

The Pictographic Codes in Al-Sadu Weavings of Kuwait

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Abstract:

Al-Sadu weavings of Kuwait are known for their quality and aesthetic appearance. Those pieces are created by the Bedouin people of Kuwait, and decorated with elegant pictographs and very pleasant colours. Each pictograph has its name, meanings, and distinct design. Those pictographs are created by female master weavers to beautify their woven objects, prove their talents and weaving skills, and satisfy their family needs for woven textiles. Whoever, all those pictographs are not yet carefully and explicitly documented. As a result, there is a genuine concern regarding the fear of losing the shapes, names, and meanings of those pictographs. Therefore, part of the aim of this study is to answer the following questions: 1) what are the shapes, names, and meanings of the different pictographs commonly incorporated within the different Al-Sadu weavings? 2) How the Al-Sadu pictographs are created? 3) Did the Al-Sadu pictographs change over time? How? and Why? The major objective of this study are to: 1) Investigate the shapes, names, and meanings of the major pictographic codes that appear on most of Al-Sadu Weavings, 2) Identify the major changes that are taking place in the Al-Sadu pictographic codes, 3) Predict new trends in Al-Sadu future pictographic codes.

Thirty (30) different Al-Sadu weaving were carefully studied. They contained 54 Shajarahs with a total length of 264.47 meters (293.86 yards). The Shajarahs had 3,160 pictographs of which 25% of them were reputations. Furthermore, nine (9) master Al-Sadu weavers were interviewed to better understand the shapes, names, and meanings of the different Al-Sadu pictographs. The focus of this study was directed toward the different pictographs found in the long set of pictographs called the Shajarah. Major finding of this study indicates that the master weavers learned all the needed knowledge and required weaving skills from their parents, relatives, and close friends. Moreover, most of the common pictographs used in Al-Sadu weavings were passed from one generation of master weavers to another. However, most of the skilled master weavers often came up with their new or modified versions of pictographs, which they created depending on their own observations and interpretations of things they have seen in their surrounding or visited environments. Finally, there is an urgent need for full and comprehensive documentation of all, or at least the most common Al-Sadu pictographs to preserve them from extinction, and have them available to be used by future master weavers.

Keywords:

*Kuwait,
Bedouin,
Al-Sadu,
Weaving,
Pictograph,
Qatta,
Shajarah*

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1. Introduction

Out of necessity, the nomad people of Kuwait, who used to be called "Bedouins" and currently are called "The Sons of the Tribes", used special homemade woven materials called Al-Sadu to build their portable tent homes "Bait-al-Sha'ar", and to construct most of their basic furniture, furnishings items, and soft decorations. The basic constructing materials used in Al-Sadu weavings are the camel's hair, sheep's fleece, goat's hair, and

cotton. The first three constructing materials were collected locally, but the fourth one was imported in the form of ready-made white yarns from neighboring countries.

Since the Al-Sadu weavings were the basic building and forming materials for almost all the Bedouins' utilitarian items, Bedouin women used to color their white wool to make colorful yarns, and weave joyful pieces. The great majority of the Al-Sadu woven items were decorated with elegant geometric patterns which were simplified in

abstract, clever, and original ways to represent specific shapes or motifs of well know items to Bedouin women. Over time, those motifs, and designs became well defined and clearly recognized as "Pictographic Codes" to Kuwait Al-Sadu Weavings.

Whoever, those pictographs are not carefully and explicitly documented. As a result, there is a genuine concern regarding the fear of losing the names and meanings of those pictographs due to the continuous decline of the number of experienced and master weavers who are still practicing Al-Sadu weaving. Therefore, few questions rise seeking satisfying answers. Such questions include: 1) what are the shapes, names, and meanings of the different pictographs commonly incorporated in the different Al-Sadu weavings? 2) How the pictographs are created? 3) Did the Al-Sadu pictographs change over time? How? and Why?

2. Objectives

This research paper represents a small portion of a major and a continuous collaborative research effort started in September 2009 between the author of this paper and Dr. Keireine Canavan, Principal Lecturer and Head of Textile Programme at Cardiff Metropolitan University at the United Kingdom (UK). The aim was to study the pictographic codes found in the Al-Sadu weavings and mainly in the Shajarah. Thus, the main objectives of this paper are:

1. Investigate the shapes, names, and meanings of the major pictographic codes that appear on most of Al-Sadu Weavings.
2. Identify the major changes that are taking place within the Al-Sadu pictographic codes.
3. Predict new trends in Al-Sadu future pictographic codes.

3. Operational Definitions

As an introduction, it is important to define the meanings of the three major terms, which are being used in this paper. First, it is important to define the meaning of "**Pictography**". This term is explained in the electronic version of Britannica Encyclopedia (Retrieved July 8, 2017) as:

"... expression and communication by means of pictures and drawings having a communicative aim. These pictures and drawings (called pictographs) are usually considered to be a forerunner of true writing and are characterized by stereotyped execution and by omission of all details not necessary for the expression of the communication. (Pictographs that are drawn

or painted on rocks are known as petrograms; those that are incised or carved on rocks are called petroglyphs.) A pictograph that stands for an individual idea or meaning may be called an ideogram; if a pictograph stands for an individual word, it is called a logogram.

Pictographs are also used as memory aids."

In addition, the word **pictograph** as a noun is defined in Merriam - Webster Dictionary (Retrieved July 8, 2017) as "one of the symbols belonging to a pictorial graphic system." Moreover, the same dictionary defines the term "**code**" as "a system of signals or symbols for communication."

Finally, the term **Al-Sadu** stands for three different meanings. First, it is used to name the nomad floor loom that is used for Al-Sadu weaving. In addition, it is used to identify the process of specific warp-face nomadic weaving. Last, it is the generic name for the woven objects produced by weaving on the nomad floor loom (Crichton, 1998, 2nd ed.).

4. Literature Review

The use of pictographic codes is not limited to Al-Sadu weaving of Kuwait, but it has been used by many other people from different cultures and civilizations for hundreds of years. The prehistoric people drew, painted, and carved on cave walls and stones many pictographs to document impotent event that happened to them such as wars between the different tribes, hunting seasons, animal migrations, tribal celebrations, and many other activities (Janson, 1982, 2nd ed. 17th printing). For example, "Boat Cave Drawings" and other paintings were found in the "El Castillo Cave" in Northern Spain. They were dated at least 40,000 years old. The "Wounded Bison" cave painting (15,000-10,000 B.C.E.) was found in Altamira. In addition, more animal cave paintings for aurochs, horses, and deer's were found in Lascaux (Dordogne) in France that date around 15,000-10,000 B.C.E.

Around 4000 B.C.E., the "Hieroglyphs" of Ancient Egypt characters and pictographic codes emerged from the preliterate artistic tradition of Egypt to resemble a system of writing and expression. Alphabets, images, and abstract symbols were used as means for visual communication. Next, around 3200 B.C.E., the Sumerians developed a record keeping system in the form of alphabets called the "Cuneiform Script" or the "Wedge Shaped Marks" to create a way for a written communication method. It began as a system of pictographs. Later, the pictorial representations got simplified and more abstract as the symbols became smaller (Elsen, 1967, 2nd ed.).

The main difference between the pictographic scripts of the phonetic scripts is that the first type uses symbols to represent ideas and objects in a visual matter, while the second type uses different symbols to represent different sounds. Throughout the Greece, Roman, and Persian civilizations pictographs continued to grow and advance in the forms of visual art symbols and linguistic symbols (Croix & Tansey, 1975, 6th ed.).

With the birth of the Islamic civilization, new pictographs were established to accommodate the religious teaching of Islam as a religion. Pictographs continued to include geometric shapes and alphabetic characters especially in Islamic Architecture (Hillenbrand, 1994). However, pictographs of living things like human, animals; birds etc. were prohibited by Islamic teachings. Plants and flowers were used extensively in modified forms.

In the field of Textiles, both pictographic and phonetic symbols have been used widely among the nomad and civilized populations throughout the world. Old and modern textiles show wide range of pictographic and phonetic representation on carpets, area rugs, upholstery, bed sheets, dress fabrics... etc. (Held, 1978; Storey, 1974).

At the "Agua Calientes Village" of the "Machupicchu Town" which is located at the foot of Machu Picchu, in Peru, South America some of the most beautiful weavings of area rugs and wall hangings are made with Lama pictographic symbols. In the other close by neighboring country of Panama, the 170 people of "Embera Puru Village" created brightly colored baskets with local pictographs of birds, butterflies, and geometric symbols that reflect their culture. They

used the natural fibers of the "Canastas" found in the forest and colored it with natural dyes to make their baskets and sell them to visiting tourists to make living. In the North American continent, we find the American Indians of the "Navajo Tribes" living in the United State of America (U.S.A.) were quite talented and very creative in using pictographs for visual expression in their weavings. Navajo textiles were originally made for utilitarian purposes such blankets, and for use as cloaks, dresses, saddle blankets, and similar purposes. Toward the end of the 19th century, weavers began to make rugs for tourism and export. Typical Navajo textiles have strong geometric patterns (Held, 1878).

In the Middle East, marvelous area rugs and carpets are woven in lavished designs with quite expressive pictographs to represent the nature of the Persian culture and traditions. In fact, the oriental world is quite rich with well-defined and quite recognized pictographs that are well documented in that culture. More pictographs are seen in the "Shahsavani" bird rug from Afghanistan.

The Al-Sadu weavings of Kuwait are found to be quite rich with both pictographic objects, as well as phonetic symbols that are commonly used among the women of different Bedouin Tribes of Kuwait (Al-Sabah 2006; Cnavan & Alnajadah, 2013, July). The main area that collects most of those pictographs and phonetic symbols is the central pattern that is called the Shajarah (Figure 1). The Shajarah resembles and reflects the knowledge and talent of the Al-Sadu master weavers.



Figure (1): An area rug (Besat) made out of two woven runners with the Shajarah set of pictographs in the middle of each runner. The picture was taken with a kind permission from Kuwait National Museum (Piece # K.M. 6181).

To understand the importance and use of Al-Sadu weaving in the lives of the Bedouin people living in Kuwait; as well as, the ones in the Arabian

Peninsula, it is important to study their social system, their daily life habits and activities, and the methods through which they satisfy their basic

living needs. For hundreds of years, the Bedouin people of Kuwait; as well as, the ones living the Arabian Peninsula migrated from one area to another looking for drinking water and grass. Those two items were quite essential for the continuation of human and animal lives in their arid environments (Crichton, 1998, 2nd ed.; Dickson, 1967, 4th ed.). As a result, the Bedouins were forced to construct their tent homes “Bait-al-Sha’ar” and all their furnishings and utilitarian items to be quite simple, highly functional, and light in weight for practical daily usage, and easy mobilization. As a result, the constructing materials which were used to fulfill that specific need and requirement had to serve both purposes. Bait-al-Sha’ar as well as its furnishing and decorations items are woven mainly with local materials that consist of sheep’s fleece, goat’s hair, camel’s hair. These natural animal fibers were locally collected or sheered from the animals that Bedouins raise. Later, Bedouin women started using cotton yarns which were imported from neighboring countries (Canavan & Alnajadah, 2013; Canavan & Alnajadah, 2011; Crichton, 1998, 2nd ed.; Dickson, 1967, 4th ed.). Animal fibers are usually cleaned from dirt, then washed to remove animal grease and odor. Later, these fibers are combed, hand spun, and hand colored with natural dyes. On the other hand, cotton yarns were imported ready made in white color, and they were often used in their natural color. Black goat’s hair is mainly used to construct the roof of Bait-al-Sha’ar (tent). However, the surrounding curtain walls of that tent were woven with black sheep’s wool and decorated with wide white lines of sheep’s fleece to enhance the look of that soft wall and to make Bait-al-Sha’ar visually look longer from the outside and wider from the inside. To utilize the same Bait-al-Sha’ar

for both family and non-family purposes, it is divided into two main sections: men’s quarter (Ruba’at Al-Rijal or Al-Majles) and women’s quarter (Ruba’at Al-Hareem or Al-Haram). The first quarter is used for family and non-family male gatherings; however, the second one is solely used for women and family purposes. Both sections or quarters are separated with a long colorful and well-designed tent divider called Qatta or Ibjad (Al-Sabah, 2006; Dickson, 1967).

The Qatta (tent divider) (Figure 2) is often constructed of five long pieces of woven Al-Sadu textile named from the top to the bottom as the following: 1) Al-Kuffah, 2) Al-Khadeer, 3) Al-Bgrah, 4) Al-Baij, and 5) Al-Seflah (Al-Thafeeree, personal communication, October 10, 2009). These five long pieces are sewn side-by-side with each other to form a divider that is about nine (9) meters in length and two and one-half (2.5) meters in height. The four top sections of the tent divider are often well decorated with beautiful abstract designs that run the entire length of the woven piece, while the fifth one that is touching the ground is often made plain. The running designs come in three different types of forms: 1) running plain colored with thin and thick lines, 2) boarder or inside repeated geometric patterns, 3) central collection of pictographic symbols or codes which are organized one after the other in what is called the Shajarah and Mishojarah (Figure 2).

The same woven Al-Sadu textiles is used to cover the floor of Bait-al-Sha’ar with beautiful and colorful soft area rugs (Besat) (Figure 1). Also, the same textile is used to create pillows cases, as well as, several kinds of bags such as the shoulder bag (Mezwadah), saddle bag (Adel), and horse or donkey back bags (Kharj). Other Al-Sadu decoration items are often used to decorate camels, woman’s Hodaj, and horses.



Figure (2): A woman’s figure setting in front of a Qatta (tent divider) which is decorated with numerous pictographs constructed in the long Shajarah. The picture was taken for Bedouin tent of Bait-al-Sha’ar at Bait Alothman Museum.

5. Methodology

This project focused on studying the pictographs in fifty-four (54) Shajarahs of different lengths and widths. Those Shajarahs were found in thirty (30) different Al-Sadu weavings categorized as the following: two (2) Adels (big bags), thirteen (13) Besats (area rugs or runners), six (6) Fijjahs, one-half (0.5) Qatta (tent divider), one (1) pillow case, four (4) full size Qattas (tent dividers), two (2) Safefahs (camel or Hodaj decorations), and one (1) Mezwadah (Table 1).

Kuwait National Museum (KNM) owned Twenty-six (26) out of the thirty (30) studies pieces; while, the Al-Sadu weaving Cooperative Society (AWCS) owned three (3) pieces, and only one (1) piece was privately owned (Table 1). Borders and central pictographs were photographed with a Canon camera for clear details recording. Moreover, a measuring tape was used to measure the dimensions of the studied Al-Sadu pieces and their pictographs.

Table (1): Details of the investigated different Al-Sadu woven items.

No	Type and code number	Number of Shajarahs	Length of Shajarah		Width of Shajarah		Number of double warps	Colors of double warps	Number of Pictographs
			cm	in	cm	in			
1	Adel (*)	1	150	60	6	2.4	44	B & W	32
		2	150	60	6	2.4	44	B & W	42
2	Adel (*)	1	154	61.6	9.5	3.8	82	B & W	24
3	Besat (*)	1	234	93.6	6	2.4	60	B & W	15
		2	234	93.6	7	2.8	66	B & W	20
4	Besat (*)	1	356	142.4	3.5	1.4	28	B & W	124
		2	356	142.4	3	1.2	30	B & W	116
5	Besat (*)	1	320	128	7.5	3	62	B & W	35
		2	320	128	7	2.8	64	B & W	41
6	Besat (*)	1	304	121.6	6.5	2.6	84	B & W	35
		2	304	121.6	6.5	2.6	82	B & W	37
7	Besat (*)	1	393	157.2	7.1	2.84	60	B & W	48
		2	393	157.2	7.2	2.88	60	B & W	36
8	Besat (*)	1	343	137.2	9.5	3.8	96	B, W, R & O	54
		2	343	137.2	10	4	98	B, W, R & O	45
9	Besat (*)	1	300	120	9.5	3.8	82	B & W	43
		2	300	120	9.5	3.8	82	B & W	50
10	Besat (*)	1	600	240	5.5	2.2	32	B & W	41
		2	600	240	5.5	2.2	32	B & W	42
11	Besat (*)	1	328	131.2	6	2.4	46	B & W	27
		2	328	131.2	6.5	2.6	46	B & W	28
12	Besat (*)	1	320	128	7	2.8	64	B & W	24
		2	320	128	7	2.8	64	B & W	24
13	Besat (*)	1	253	101.2	6.8	2.72	48	B & W	56
		2	253	101.2	7	2.8	48	B & W	56
14	Besat (*)	1	293	117.2	5.8	2.32	48	B & W	47
		2	293	117.2	6	2.4	48	B & W	52
15	Besat (*)	1	250	100	4	1.6	22	B & W	75
		2	250	100	4	1.6	22	B & W	88
16	Fijjah (*)	1	537	214.8	6.5	2.6	56	B & W	46
17	Fijjah (*)	1	754	301.6	7.5	3	66	B & W	46
18	Fijjah (*)	1	636	254.4	6.5	2.6	64	B & W	58
19	Fijjah (*)	1	623	249.2	6.5	2.6	58	B & W	35
20	Fijjah (*)	1	554	221.6	8.5	3.4	66	B & W	48
21	Fijjah (*)	1	674	269.6	5.6	2.24	32	B & W	68
22	One-half Qatta (*)	1	924	369.6	9	3.6	90	B & W	129
		2	924	369.6	5.4	2.16	62	B & W	129
23	Pillow Case(*)	1	100	40	4	1.6	22	B & W	45

24	Qatta # 2 (**)	1	995	398	6	2.4	80	B & W	63
		2	995	398	8.3	3.32	100	B & W	74
		3	995	398	6.2	2.48	78	B & W	67
		4	995	398	5	2	64	B & W	84
Sub-total		42	18,748	7,499.2					2,249

(*) Property of Kuwait National Museum (KNM)

(*) Property of Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society

(***) Privately Owned

B = Black W = White R = Red O = Orange

- Table (1 Continued): Details of the investigated different Al-Sadu woven items.

No	Type and code number	Number of Shajarahs	Length of Shajarah		Width of Shajarah		Number of double warps	Colors of double warps	Number of Pictographs
			cm	in	cm	in			
25	Qatta # 4 (**)	1	912	364.8	4.5	1.8	56	B & W	104
		2	912	364.8	7.2	2.88	84	B & W	88
		3	912	364.8	6	2.4	78	B & W	81
		4	912	364.8	7	2.8	78	B & W	76
26	Qatta # 7 (**)	1	877	350.8	9.5	3.8	112	B & W	106
27	Qatta (***)	1	712	284.8	4.5	1.8	26	B & W	105
		2	712	284.8	8	3.2	82	B & W	86
		3	712	284.8	7	2.8	64	B & W	108
		4	712	284.8	5.5	2.2	58	B & W	67
28	Safefah (*)	1	110	44	8	3.2	64	B & W	13
29	Safefah (*)	1	136	54.4	4.5	1.8	26	B & W	59
30	Mezwadah (*)	1	80	32	6.2	2.48	34	B & W	18
Sub-total		12	7,699	3,079.6					911
TOTAL		54	26,447	10,578.8					3,160

(*) Property of Kuwait National Museum (KNM)

(*) Property of Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society

(***) Privately Owned

B = Black W = White R = Red O = Orange

Nine (9) Al-Sadu master weavers and members of the AWCS were individually interviewed. Those weavers are: Miss M. Al-Thafeeree, Mrs. Um-Bargash, Mrs. Seetah Um-Mahmood, Mrs. Um-Abdullah, Mrs. Laylah Um-Nayef, Mrs. Amshah Um-Talal, Mrs. Um-Turkey, Mrs. Um-Saleh, and Mr. Hamad Abu-Abdulrahman. All the master weavers gave their nicknames rather than their full real names for social and family restrictions.

The major contributions of the master weavers were in the field of identifying and helping the researchers to better understand the shapes, names, and meanings of the all different pictographs found in three main subjects of this study which are Qattas number 2, 4, and 7 (Table 1). Sixteen (16) different interviews were conducted with the nine (9) master weavers over the period of three (3) years. Twelve (12) interviews were conducted with seven (7) master weavers during the months of November and December of 2009. The thirteenth and fourteenth (13th & 14th) interviews were conducted in February 2010 and the fifteenth

and sixteenth (15th & 16th) interviews were conducted in August 2011. The total time length of the sixteen (16) interviews was 550 minutes, which rounds up to nine (9) hours and ten (10) minutes.

6. Findings

The total length of all the 54 Shajarahs was 26,446 centimeters (264.46 meters), which is equivalent to 10,578.8 inches (293.8 yards). The longest Shajarahs were 995 centimeters (9.93 meters), which are equivalent to 398 inches (11.05 yards), while the shortest Shajarah was 80 centimeters (0.8 meter), which is equivalent to 32 inches (0.88 yard). The widest Shajarah was 10 centimeters (4 inches), and the narrowest Shajarah was 4 centimeters (1.6 inches). The highest number of double warps in one Shajarah was 112 double warps, and to lowest number of double warps in one Shajarah was 22 double warps. The highest number of colored warps used in one Shajarah was four (4) colors: Black, White, Red, and Orange.

However, the lowest number of colored warps used in one Shajarah was two (2) colors: Black and White.

Three-thousand, one hundred and sixty (3,160) pictographs were found in the 54 different Shajarahs located in the studied 30 different Al-Sadu pieces. The highest number of pictographs in one Shajarah was 129 pictographs, and the lowest number was 15 pictographs. Around 25% of the total number of pictographs found in the 54 Shajarahs were repeated. The founded pictographs in Al-Sadu weavings are classified under three distinct categories: 1) continuous pictographs, 2) semi-continuous pictographs, and 3) non-continuous pictographs.

1. Continuous Pictographs

The continuous pictographs type is the most common group of pictographs found in almost all the woven Al-Sadu pieces. They appear on one or both sides of the woven textiles. They come on the boards or close to it, or inside the woven pieces. These pictographs are mainly grouped based on the repetition of one or two simple patterns to form a long continuous line of pictographs. This group includes the following types:

1. **Aein (Eye):** this pictographic design is created by constructing a warp face textile were warps of two different colors are mostly used (Figure 3). The warps are woven to form small alternating dots in both the vertical and horizontal layout. Those dots resemble viewing eyes.
2. **Hubub (Seeds):** this pictographic design is

created by constructing a plain weave warp face textile were warps of two different colors are used to form short and thin alternating lines laying out horizontally one after the other while they are extending out of a thick solid long line of the same color (Figure 3). Those short thin lines resemble seeds.

3. **Dhalla (Ribs):** It is a plain weave of alternating colored lines to give the shape of human or animal ribs (Figure 3).
4. **Dhrus El Khail (Horse Teeth):** This pictographic design consists of two lines of opposing geometric shapes of two contrasting colors to give the shape of two jaws closed on each other (Figure 3). Master weavers see this layout as an abstract representation of the horse's teeth.
5. **Mithkhar:** This pictographic geometric design takes the shapes of side-by-side diamond shapes separated by alternating two triangles connected from the top sides (Figure 3).
6. **Uwairjan (Zigzag):** this pictographic design is created by constructing a warp face textile were warps of three different colors mostly black, white, and red are used. The black colored warps are used to create the background, while the white and red warps are woven to create two lines of repeated and opposing triangles (Figure 3). This layout forms a zigzag shape that leads the eyes up and down as they are moving between the two lines triangles.

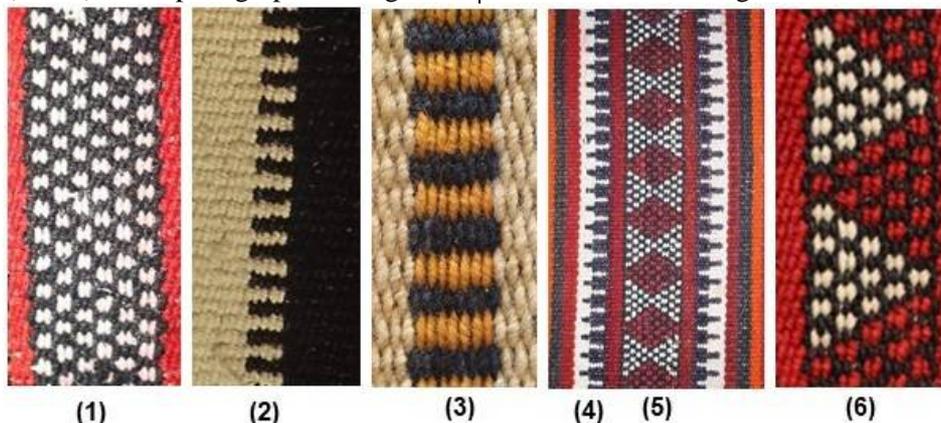


Figure (3): Names of the continuous Al-Sadu pictographs: 1) Aein (Eye), 2) Hubub (Seeds), 3) Dhalla (Ribs), 4) Dhrus El Khail (Horse Teeth), 5) Mithkhar, 6) Uwairjan (Zigzag).

2. Semi-Continuous Pictographs

The semi-continuous pictographs of the Raqoum group are unlike the previous ones in terms of their weaving technique and location on Al-Sadu weavings. They are often done at the beginning section of long woven Al-Sadu piece rather than at the end of it for aesthetical purposes. Examples of such pictographs can be found in the Besat (Figure 1), the Qatta (Figures 4 & 5), as well as, the

different types of bags and decoration weavings. Few members of this group come in a chain of connected patterns, while the others come in single and double patterns. The Raqoum pictographs are constructed with the wefts rapped each time around 3-6 warps to create the desired patterns (Crichton, 1998, 2nd ed.). At the same time, the Raqoum is the name for a special pattern where 5-10 small triangles are lined more or less in

a diamond shape to create the Raqoum pattern (Figure 4). Other patterns that use the same Raqoum technique but have different shape and name are as the following:

- **Hanbaliyya:** It is a one large diamond shape Raqoum woven in the middle of a solid color as a background (Figure 4). This pattern is designed with a minimum of five different outlining colors.
- **Janah Hanbaliyya:** It is the same as the

Hanbaliyya but its pattern is more creative with colored triangles (Figure 4).

- **Nous Hanbaliyya:** It is half of the pattern of Hanbaliyya (Figure 4) were the design of the patter is created as one-half of the diamond.
- **Shanaf Hanbaliyya:** Only 4-5 triangles are woven in one raw across the Fijjah (Long woven Al-Sadu piece).



Figure (4): The different patterns of the Raqoum group of pictographs. The picture was

taken with a kind verbal permission from Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society (Qatta # 2).

- **Ragoum Hanbaliyya:** This pattern is the same as the Hanbaliyya but it differs by rapping the weft around one group of warp yarn.
- **Sobaa:** It is a small Raqoum pattern that takes the shape of the letter (H) in English (Figure4).

3. Non- Continuous Pictographs.

This group of pictographs is found in both the Shajarah and Mishojarah. Although both the Shajarah and Mishojarah look like a long continuous pattern that runs thought out the entire length of the woven Al-Sadu textile, however, inside both of them a large number well-defined

pictographs of different abstracted objects are woven (Figure 5). The major differences between the Shajarah and “Mishojarah (Figures 6 & 7) are:

1. The Shajarah is commonly created with two colored yarns for each double set of warps, while the Mishojarah is woven with three differently colored yarns for each triple set of warps.
2. The most commonly used colors in weaving the Shajarah pictographs are black and white, but masters weaver often use black, white, and red warp yarns to weave the different pictographs of the Mishojarah.



Figure (5): From the left side of the figure, the non-continuous Shajarah group of pictographs in the middle of two set of Mishojarah pictographs. The picture was taken with a kind verbal permission from Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society (Qatta # 7).

3. The pictographs of the Shajarah mainly consist of abstract objects such as women's jewelry; phonetic symbols of words and alphabets; numbers; camel branding symbols; life figures of man, animals, insects, reptiles, plants ... etc.; and others (Figure 6). On the other hand, the great majority of the pictographs of the Mishojarah are geometric shapes (Figure 7).



Figure (6) Two Shajarahs on a Besat. (*)

7. Discussion of Findings

Although Al-Sadu weavings are highly utilitarian items to cover individual and family needs of the Bedouin living in Kuwait's desert, however, they are highly esthetical and communicative pieces of artifacts. They are used to fulfill many of the daily needs of the Bedouin families such as constructing their shelters of mobile



Figure (7) Two Mishojarahs on a Besat. (*)

(*) The two pictures were taken with a kind permission from Kuwait National Museum tent homes (Bait-al-Sha'ar), furnishing their men and women quarters with the proper soft furniture, making their different kinds of storage bags, and decorating their tents and animals. In addition, each woven piece is a proven reflection of the artistic creativity, depth of knowledge, and skill perfection of its master weaver. Moreover, Al-Sadu weavings reflect some of the width and depth of the Bedouin culture as a product of living in an arid desert environment.

Moreover, it was explained in the interviews with the eight (8) female master weavers, who are members of the Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society (AWCS), that learning and teaching Al-Sadu weaving is restricted only to Bedouin women rather than men. Bedouin girls start their learning to weave at an early age. By the age of 15-16 years old, many of those girls master the basics of this essential traditional hand handicraft. The perfection of craft is reached when the weaver masters weaving the Shajarah. This means that the she knows how to solely weave the most complicated and diversified Al-Sadu pictographs.

Then, she is given the title "Thafrah" which mean victorious (M. Al-Thafeere, personal communication, October 10, 2009; Um-Saleh, personal communication, December 7, 2009; Um-Abdullah, personal communication, December 8, 2009; Um-Bargash, personal communication, December 22, 2009; Seetah Um-Mahmood, personal communication, December 29, 2009; Amshah Um-Talal, personal communication, February 14, 2010; Hamad Abu-Abdulrahman, personal communication, December 29, 2009 & January 13, 2011; Laylah Um-Nayef, personal communication, August 17, 2011; and Um-Turkey, personal communication, December 22, 2012).

The Shajarah is the only one long set of pictographic symbols or codes that Al-Sadu master weavers do with numerous creative designs to reflect the depth and width of her knowledge and weaving skills, analytical observations, and areas of genuine personal and tribal interests (Um-Bargash, personal communication, December 22, 2009). Thus, it was found that jewelry such as ear

rings (Tarachee) of all different designs and sizes, and women’s golden belts were the most repeated pictographs in the Shajarah (M. Al-Thafeeree, personal communication, October 10, 2009). Next, large necklaces and rings are woven into the Shajarah to complete the women’s set of personal jewelry (Figure 8). Hair combs, mirrors, and scissors come next in their importance to the Bedouin women to maintain her beauty. In addition, master weavers stayed in touch with their desert lives by weaving their “Thella” or “Hodaj” which is quite an essential part of their preparation for comfortable travel across the desert (Figure 8). Figurative shapes of humans, animals, birds, reptiles, insects, and plants. were quite common in Al-Sadu weavings. All of those subjects were found in the near environment of the master weavers in the desert (Figure 8). However, after the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi Invasion in 1990, master weavers stopped using pictographs of humans and any living creature except plants in

their weavings because they were informed that Muslim scholar prohibit the replication of living things except plants (Seetah Um-Mahmood, personal communication, December 29, 2009). Master weavers got highly influenced and amazed by modern technology after they moved away from the desert life into the city life to the point that they introduced pictographs of planes, rockets, radios, tape-recorders, cars, and school buses in their newly woven Shajarahs (Figure 8) (Amshah Um-Talal, personal communication, February 14, 2010). At the same time, the master weavers were quite proud of their genuine hospitable traditions especially the coffee serving tradition in welcoming their guests. Therefore, they introduced pictographs of coffee pots (Dallah), coffee cups (Fanajeen), and incense burners (Mubkhar) in their weavings (Figure 8) (Um-Saleh, personal communication, December 7, 2009).



Figure (8): Different Al-Sadu pictographs woven in different Shajarah from Sadu pieces taken from Kuwait National Museum and Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society. 1) hodaj, 2) wooden camel’s saddle, 3) ear rings, 4) Necklace, 5) a man with a camel, 6) a horse, 7) wooden comb (top) & nan goat (bottom), 8) rooster, 9) mosquito (top) & wasem (camel branding sign), 10) Kuwait water towers, 11) a scorpion and a snake, 12) a bird, 13) a butterfly (top) and a pair of scissors, 14) desert shrub, 15) a radio/tape recorder, 16) a war plane, 17) a commercial plane, 18) a solder, 19) the word Kuwait, 20) a water heating pot (top) , two coffee pots (middle), & incense burner, 21) Kuwait TV logo, 22) school bus, and 23) a set of Arabic alphabets (top) with small ear rings (bottom) and zigzag lines resembling the snake paths or desert grass (the thick lines mean dense grass and the thin lines mean light grass).

Although most of the elderly master weavers of Al-Sadu were illiterate, yet, they managed to incorporate Arabic and foreign phonetic symbols of alphabets and words in their Shajarahs by visually imitating existing one (Hamad Abu-Abdulrahman, personal communication, December 29, 2009). This skill proved the powerful observational, analytical, and weaving skills of the master weavers (Figure 8). Finally, camel branding (Wasim) symbols were introduced in the Shajarah to identify the tribe of the master weave. Those symbols are used to identify the personal or tribal properties of life animals (Figure 8) (Hamad Abu-Abdulrahman, personal communication, December 29, 2009).

Past, Present and Future Trends in Al-Sadu Pictographic Codes

By studying the 54 Al-Sadu weavings, as an introduction to a more in-depth research, it was found that Al-Sadu pictographs have gradually been modified or were changed over time. In the past, Al-Sadu pictographic codes were true and honest reflections of the daily observations of the Al-Sadu master weavers. Those women wove in abstract forms their daily observations and items of their concern in a very honest and strait forward manners. Also, the older Al-Sadu pieces tell us that most of the master and their families were less informed when it comes to in-depth Islamic Teachings. Therefore, more life figures of people, animals, and birds were incorporated in their Al-Sadu as pictographs. However, after the resettling of the majority of the Bedouin families in the different cities and suburbs of Kuwait, getting closer to religious institutions and places of worship like mosques, attending more structured educational programs through the studying of young Bedouins in government and private schools, and the gradual and increasing exposure to new things every day through the different types of visual media; the knowledge base of the Al-Sadu master weavers increased and became richer than before. As a result, pictographs of living things gradually disappeared from the Al-Sadu weavings, and more abstract pictographs of different types of jewelry, plants, non-living objects were used as a replacement. Moreover, Al-Sadu master weavers began to introduce newer phonetic and pictographic images such as Arabic and foreign alphabets and words; as well as, different types of automobiles, radios, tape-recorders, planes, houses, and other modern items. Currently, Al-Sadu master weavers continue to stay away from weaving pictographs of living creatures, and continue to weave different and modified versions of women jewelry, as well as,

whatever they might see around them or watch on the different TV channels, or get their attention from the different books and magazines that are brought home. Moreover, less Al-Sadu master weavers and younger weavers are interested and practicing Shajarah weaving because that requires longer hours of teaching, learning, and work; as well as, more bodily tolerance.

Due to the declining interest among the younger generations of Bedouin females into carrying on with the Al-Sadu weaving tradition, and the accelerating ageing of most of the living master weaver, there is an increasing concern regarding the continuation and flourishing of the Al-Sadu handicraft in Kuwait. In addition, it is expected in the future to lose more traditional pictographs in favor of modern ones especially that relate to modern technology.

8. Recommendations

Due to the drastic and massive changes occurring and expected to take place in the genuine Bedouin traditions in Kuwait, it is quite essential to pay attention to the following recommendations:

1. It is vitally important to preserve and record all the traditional Al-Sadu pictographic and phonetic symbols for current and future referencing for both the new generations of Al-Sadu master weavers and researcher. This effort will at least insure a strong binding and connection between the past and future of this increasingly important traditional and national handicraft.
2. It is crucially helpful to identify and explain the cultural meanings of existing and extinct Al-Sadu pictographic symbols. It is hoped that this academic effort will add-up with other similar or related research to assist current and future Al-Sadu master weavers and researchers to a better understanding of the Bedouin culture and way of life.
3. It is important to find and create the most effective and informative methods and means for the proper dissemination of Al-Sadu information especially the ones related to Al-Sadu pictographic codes among all Al-Sadu weavers and researchers. This could be done by creating different electronic sites on the internet dedicated for that purpose, and to encourage productive interaction between all concerned individuals, organizations, and institutions.
4. Finally, new research is in need to be directed toward identifying and studying the different shapes and meanings of the different geometric pictographs found in the Mishojarah.

9. Limitations of this Study

It is quite necessary to notify that the findings of this study are bound by its limitations of the study due to the limited number of the studied Al-Sadu pieces. Thus it is necessary to expand this study and include more tent dividers, as well as, any other Al-Sadu weavings that contain the Shajarah in order to add to the pictograph collection documented in this study.

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