with man-made products and the very latest technology.

5.2 *Concluding Remarks*

The following objectives of this thesis have been met in this work:

1. To contribute to the discussion of social culture research in Oman using new methods through the lens of contemporary jewellery. This objective was addressed in chapter 2. The discussion here covered the two models of the Bedouin community: nomadic and settled. Also, it investigated the background of Omani traditional jewellery and discussed comparisons between Bedouin jewellery and *Hadher* jewellery. In addition, the contemporary Omani context is discussed in relation to the actions of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in order to preserve traditions, the status of the silversmith trading centre, the galleries displaying contemporary jewellery in Oman, Omani woman designers, and issues regarding the current jewellery preferred by Omani women.
2. To understand the value of traditional Omani jewellery based on the knowledge acquired from the Bedouin community. This objective was covered in chapter 4. The research has identified 14 values related to Omani jewellery in the Bedouin community. These are: function, poem, power, storing, smell, weight, sustainability, structure, thread, sound,

dress-up, narrative, purchasing. The 14 values identified were instrumental in the production of a series of contemporary jewellery pieces informing concept and design elements.

3. To collaborate with the settled Bedouin makers through the lens of practice-based research. This objective was addressed in chapter 4. A co-creation workshop was established, involving six participants recruited through snowball sampling. All participants were skilled in traditional crafts such as *sifah*, *tali*, and *siim*. The participants were encouraged to cut and weave the leather in the workshop. I collected this thread and used it to weave an object. After that, I designed and created two necklaces using woven leather thread. The necklaces were displayed at W1's house and all the participants came to see the result and talk about their work to members of wider community.
4. To explore ways in which interpretation of jewellery from the settled Bedouin can contribute to the discourse of contemporary design. This objective was covered in chapter 4, which outlines the establishment of a co-creation group, and the way in which that group's individual skills cross-fertilised and permitted the creation of pieces of hybridised, contemporary jewellery. A complete record of the practice and development has been presented in the photo book. My design development process moved through the sequential stages of reading, observing, making, thinking and reflecting. Additionally, a paper entitled "An interpretation of Bedouin *shaabook*: from Tanning to Contemporary Jewellery." was published in p*roceedings of the 1st International Conference*: *Culture, Costume and Dress, 2018. Moreover, I presented parts of this work in the* Method Conference in Sheffield Hallam University, 2015 and 2016. And recently, I presented a paper entitled "Opportunities in Heritage Studies and Development of Omani Eco-Leather Tanning Industry" in the 'Economic Discussions Towards a Diverse Economy in Oman' conference in Sheffield, 2018. Furthermore, I will participate in the 6th International Conference of the College of Education "Art Education and Contemporary Challenges" that will be held in Muscat from the 7th to the 9th of October 2019. In this conference I will present a paper entitled "Developing Omani Jewellery through the use of new Technology", deliver a workshop about making handmade jewellery

from recycled materials and exhibit my developed collection of the "Shahid Ring" in Bait Al-Zubair Museum. In addition to that, I was accepted to present my work in the Artistar Jewels in Milano Jewellery Week which will be held in Italy between 24th and 27th of October 2019. Also, I have the chance to participate by Domination, Peace and Sound rings in the Collective Meeting International Exhibition in Portugal 21th of September to 31th October 2019.

5.3 *Research Contributions*

The contributions of this research study are given as follows:

1. The research describes the evolution, identity and value of traditional Omani jewellery worn by Bedouin women.

This study is the first to explore traditional Omani jewellery as more than objects and to investigate the full range of values associated with this jewellery. The values identified were as follows: function, poem, power, storing, smell, weight, sustainability, structure, thread, sound, dress-up, narrative, purchasing. The 14 values identified were instrumental in the production of a series of contemporary jewellery pieces informing concept and design elements.

I observed how Bedouin women valued their jewellery, wishing to keep it as a prized possession, and how jewellery could function as a physical reminder about their memories, their family bonds and community. This study of traditional Bedouin jewellery sheds new light on the roles played by Bedouin women and this has been invisible in previous studies. By wearing, owning and making traditional jewellery, women have a large impact on shaping the identity of traditional Omani jewellery.

I identified the imminent danger of Omani traditional jewellery vanishing, along with craft processing techniques. I also interviewed practitioners, recorded processes and produced artefacts.

The oral knowledge and physical pieces of traditional Omani jewellery that have been handed down through the generations are in danger of vanishing. It was significant during this study to meet participants who no longer own their jewellery (see section 4.5.1). In addition, I was not able to locate women who were skilled in weaving thread to join the silver components and structure the

jewellery, and it appears that this skill may be lost to future generations. However, this study found several participants who own some or most of their jewellery and also participants who were experts in craft techniques related to jewellery production such as *sifah*, *tali* and *siim*.

The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature related to jewellery in Oman. First, I explored headdress jewellery, which is no longer worn nowadays because these pieces of jewellery are usually hidden and are not well known by people from outside Bedouin community, including me. This motivated me to explore the different forms of this type of jewellery, in order to raise the awareness of its existence. At the same time, it motivated me to incorporate certain elements of the headdress into contemporary jewellery. During my initial investigations about the headdress, I found that the leather used as a component of this jewellery adds value to it. For example, leather absorbs the scents of the user. Additionally, the headdress is owned by a single person (woman) and it provides an identification of that particular person. Usually this piece cannot be exchanged between women because it is tailored to the wearer herself. The headdresses were highly valued and were repaired, if damaged for continued use. It is also the only form of jewellery that is made by Bedouin women; all other jewellery is created mainly by male silversmiths. The ultimate form and use of the jewellery is a creative process which belongs to women even where men manufacture some components. Their activities are 'visible' whereas women's activities are less visible. This was important when focussing my research on women. Also, it redirected my research. I initially focussed on silver and later shifted towards leatherwork.

This is the first study of substantial duration which examines associations between a jeweller (the author) and women craft practitioners in the creation of contemporary Omani jewellery. The snowball sampling method allowed me to find one woman who was a maker of headdress (*shaabook)*. She proved to be able to provide expert knowledge of *shaabook* and was also able to put me in touch with women who had other, different craft skills. This allowed me to form a co-creation group for production of collaborative jewellery. My engagement with these women played a major role in the development of my practice.

This work contributes to the existing knowledge of craft processing techniques by recording process and producing sample material. I learned and recorded

the traditional weaving techniques of *shaabook* from an expert with knowledge of *shaabook*. We made a small *shaabook* together. Moreover, for preparing the leather material for making *shaabook* I recorded the tanning process which extends the knowledge of the Omani tanning craft industry.

The research has led to the design and production of a series of contemporary jewellery pieces drawing on traditional Omani jewellery materials, methods and values. I would suggest that my designs are unique. To the best of my knowledge, no other Omani practitioner has attempted to create artefacts of this nature. I have used innovative materials like leather, plastic, and goat hair and I have, in some cases, used innovative methods to create those materials like producing leather thread using traditional tanning methods. Thanks to my use of qualitative assessment methods, and thanks to my female informants, I have been able to identify a range of subjective values implicit in Omani traditional jewellery. I have used these subjective values to inform the creation of an innovative body of work. My design focused in four themes; Jewellery and materials, Jewellery and mixed cultures, Jewellery and social practice, Jewellery and recycling and sustainability and Jewellery and technologies.

5.4 *Future Implications*

Future studies can use the reflections developed in this study to encourage further work with Omani Bedouin women. There is potential to look at different aspects of traditional Omani jewellery that have been discussed in this study. A future study could further explore the tensions between traditional and contemporary design within Omani society, attempting to establish the point at which contemporary design becomes too novel to be accepted.

Future work needs to be directed towards investigating and designing modern workshop facilities that will meet international standards to allow the creation of both quantity and quality natural leather or to work with leather. I would suggest that there could well be a market for high value, locally crafted leather goods such as shoes, hand bags, or furniture. The Arab Gulf generates a considerable amount of intra-national travel (GCC citizen visiting each other's countries) and Dubai, in the UAE, is an established commercial and travel hub. Niche marketing might well offer the answer to Oman's desire to diversify the economy see appendix.

More broadly, research is also needed to investigate the facilities for working with silver and other metals. The results will help in the design of courses within higher education institutions and will shape the direction of contemporary jewellery based on traditional Omani jewellery. This study has covered some of the traditional jewellery in eastern Oman and has mainly focussed on the roles of women in designing, crafting and wearing this jewellery. Future studies could explore men's jewellery and compare the design and production of both types of jewellery.

Future studies need to examine exhibitions in national museums of the traditional Omani jewellery, such as anklets and earrings, but displayed and presented correctly when depicting past practices. I am going to present my project outcomes in contemporary Oman galleries and in Gulf venues such as the Sharjah Art Foundation and in international galleries.

The photo book which accompanies this thesis will be published as a book. I am in discussion with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and the Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) to publish the photo book. Also, there is a need to create a group of contemporary jewellers in Arab countries to facilitate exploration of the designs, concepts, and materials, which would preserve the strong heritage of Omani jewellery.

Traditional leather tanning in Oman is an important part of Oman's heritage, but there is a lack of concise documentation to preserve the rich cultural heritage. The history of tanning from past to present generations in Oman should be further examined including the publication of currently undocumented methods, tools, materials and artefacts used in the tanning process, giving an insight into past, present and future practice and opportunities.

Commercial Omani leather tanneries should be established. This could transform a traditional practice into an industrial process. Existing, or better, bio-degradable eco-friendly plant/ animal tanning could be used. Existing or newly developed leather processing techniques could be adopted. Production could be increased to exportable quantities. Economic, sustainable methods of eco-leather processing could be developed.

Most importantly, however, is the recognition given to the final outcome of my research and creative practice. The *Saqla*2 necklace which was the final

articulation of knowledge gained and made through the embedding and rethinking of Omani cultural traditions and materials, won the Enjoia't Jewellery Prize Barcelona (A-FAD, 2019). It is impossible for me to emphasise how important this award has been. It has given me a voice within Oman and has increased my status from being a researcher at the Sultan Qaboos University to being an Omani woman who has received international recognition. Above all, it has given me the opportunity to extend my research to different areas of Oman, exploring its diversity. I hope to be able to recruit a team of research assistants through my work at Sultan Qaboos University to collect data about traditional Omani jewellery from different regions. I will share my research methods and outcomes with students and fellow researchers, encouraging them to explore their own reseach projects that will hopefully provide opportunities for greater understanding of the cultural richness of Oman.

One limitation of this thesis is that it has has focused entirely on the Bedouin women of the Sharqiyya communities, particularly those in Ibra and Al-Kamel. This raises the question of whether the women who contributed to this study come from a different jewellery culture if compared with the women from the settled, hadher community, or the women from the villages along the Batinah coast, or from the inland settlements (Nakhl, Rustaq) of the Batinah, or the inland towns of the Dhakliyya (Samail, Nizwa)

To the best of my knowledge, nobody has ever investigated these areas, nor have they considered the jewellery cultures of the "outlier" areas of Oman. Musandam, the Jabel Akhar and Dhofar are well known to have different cultures from "mainstream" Oman, but the extent to which jewellery reflects these cultural differences has never been explored – other than in passing, anecdotal references to the obviously African influences in Salalah in Dhofar. The differences between the women in Salalah and those from the pastoral communities in the mountains, however, have never been examined.

With access to funding, it will be possible to investigate at least some of these differences, and I hope that the accession of His Majesty Sultan Heitham bin Tariq bin Taimour will see enhanced interest in the traditional culture of Oman. During the reign of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the current Sultan held the portfolio for the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, and he may wish

to preserve some of the “bookless” knowledge that existed before the Renaissance of Oman began in 1970.

Finally, I sincerely hope I am able to continue working co-creatively with participatory groups, linking traditional craft skills from the past to inform and influence production of contemporary artifacts for the future.

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APPENDIX

This appendix presents both the information sheet and the consent form which covered in chapter 4. These include:

1. Participant Information Sheet
2. Consent Form (English)
3. Participant Consent form for Use of Images (English)
4. Consent Form (Arabic)
5. Participant Consent form for Use of Images (Arabic)
6. Opportunities in Heritage Studies and Development of Omani Eco-Leather Tanning Industry

Participant Information Sheet

Title: **Interpreting the Traditional Jewellery of Bedouin in Oman through Contemporary Jewellery Practice**

Introduction:

May Allah`s peace, mercy and blessing be upon you,
My name is Amal Alismaili, I am a PhD candidate at Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom. My research title is**"**The Representation of Aspects of Omani National Identity through Contemporary Jewellery"**.** The aim of my study is to influence and contribute to the representation of traditional Omani jewellery in a contemporary context. I need your participation in order to collect a sample for my study.

How can I Participate?

I will ask you to join in the workshops that will involve about 6-10 Bedouins (depending on availability) aged between 30-70 years old who are born as settled. The purpose is to produce meaningful jewellery within a contemporary context.

The workshops will be carried out during the month of August 2016 (20 days – Sunday to Thursday over 4 weeks) and will involve working individually and also as a group.

The group sessions will be held in the house of a professional leather tanner who will demonstrate how tanning the leather.

During and after the workshop I will conduct semi-structured interviews with you.

Data Protection and Privacy:

Your name will not be used in any published report or article, and I will refer to each participant by your specific case number (for example participant number 1). All of the data will be saved on my personal computer, which is password-protected. No one else will have an access to the raw data. Moreover, I will not publish your pictures without your permission. I will give you a consent form to be signed if you 'allow' or 'not allow' to publish your pictures in the forms of photographs and video. At the completion of my PhD studies, parts of the raw data - which doesn't contain or refer to participants' identity - will be stored until

the end of the study on a hard drive in a locked cabinet in my Director of Studies' office at Sheffield Hallam University.

How will you use my data?

The main information that I aim to collect is: To understand Omani 'national identity' through the lens of a practice-based research focusing on traditional jewellery The findings will be discussed with my PhD supervisors and can be published several times at different stages of the study, such as Academic reports, conferences, publications, presentations and finally as a PhD thesis.

Can I contact you? And How?

At any time that you need to discuss your participation, you can contact me via mobile or email.

Phone: 92170800

E-mail: amal05051@hotmail.com

How can I find out about the results of the study?

Following the pilot study, I will pursue my research for three years in total, the whole thesis will be freely available in English on Sheffield Hallam University database, then it will be translated to Arabic in order to be obtainable through Omani libraries.

Participation, withdrawal and further information:

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time within the data collection period (3 months). However, if during or after the study you needed any further information regarding your participation you can contact my supervisors or my studies department at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

To be completed by the participant:

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

	YES	NO
1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study/workshop and have had details of the research explained to me.	☐	☐
2. My questions about both workshop and study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
3. I understand that I am free to leave the study/workshop within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the research without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.	☐	☐
4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet and, for the researcher to audio/video-record our conversation.	☐	☐
5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes (e.g. post-thesis research work).	☐	☐

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of participant (block letters): _____

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF IMAGES

Photographs taken of you would be used to add interest and exemplify the research findings. For example, they may be used as illustrations for the PhD thesis, research reports, summary leaflets, blog post and/or conference presentations. They will not be used in any way that would show you in a bad light. **You can still take part in the study if you do not give your consent for me to use any photograph of you.**

To be completed by the participant:

	YES	NO
1. I agree to have photograph taken of me during the study/workshop.	☐	☐
2. I agree to have photograph taken of my activities.	☐	☐
3. I understand that my responses to the researcher's questions will not be linked to the photograph(s).	☐	☐
4. I want my name (real or pseudonym) to be linked to the photograph(s).	☐	☐
5. I give the researcher permission to use the photographs in all her research materials **OR**	☐	☐
- put my photograph(s) on websites (e.g. blog post)	☐	☐
- use my photograph(s) in printed material (e.g. reports, leaflets, newspaper articles, PhD thesis)	☐	☐
- use my photograph(s) in presentations (e.g. at conferences or seminars)	☐	☐

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of participant (block letters): _____

Signature of investigator: _____Date: _____

استمارة موافقة للمشاركين

يتم استكمال الاستبيان بالأسفل بواسطة المشترك:

فضلا قم بالإجابة عن النقاط المذكورة بالأسفل عن طريق وضع علامة في مربع نعم أو لا

نعم	لا	
☐	☐	7. لقد قرأت الورقة التعريفية الخاصة بهذه الدراسة/ الورشة وتم شرح كافة التفاصيل المتعلقة بها جيدا وبوضوح.
☐	☐	8. لقد تم الإجابة عن كل أسئلتي واستفساراتي بخصوص كلا من الورشة والدراسة بكل وضوح وأتفهم تماما حقي في إمكانية طرح أي أسئلة إضافية في أي فترة خلال الدراسة.
☐	☐	9. أتفهم وأستوعب حرية قراري في ترك الدراسة/ الورشة خلال الفترة الزمنية الموضحة في الورقة التعريفية بالبحث، وبدون إبداء أي أسباب عن انسحابي، كما أنني أملك تام الحرية في رفض الإجابة عن أسئلة معينة دون التعرض لأي عواقب أو تغيرات في معاملة الباحث لي في المستقبل.
☐	☐	10. أوافق على توفير معلومات للباحثين بما يتفق ويخضع لشروط السرية المذكورة بوضوح في الورقة التعريفية للبحث، وأوافق على فكرة أن الباحث قد يحتاج إلى تسجيل المحادثة صوتيا أو فيديو.
☐	☐	11. أوافق على توفير معلومات للباحثين بما يتفق ويخضع لشروط السرية المذكورة بوضوح في الورقة التعريفية للبحث، وأوافق على فكرة أن الباحث قد يحتاج إلى تسجيل المحادثة صوتيا أو فيديو.
☐	☐	12. أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة بما يخضع لشروط السرية المذكورة بالورقة التعريفية للبحث.

توقيع المشارك _____ : التاريخ_____ :

(اسم المشارك)_____

استمارة موافقة المشارك فيما يخص الصور

سوف يتم استخدام الصور المأخوذة للمشترك لإضافة أمثلة حقيقة ومتجسدة إلى موضوع البحث ولجذب الاهتمام إليه. على سبيل المثال سوف يتم استخدام الصور كأمثلة توضيحية لأطروحة الدكتوراه، تقارير البحث، النشرات الموجزة عن الدراسة، مواضيع ومشاركات المدونات و/أو العروض التقديمية في

المؤتمرات. علما بأنه لن يتم استخدام أي منها بشكل يسبب أي ضرر شخصي للمشترك. **كما ينبغي التوضيح أنه ما يزال بإمكانك المشاركة في الدراسة حتى لو لم تمنح أي موافقة لاستخدام أي من صوركم.**

يتم استكمال الاستفسارات التالية بواسطة المشترك

لا	**نعم**		
☐	☐	1.	أوافق على التقاط صور تخصني أثناء الدراسة/ الورشة.
☐	☐	2.	أوافق على التقاط صور تخص أنشطتي.
☐	☐	3.	أتفهم تماما كون إجاباتي التي قمت بتزويد الباحث بها لن يتم ربطها بصوري على الإطلاق.
☐	☐	4.	أريد أن يتم الربط بين اسمي (حقيقي أو مستعار) وبين الصورة/الصور الملتقطة لي.
		5.	أعطي المسئول عن التقاط الصور موافقتي علي:
☐	☐		استخدام الصور في كافة مواضيع البحث.
☐	☐		**<u>أو</u>**
☐	☐	-	وضع صورتي/صوري في المواقع الإلكترونية (مشاركات المدونات على سبيل المثال).
☐	☐	-	استخدام صوري في مطبوعات (على سبيل المثال: في التقارير أو المنشورات أو مقالات الصحف أو رسالات الدكتوراه)
☐	☐	-	استخدام صورتي/ صوري في العروض التقديمية (في المؤتمرات أو الندوات).

توقيع المشارك _____

التاريخ: _____

اسم المشارك في المادة البحثية (بحروف واضحة_____**:**

توقيع الباحث _____

التاريخ_____

Opportunities in Heritage Studies and Development of Omani Eco-Leather Tanning Industry

Tanning is a process of converting animal hide into leather. The processed leather is then used as the raw material for making footwear, bags, belts, wallets and even jewellery. According to Technavio Research (2016) the global leather goods market is valued at $217.49bn and it is forecast to grow at a

CAGR of almost 5% from 2017 to 2021. The current process employed in the commercial tanning industry involves the use of hazardous non-biodegradable chemicals creating a negative impact on the environment and human health. On the other hand, traditional Omani leather tanning, which is Eco-friendly, is also known as "Eco leather" provides a better, sustainable alternative without sacrificing quality (Gabardi, 2018).

In the production of Eco leather, the animal skin is organically tanned via a technique that includes the use of plant tannins, vegetable tannins and natural smoke for transforming the raw hide into leather. This technique is an important Omani craft and is part of the cultural heritage from past generations. It employs a great deal of creativity during the tanning process without the use of conventional harmful chemicals.

However, due to lack of accurate records there is an imminent danger that this rich environmentally friendly process of traditional Omani tanning could be lost forever. No research studies or literature have properly captured the process. Also, there is a possibility that there will be such a lack of continuity that the craft will eventually fade away. As a result of inadequate funding to support the individuals and small families involved in the trade, the production of Eco leather has remained very low scale in Oman.

Unfortunately, at the moment, most of the leather currently used in Oman is imported from abroad. In addition, the salted, extracted hide sourced from animals in Oman is exported to the United Arab Emirates because the UAE has modern tanning factories which are well equipped and have adequate processing capacities. It is estimated that the UAE receives over $2bn annually from leather tanning.

According to the Oman Future Vision (2040) regarding economic diversity, future work needs to be directed towards investigating and designing modern equipment and facilities that meet and compete with international standards to encourage the production of high quality natural leather in commercially exportable volumes. The move to support and actively develop the tanning industry in Oman is in line with the vision's goals which includes encouraging participation in Transformational Industries (such as tanning industry), Logistics Services, Fisheries and Mining.

The immediate benefit that stems from supporting the growth and upscaling of the traditional Omani tanning industry is the direct economic development of the industry, thus providing jobs for people of several occupations including livestock farmers, technicians, machine operators, transporters and the administrative occupations required to support the industry. This would provide gainful employment for both the young and old in Omani society; feeding many families and improving their quality of life.

Another benefit of developing the Omani tanning industry would be the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country as a result of foreign trade with other countries. A robustly developed industry could meet both local and international demand for unique high-quality leather processed via sustainable; environmentally friendly techniques and, as a result, bring an inflow of more foreign currency into the economy of Oman in exchange for the commercial quantities of exported processed leather.

The third benefit of developing the Omani Eco-leather industry is its use of bio-degradable, sustainable materials and substances which do not impact the Omani environment in any negative way. This could also become a unique selling point to attract potential buyers globally. According to the Global Leather Goods Industry (2015-2019 report) there is a growing market for organic leather; for consumers desire to purchase products that have been produced with due consideration and minimal impact on the environment. Traditionally processed Omani leather provides this option to that particular segment of the global leather market.