ABSTRACT

Textiles are an essential element and integral part of material culture, representing an important human need and creative activity. *Al Sadu* is an ancient Bedouin tribal weaving craft, which in its broadest identity is rhythmically linked to poetry, memory, the weaving practice, the extension of the hand, and the graceful moving pace of a camel.1

*Al Sadu* weavings of Kuwait convey the Bedouin’s rich heritage and instinctive awareness of natural beauty, with patterns and designs messaging the traditional nomadic lifestyle, the desert environment, and the emphasis of symmetry and balance due to the making process. Traditional weaving is a form of expression, and for Bedouin women in the Gulf and beyond, their textiles are testimony to their practical achievements, manual dexterity and aesthetic values.

With many of the regions textile traditions fast disappearing in the face of rapid cultural and economic change, the Bedouin nomadic lifestyle has radically diminished, and the number of *Al Sadu* weavers in Kuwait is in continual decline.

The aspiration is to preserve and reinforce the vital role that *Al Sadu* textiles play in the regions cultural identity for the next generation, and to avoid the risk of losing important values and traditions. The challenge is to retain and revive traditional crafts and skills, blending the traditional with modern technology, and education and training with commercial demand. This will inspire new, original *Al Sadu* designs and creative contemporary practitioners.

This paper will discuss the research findings and current outcomes over a six-year period in Kuwait, in collaboration with the University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Al Sadu Weaving Society Kuwait, Sadu House museum, Bedouin master-weavers, academics and poets, social anthropologist and UK textile design students.2

The focus is on the interpretation of the traditional woven *gata* textile or central tent curtain; establishing a wealth of historic cultural meaning and communication from the codes or pictographic language, in stark contrast with the lack of knowledge and understanding, and worse still, lack of interest, from the contemporary indigenous generation or current government.

An educational *Al Sadu* design projects and training with BA textile design students and a Kuwaiti design-company, will be discussed, to evidence young peoples’ interest and design skills in *Al Sadu*, and meet the requirements of traditional progress, ensuring the future survival of *Al Sadu* textiles.

---


BA (Hons) Contemporary Textile Practice/ Zar Kuwait Design Project – final year Textile Design student competition. University of Wales Institute Cardiff UWIC.