

The Role of Omani Bedouin Women in Shaping the Identity Of the Traditional Headdress

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دور المرأة العمانية البدوية في تكوين هوية حلية الرأس التقليدية

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الملخص

على الرغم من إعتبار صناعة المجوهرات العمانية التقليدية واحدة من الحرف التي لا تقدر بثمن في التراث الثقافي للسلطنة، إلا أن المجوهرات المعاصرة تم تجاهلها. ولم تتم دراسة دور المرأة في إنتاج المجوهرات العمانية التقليدية. وبشكل عام فقد تجاهلت الدراسات السابقة الأجزاء الجلدية المستخدمة في صناعة المجوهرات التقليدية العمانية. إن دور المرأة العمانية في تكوين وتطوير هوية المجوهرات التقليدية محدود للغاية. ولذلك فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى معرفة مدى الدور الفعلي الذي لعبته المرأة العمانية في تكوين هوية المجوهرات التقليدية. كما تسعى الدراسة إلى تفسير هذه المجوهرات البدوية التقليدية من خلال ممارسة المجوهرات المعاصرة.

المنهجية المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة هي البحث القائم على الممارسة والمبني على المعرفة التي تم تطويرها من خلال العمل الميداني. وتضمنت الدراسة استخدام البحث الإثنوغرافي أيضا. وقد كشف العمل الميداني عن منطقة لم يتم استكشافها من قبل لاستخدام الجلد البيئي في صناعة المجوهرات العمانية التقليدية. فقد مكن التفاعل مع النساء البدويات من تسجيل تقنيات المعالجة الحرفية التقليدية وإنتاج عينة من المواد. وأدت الأفكار المكتسبة من هذا البحث إلى تطوير هيكل من المجوهرات المعاصرة في إطار موضوع المجوهرات والمواد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لباس الرأس، المجوهرات العمانية، الجلد، الشابوك، النسعة، الشبكة.

Abstract

According to the previous studies 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 through a specific headdress.

During the fieldwork, the researcher started to explore how social contexts relate to traditional and cultural identity, by interviewing the owners of jewellery and craftsmakers involved in jewellery production such as the expert women who made the traditional headdress (shaabook). The researcher began to understand the value and importance of leather and to explore potential design inspired by smell, weight, sound, and storage of jewellery.

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. The researcher explored traditional materials such as leather which inspired him to create jewellery. The material itself became a focal point of the researcher work and a tool to convey his concept. The use of leather in the work became a central concern in designing, making and as a symbolic reflection on the Bedouin community identity.

Keywords: headdress, Omani jewellery, leather, Shaabook, Nis'ah, Shabkah.

Problem Statement

Using leather in Omani jewellery is being ignored despite its important role in traditional Omani jewellery. Many of previous studies focused on the parts made of silver in Omani jewellery because of its popularity and rarely focused on the leather .

Traditional jewellery in Oman has maintained the same designs for centuries, so the market for this jewellery has decreased significantly. This research explores how traditional jewellery can inform the production of contemporary forms of jewellery and investigates traditional and potential new aspects of leather use in Omani jewellery. This study has used structured methodologies to study traditional Omani jewellery in depth according to who owns it and the ideas to create new contemporary Omani jewellery. This research aims to investigate the role of Bedouin women in traditional Omani jewellery, and seeks to interpret this traditional Bedouin jewellery through contemporary jewellery practice.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To contribute to the discussion of social culture research in Oman using a new method through the lens of contemporary jewellery.
2. To collaborate with the settled jewellery makers of Bedouin through the practice-based research.
3. To explore the value of jewellery for settled Bedouin to contribute to discourse on contemporary design.

Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

Main question:

1. How is the value of traditional Omani jewellery' can be interpreted, appreciated and developed through contemporary Omani jewellery design?

Secondary questions:

2. What is the background of Omani traditional headdresses?
3. What relationship do the Bedouin Omani women have with traditional jewellery and its production?

Background

According to the Oxford dictionary, identity is defined as "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is". In this research, the person's identity is rooted in national identity as a whole through distinctive traditions, culture and language. It is further defined by 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 Regardless of the status of legal citizenship .

Edensor (2002) stated that the 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 a 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 regional and 'state' concept that spread into eastern Africa. Partrick (2009) stated that contemporary Omani national identity changed from that sense of affiliation which was 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" as the geographical nature of Oman has attracted a variety of ethnic groups. Elliot asserted that this diversity affected the identity of people in society including their language, appearance, dress, morals, customs, beliefs, and lifestyle (Elliott, 2011). Cole (2003) suggests that the Bedouin cultural heritage is a component of national identity.

At the diversified contemporary society, the majority of the Omani men clothes with the khanjar, a traditional dagger, on formal and ceremonial occasions as part of their national dress which reflects the Omani shared national identity. Wearing the national clothes is evident in Oman to show the Omani identity of the majority clearly and differentiate other ethnic groups (Peterson, 2004).

Mazumbar (2014) pointed out that the jewellery is related to the identity emotionally, materially, economically, and politically. It can be read in two opposing semiotic modes as 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 strengthen the identity through allegiance and inclusion. It was embodied in badges, buttons, rosaries, crosses, crowns, diadems, or other symbolically loaded elements that were used to adorn divine or human archetypes like gods, goddesses and heroes. Moreover, jewellery can also strengthen the 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, women sometimes acquire their first jewellery collection at their marriage to express their marital status. The groom buies their brides' jewellery from itinerant craftsmen or near Bedouin camps, where traders travel with their wares. The jewellery is paid to the father of the bride by the groom as part of dowry, but this jewellery is completely the bride's own property. The bride often added the jewelry to her collection owned previously, if she has any, or she can sell a part of it for cash whenever she wants.

However, traditional Omani jewellery has been influenced by many other cultures and become very rich in design complexity due to the long history of seafaring and trade with partners from different countries like India, China, Iran and Zanzibar (Figure 1-1). Thus shaped the Omani jewellery national identity by trading with other partners, along with the traditional jewellery that was traded locally.



2015)

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.-1 Anklets of Zanzibari origin (8×7×3 CM, Silver, usesd during the eighteenth century until 1972, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, North Sharqiyah, Oman,

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), jewellery representation connects meaning and language to culture. Culture is a broad notion, which involves shared experiences of specific culture, language, ideology, and concepts. 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.

Bedouin Identity

The term "Bedouin" is spelled as Beduin, Badawi, Badw or Badu. The Bedouin are the Arabic Language speaking groups who usually live in the deserts of North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017). In the Omani sultanate context, the Bedouin tribes are a traditional community living inside Oman. Omani's society and culture were divided into two areas: the inner part of Oman, and the other part in Muscat and coastal area. Riphenburg (1998) divided the concept of

Omani identity into different types: the traditional (interior) community that was tribal (Bedouin), and the second was a modern community 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 in Oman including 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 characterised the Badu, although the diversity of the characteristics and values can cause confusion (Webster, 1991). Webster observed that the Omani Bedou have achieved social success in terms of modernisation and development unlike the Arab tribes who stick to their pastoral nomadic culture. Al-Zadjali (2009) and Al-Mamari (2012) commented on the Omani Bedouin's willingness to create traditional manufacturing techniques with more contemporary design, when they have been persuaded that these designs are more in demand. The majority of the Bedou retained traditional Bedouin culture, whereas the rest of them abandoned the tribal and nomadic lifestyle. Bedouin values are evident in the formal and highly ritualised context of greater social gatherings. Pastoralism is the basic characteristic of Bedouin concerning their economic, social, and cultural way of life, and their identity would be lost if pastoralism disappeared (Webster, 1991). Recently, settled Bedouin still look after their animals by themselves or usually employ herdsmen from India or Punjab.

There are two groups of nomadic Bedouins. First, desert Bedouins who migrate to the coastal areas to gain profit of pastoralism in those areas in Oman. Second, some Bedouin fishermen take their livestock into the interior regions when fishing is impossible during the monsoon season (Morris and Shelton, 1997). 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 settled and built permanent residences for themselves, but they are still known to be Bedouin even if they are settled due to the decisions national borders (Scholz, 1980). The Omani government encourages the nomadic Bedouin to settle down in order to modernise the country (Cordes, 1980), and it provides the necessary services for settlement (Al-Araimi, 2003).

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. First, national borders limited unrestricted nomad mobility, causing some groups to gradually stay and settle within the community. Second, the government gradually inhibit the role and position of the tribe leader within the local communities. Third, the camel's diminishing role as the main form of transportation across the Oman desert. Fourth, the expansion of agricultural lands which caused a reduction in nomad grazing area.

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 braiding process (Figure 1-2). 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).



Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.-2Shaabook (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 1-3). 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 1-3 Shaabook have up to 15 strands (33×27×1 CM, Silver, gold, cotton thread & leather, during 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. Leather are used for the crafting of luxurious personal tools along with the production of basic nomadic equipments, although many goods are now made of plastic and sold in towns and villages. While conducting this research, the researcher's growing interest in the leather materials he have found was a reason to incorporate leather in his own designs.

During the researcher's initial investigations about the headdress, he found that using leather as a component added a value to it. For example, leather absorbs the scents of who wears, so it personalising the piece through adding the smell to the appearance. Additionally, this piece of jewellery is usually hidden and not well known by people from outside this community. The headdress is owned by a single individual woman and provides an identification of her, and it usually cannot be exchanged between women because it is tailored for the owner herself. Whenever the leather part of headdress is damaged, it can be renewed with a new piece and it is entirely created by Bedouin women. Leather, made from goatskin or camel skin, was used for a many purposes by the Bedouin and belonged to domestic sphere of woman. Cradles for babies, belts, water buckets, and water skins were all manufactured using leather, and these artifacts were crafted by women. Leather was regarded as an available and comparatively cheap material that held no intrinsic value. In contrast with this, the more valuable jewellery like silver was made by men, and the jewellery trade in Nizwa remains depending on male silversmiths.

In a patriarchal, conservative Islamic society such as the Bedouin experience in Oman, it is founded fascinating that women should have used their headdress as

expressions of their personal identity. This motivated the researcher to explore this piece of jewellery to highlight its cultural importance and its beauty. This study is the first study to acknowledge the role of Omani women in creating jewellery. All the previous studies about Omani jewellery have considered women as consumers (Rajab 1997), (Forster 1998), and (Hawley, 2000). Women have been highlighted as customers for the silversmiths. However, the headdresses revealed that there was a hidden, unknown, and creative side to Bedouin women's jewellery in designing and manufacturing complex artifacts to be worn primarily to satisfy themselves and express their own taste. These information was important for the researcher to make the decision on focusing the research on women, silver and the craft of leatherwork.

Shabkah and Nis'ah 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 1 4). 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 can be worn together.



Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.-4
Shabkah and nis'ah (image from Forester, 1998)

During conducting the interviews, the researcher found 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 the answers of women have been interviewed is conflicted. This type of headgear was worn only by the women belonging to 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. Both building of new roads leads to these mountainous areas and the increased popularity of vehicles changed the previous situation. 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.

Methodology

The central methodology of this project is a practice-based research approach which builds on knowledge developed through fieldwork. 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. Barbour (2007) stated that ethnography generally tends to give an analytical description to different cultures. The main purpose of the ethnography's method is to collect and interpret oral knowledge.

The main focus of research project is cultural and social situations, specifically the use of traditional jewellery by the Bedouin women. I went to the governorates of North A’Sharqiyah and South A’Sharqiyah to undertake the research related to the role of Bedouin women in shaping the identity of traditional Omani jewellery. By observation, taking notes, recording, questioning and investigating the associated sources closely with the events that occurred at that time. Figure 1-5 shows how this practice-based research is related to the fieldwork, based on an ethnographic research approach which includes photo elicitation and snowball sampling techniques.

Fieldwork

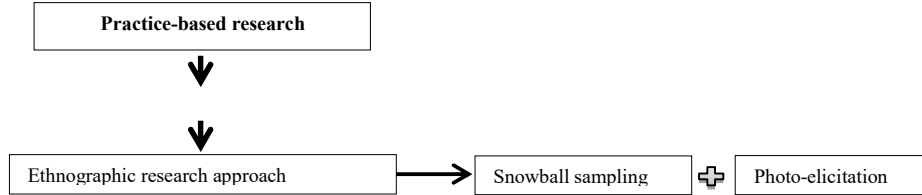


Figure 1-5 Methodology structure

This section describes the fieldwork 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, the researcher 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.

This 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 living as embodied in the crafting and wearing of jewellery.

The Key Finding

In reueiwng the literature, there are two headdress's types made of leather and silver which are Shabkah and nis’ah. The interviewees assert that there are actually four types of headdresses made of leather and silver. They are shabkah or mins’aa, shaabook, nis'ah and nisfay. Al-hashmi (2017) is the head of the Old Castle Museum in Al-Kamel says that 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 and worn at the front of the head (Figure 1- 6). The second type is called shaabook and covers the upper half of the head (Figure 1- 7). 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 1- 8). The biggest type is called shabkah or mins’aa (Figure 1-9). Shabkah referred to a net in English in previous studies (Richardson and Dorr, 2003) and (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

interviewees and (Al-hashmi, 2017).



Figure 1-6 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 Error! No text of specified style in document.-7 Shaabook (image from Old Castle Museum by Al-hashmi, South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017) permission from Al-hashmi



Figure 1-8 Nis'ah (image from Old Castle Museum by Al-hashmi South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017) permission from Al-hashmi

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.-9 Shabkah or manisa (image from Old Castle Museum by Al-hashmi South Sharqiyah, Oman, 2017) permission from Al-hashmi

Right way of wearing Oman headdress

The photo elicitation technique led to a clear analysis of jewellery production, its economic context and, its function in the context of social interaction, along with the symbolic meaning of the jewellery. It allowed the researcher 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.

Drawing the traditional Headdress

The most challenging situation is to present jewellery pieces in media such as books and exhibitions, and particularly when they are tangible pieces such as shaabook and nis'ah which are normally worn in the hair. In the literature review, such objects are often displayed without wearing it as 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. To address this problem, the researcher personally requested one woman to wear her hair dress – nis'ah. Since the fieldwork involved only women, including the female researcher, she was willing to show the way of wearing. Rather than taking a photograph, the researcher made a full drawing for front and back of the object (Figure 1-10).

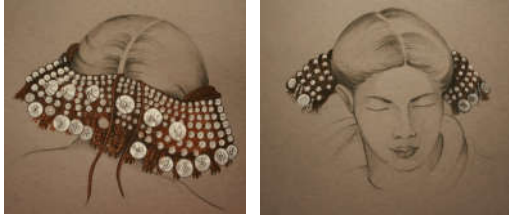


Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.-10 Nis'ah (Paper, Pencil and colour, Drawing by Amal Al-Ismaili, UK, Sheffield Hallam University, 2016)

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 by women who have used leather in various handicraft industries including 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. 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).

Practice based Research

The headdress was a co-creation by the researcher and the shaabook maker, and the remaining leather was collected by the researcher. This allowed both the shaabook and the leather to be examined and analysed at Sheffield Hallam University. The researcher 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. The participants were asked to take 50 photographs of different objects and things that can be worn. 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 representing, capturing or communicating something about a place, a journey, an experience, a sensation, or other people. Then the participants were asked to examine 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 the researcher to analyse the photos have been taken in first field work and asking himself the three previous questions .

The researcher examined the natural tanned leather material have been brought from the 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. The researcher 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 adding 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 due to the animal type and the tanning process. There was also one negative result

when the researcher 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 Domination ring were designed to reflect the role of Bedouin women in developing identity of traditional Omani jewellery.

Domination Ring

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

Reflective Analysis

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 case, the 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 explains these stages.

Observing: In 2015, in fieldwork the researcher interviewed 16 women, and the result is that women played a major role in shaping the identity of traditional Omani jewellery .

Thinking: In fieldwork the researcher thought about concepts for creativity making, which resulted in the three works; domination, peace and sound .

Making: An expert woman who crafts a traditional headdress shaabook showed her making skill. Then, she and the researcher made the leather part of shaabook together.

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

Reflecting: The researcher took the fieldwork data back to UK to reflect on 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.

Domination reflection

The design of this ring explained its title (Figure 1-11). The literature reviewed indicates that men controlled the production of traditional jewellery before oil was discovered in Oman (Morris and Shelton, 1997), (Richardson and Dorr, 2003), and (Mongitti, Suleman and Meeks, 2011) .

A recent study conducted by Al-Mamari (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 Error! No text of specified style in document.-11 Domination ring (30×27×27 CM, Leather thread, Photographed by Amal Al-Ismaili, Metal workshop, Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 2015)

Conclusion

The objectives of this research have been achieved. This research contributed to the discussion of social culture research in Oman using new methods through the lens of contemporary jewellery. The snowball sampling method was used to interview 16 women from North A'Sharqiyah and south A'Sharqiyah. A key finding from fieldwork was information about the role played by Bedouin women in the production of traditional Omani headdresses. 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. In addition, I identified the imminent danger of Omani traditional jewellery vanishing, along with craft processing techniques of the eco-leather headdresses.

This research collaborates with the settled Bedouin makers through the lens of practice-based research and 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 making shaabook headdress. She proved to be able to provide expert knowledge of shaabook. The research has led to the design and production of a series of contemporary jewellery piece drawing on traditional Omani jewellery materials. I would suggest that the researcher's designs are unique as no other Omani practitioner has attempted to create artefacts of this nature. I have used innovative materials like leather used innovative methods to create those materials like producing leather thread using traditional tanning methods.

To explore ways of interpreting the value of settled Bedouin jewellery to contribute to discourse on contemporary design. The researcher's practice has developed new form of contemporary jewellery informed by traditional Omani headdress. The project was influenced by Hanson and Hutton's (2015) "wearable stories" workshop at Sheffield Hallam University. 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 have been taken in field work, the researcher realised the right way of wearing the traditional Omani jewellery comparing with the previous study. In practise, the researcher 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 Jewellery and materials theme. The researcher explored traditional jewellery materials such as eco-leather and created created "Domination" ring. It therefore incorporated traditional forms of headdresses with the rediscovered process of leather tanning (Shaabook) and the weaving of leather thread.

Future studies can use the reflections developed in this study to encourage further work with Omani Bedouin women and take a deeper look on traditional Omani jewellery. A future study could explore the tensions between traditional and contemporary design

within Omani society as an attempt to focus on contemporary design that becomes too novel to be accepted.

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