The Pictographic Codes in Al-Sadu Weavings of Kuwait

Ali S. Alnajadah Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Interior Design, College of Basic Education – PAAET, Kuwait, Member of the World Craft Council (WCC) - Asia Pacific Region (APR)

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.