

"The artistic and formative features of Women's slippers in Egyptian folklore" (A Descriptive Study)

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Research Abstract

Folklore is an essential component of culture and a fundamental expression of identity as well as a distinguished civilizational legacy, Exploring and drawing inspiration from Folklore is, in fact, a vital condition for renewing the Egyptian character, One of the manifestations of Egyptian Folklore is traditional women's slippers, which reflect women's personalities, tastes, and customs, These slippers serve as a complementary part of women's attire, adding elegance and refinement, and are considered indispensable accessories, The significance of studying traditional women's slippers lies not only in their symbolic and cultural connotations but also in the techniques, materials, and decorative elements they incorporate.

This study aims to shed light on traditional Egyptian women's slippers (known as zarabeen), exploring the customs and traditions associated with them, and identifying their artistic and aesthetic characteristics The researcher adopted a descriptive methodology, analyzing and documenting selected examples of traditional women's slippers (zarabeen) displayed in Egyptian heritage museums, The goal was to examine their materials, construction techniques, and decorative motifs, The study concluded by identifying key aesthetic features that can enrich the field of art crafts.

Keywords: Heritage, Egyptian Folk Heritage, slippers, Traditional Women's slippers.

Introduction

Heritage is not limited to individual traits or behaviors but also encompasses the tangible and intangible history of entire civilizations, Through these material and immaterial inheritances, we can gain insight into the diversity and richness of different cultures⁽¹⁾

"Heritage has become the primary concern of intellectuals, writers, artists, and craftsmen alike, Each group calls for its representation, utilization, and the employment of its authentic values and components, Heritage is everything we have inherited from previous generations"⁽²⁾ thus, we say that heritage is a

1 Sama Ahmed Waheed (July 2018): "Folk Heritage and the Rooting of Egyptian Identity in Jewelry Design" Journal of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities, Issue 11, P298

2 Mahmoud Ahmed Baghdadi (July 2017): "Utilizing Folk Art Motifs in Murals as a Means of Developing Visual Culture and Reinforcing Egyptian Identity" Journal of Research in Specific Education, Issue 13, P40

unique phenomenon capable of transferring from the past to the present a transfer characterized by action, movement, and influence⁽¹⁾

"Our ancestors have left us a rich and immeasurable tangible and intangible artistic and cultural legacy, extending from prehistoric times to the present day"

⁽²⁾One of the popular traditions that has both influenced and been influenced by the culture of each society across different historical periods is traditional women's slippers, These traditional shoes have undergone numerous changes and developments in their shape, techniques, materials, and types over time, As a result, they became important accessories for women's attire, capable of altering the overall external appearance by adding charm, a sense of beauty, comfort, and self-confidence, thereby giving the outfit a new and distinct character.

"Footwear serves as a key to understanding the character of any nation and a reflection of its civilization, as it is the first thing noticed after clothing before the ear hears the nation's language and before the mind comprehends its culture Through the dress and slippers of each nation, one can grasp its taste, culture, and history"⁽³⁾

This research, therefore, investigates the artistic and aesthetic features of traditional women's slippers in Egyptian Folklore to identify the most important artistic and design values inherent within it and to explore how it may contribute to enriching the field of art crafts.

Research Problem:

- How can the study of the artistic and formative features of women's slippers in Egyptian folklore be utilized to enrich the field of art crafts?

Research Objectives

To introduce traditional women's slippers in Egyptian Folklore and its associated customs and traditions.

To uncover the artistic and design features of traditional women's slippers in Egyptian Folklore by describing selected examples of these traditional shoes, examining their materials, techniques, and ornamentation.

Significance of the Study

- 1- The study delves into the history of traditional women's slippers, its association with various occasions and customs, and aims to raise awareness about this heritage in order to promote and preserve it.
- 2- The subject of women's slippers in Egyptian Folklore has not been directly studied in the field of art in general, nor in the field of art crafts in particular.

1 Fatma Farouk (2010): "Architecture and Folk Decorations in Nubia and Asir" Philadelphia Conference Culture of Communication, P1

2 Karima Mohamed Mohamed Ragab (June 2023): "Egyptian Heritage and the Rooting of Identity in the Design of Woven Lighting Units," Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Specific Education Damietta University, Issue 7, P307

3 Fatma Mahmoud Mohamed Mahmoud (2014): "Traditional Women's Dress in Siwa Oasis and Its Adaptation into Contemporary Fashion" Journal of Research in Specific Sciences and Arts, P266

- 3- Enriching the field of art crafts through the study of the artistic and aesthetic features of traditional women's slippers.

Research Hypothesis

- It is possible to benefit from studying the artistic and aesthetic features of traditional women's slippers in Egyptian Folklore to enrich the field of art crafts.

Research Scope

- A historical and descriptive study of traditional women's slippers from desert regions (Sinai, Siwa Oasis, New Valley, Nubia) and the central Delta region (Sharqia and Gharbia governorates).

Research Methodology

- The study follows both historical and descriptive approaches in analyzing and documenting various forms of traditional women's slippers exhibited in multiple heritage museums across Egypt.

Terminology

• Footwear (Na'al)

In Arabic, the word "na'al" refers to what is worn on the feet for protection from the ground, regardless of the material from which it is made. Most Arabic dictionaries agree on this fundamental meaning, with slight differences in detail. According to "Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit" (The Concise Dictionary) by the Arabic Language Academy, "na'al" is defined as "what is worn on the foot to protect it from the ground"⁽¹⁾

In "Lisān al-ʿArab" (The Tongue of the Arabs) by Ibn Manẓūr, "na'al" is defined as "what protects the foot from the ground, whether it is made of leather, wood, or rubber; the plural is "ni'āl", In "Maqāyīs al-Lughah" (The Measures of Language) by Ibn Fāris, the root of the word "na'al" "nūn, ʿayn, lām" refers to the act of wearing something on the foot or riding on it ⁽²⁾

• Heritage (Turāth)

The Arabic Language Academy defines "turāth" (heritage) as "inherited human values and the cultural, intellectual, religious, literary, and artistic legacy belonging to the distant or recent past"⁽³⁾

"It is a collection of values and arts inherited from past generations across the ages, and people continue to care for and immortalize it because it represents their humanity. Heritage includes elements of culture passed down through generations customs, traditions, and arts left by ancestors and is considered an ever-growing national and civilizational gift that nourishes individuals within society. It reflects the spirit of civilization and history"⁽⁴⁾

1 Arabic Language Academy (2004): "Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit" (The Concise Dictionary), 4th Edition, Dar Al-Da'wa, P924

2 Abn Faris (1991): "Maqayis Al-Lughah edited by Abdul Salam Harun", Dar Al-Jil, Beirut, Vol. 5, P410

3 Mohamed Abed Al-Jabri (1991): "Heritage and Modernity", Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, P23

4 Ali Rafaat Hamed El-Gendy (2001): "Characteristics of Folk Pottery in Egypt and Its Application in Teaching Ceramics to Art Education Students", Unpublished Master's Thesis, Faculty of Art Education, Helwan University, P21

• Egyptian Folk Heritag

"It encompasses the customs, traditions, values, literature, arts, crafts, skills, and all forms of popular knowledge that have been created and shaped by society through its long experience, and which are passed down and learned informally among its members"⁽¹⁾

Introduction

Every society is distinguished by its heritage and identity, which define its rootedness in the land and its harmony with it," Egyptian Folklore possesses a unique character due to the rich and diverse cultural influences that resulted from the impact of various prominent civilizations that have passed through Egypt "⁽²⁾

"Egyptian Folklore is rich in artistic and aesthetic values, filled with magnificent symbols and forms that carry social dimensions expressed through customs, traditions, magical rituals, beliefs, and myths" ⁽³⁾ Preserving heritage means reviving it, which is achieved by collecting, identifying, studying, and most importantly recording and documenting it so that it becomes known, preserved, and available for meaningful reuse.

"The clothing of peoples and their accessories in general and slippers in particular are among the expressions of human development, They are customary elements reflecting the traditions of nations and act as a record preserving our national heritage, capturing aspects of a bygone era, They reveal the spirit of the past age from economic, social, intellectual, and cultural perspectives, This type of art is an inherited folk tradition passed down from ancestors to descendants, Its original designer is the general population, especially the working class, whose members participate in transmitting and preserving it as a national and cultural heritage "⁽⁴⁾

"Traditional women's slippers in Egypt is marked by a national character that distinguishes it from others, linking it to ancient heritage, Its origins can be traced back to the Pharaonic, Greco-Roman, Coptic, and Islamic periods, Traditional slippers does not lose its form with the passing of each era; rather, each era introduces modifications to the older styles without erasing their distinctive shapes"⁽⁵⁾

Egypt is known for its rare and unique tangible heritage, unmatched anywhere in the world particularly its handmade leather crafts, such as traditional women's slippers, which exhibits distinct styles unique to each

1 Eman Mahmoud Eissa (2020): "The Contribution of the Egyptian Folklore Archive to the Reproduction of Folk Heritage", **Journal of Scientific Research in Arts(Humanities and Social Sciences)**, Faculty of Women, Ain Shams University, Vol. 8, Issue 21, P306

2 Ebtisam Mohamed Khamis (January 2014): "Systems Influencing the Approaches to Egyptian Folk Heritage from Primary Sources to Establish Identity in Interior Design", **International Design Journal**, Vol. 4, Issue 1, P183

3 Mahmoud Ahmed Baghdadi (July 2017): Ibid ,P41

4 Fatma Mahmoud Mohamed Mahmoud (2014): Ibid ,P266

5 Thuraya Nasr (1998): "**The History of World Costume**", Alam Al-Kitab, P4

governorate, However, with the passage of time and the development of modern slippers industries, traditional handmade slippers with its authentic forms and cultural customs is on the verge of extinction, Now more than ever, we need to return to our authentic Arab identity and preserve our heritage before it disappears ⁽¹⁾, for it embodies the symbols, beliefs, and characteristics of every era, It also reflects the prosperity and luxury of different periods through the richness of its materials.

• Traditional Women's slippers in Desert Areas and the Central Delta

"The desert environment is characterized by a harsh lifestyle and constant mobility, and this is reflected in the nature of its people, The artist interacts with and is influenced by his surrounding environment, which becomes a source of sensory and aesthetic knowledge for the designer" ⁽²⁾, Accordingly traditional women's slippers in desert regions has distinct forms suited to its environment, In these areas, they are often referred to as zarabeen, and their design is shaped by environmental, geographical, social, historical, economic, and religious factors, Upon close examination of the various types and forms of traditional women's slippers, one can often identify the specific region they belong to.

Traditional women's slippers represents a form of accessory that evolves gradually rather than abruptly, It is passed down from generation to generation and continues through the continuity of cultural transmission, Every nation has its own unique types and styles of slippers that express its identity and national character, These designs often feature decorative patterns with geometric and floral symbols, which contribute to shaping the visual and symbolic identity of the slippers, These motifs often carry hidden symbolic meanings related to human life and environment ⁽³⁾

A- Traditional Women's slippers in Sinai Desert

Bedouin women in both North and South Sinai place great importance on their clothing and adornments, leading to a variety of slippers styles characterized by simplicity in form and structure, such as al-Watā and al-Jaballa sandals.

Footwear in Sinai is considered very important for women and girls," Women in North and South Sinai wear sandals made from cowhide, camel hide, or rubber when traveling to town, However, due to the difficulty of walking in the sand, they often go barefoot in the desert, The al-Watā sandal, unique to Sinai, is made from goatskin and resembles traditional balgha-style shoes, It features a front flap that covers a large part of the foot and is free of embroidery, The al-Jaballa sandal, on the other hand, is rarely used and is crafted from soft leather,

1 Karima Mohamed Mohamed Ragab (June 2023): Ibid ,P309

2 Sherif Abdel-Fattah Tamraz (August 2009): "Training as One of the Fundamentals of Design Quality for Reviving Siwan Textile Heritage", Symposium: Preserving Civilizational Heritage in the Arab World Between Theory and Practice, Arab Administrative Development Organization, P145

3 Fatma Mahmoud Mohamed Mahmoud (2014): Ibid ,P266

It features a front design resembling the letter X and is made using specific Bedouin techniques" ⁽¹⁾ **as illustrated in Figure (1)**

Bedouin women also wear high-collared types of sandals, some plain and others embroidered with silk threads, to protect their legs from scorpion and snake bites common in desert environments, **as shown in Figure (2)**, Brides have a special type of shoe, part of which is embroidered and decorated with colorful wool tassels.



Figure (1) Al-Jabla sandal, dating between the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Sinai), Museum of Folk Arts (Photographed by the researcher)



Figure (2) Two women's high-collared shoes beige for unmarried women and brown for married women (Sinai), made of leather, silk threads, metallic braid, and cotton⁽²⁾

B- Traditional slippers in the Northern Depression Siwa Oasis

"Women in Siwa Oasis play a significant role in various forms of local art, especially in traditional dress and its accessories particularly slippers, This highlights the women's exceptional skills in decoration and embroidery, as seen in their ability to create spontaneous, simple, and highly refined designs in terms of form, color, and technique, These designs and methods are passed down from grandmothers to granddaughters, confirming that such decorations and techniques are cultural remnants from earlier historical periods" ⁽³⁾

1 Thuraya Nasr (1998): Ibid ,P72

2 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fgate.ahram.org>.

3 Kafaya Suleiman Ahmed and others (2010) :**"Traditional Costumes Between Restoration and Imitation"**, Dar Al-Zahraa Publishing and Printing, Riyadh, 1st Edition, P136

"Traditional women's slippers in Siwa Oasis is considered a national heritage and a cultural legacy that distinguishes the women of the oasis, It embodies a rich artistic tradition and an innate folk sensibility, characterized by abundant and varied decorations"⁽¹⁾ The people of this oasis have developed a distinct language in crafting their slippers through unique materials, decorations, and techniques.

Bedouin women in Siwa ensured that women's slippers carried symbolic meanings and codes known only to tribal members, The color of a woman's shoe reveals her social identity whether she is single, married, divorced, or widowed, This code was ingeniously designed by the women of Siwa, as tribal customs prohibit women from revealing their faces to strangers, Thus, the shoe became a discreet way for a man to identify a woman, especially if he wished to propose marriage, without causing embarrassment.

In Siwa, the shoes are called "zarboun" or "zarabeen", and they are made from red cowhide, They are distinguished by their shape and embroidery and are harmonized with the traditional Bedouin dress, Siwan women demonstrate great creativity in embroidering the shoes with skill and precision using colorful silk threads, forming geometric and botanical motifs in shapes such as diamonds and triangles, symbolizing the "eye" The result is a stunning work of art, **as shown in Figure (3)** The shoes typically feature a high collar, similar to those in Sinai, to protect against scorpion and snake bites, and are fastened to the foot with ties at the top of the collar ⁽²⁾



Figure (3) Elderly Bedouin woman embroidering a traditional Sinai shoes ⁽³⁾

Figure (4) shows a high-collared Bedouin shoe from the Matrouh desert, dating to the late 20th or early 21st century, It is made from goatskin and embroidered with cotton and silk threads, It is crafted by Bedouin women in Matrouh and completed by the women of Siwa.

1 Fatma Mahmoud Mohamed Mahmoud (2014): Ibid ,P268

2 Kafaya Suleiman Ahmed and others (2010): Ibid , P139:140

3 <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2543053.aspx>



**Figure (4) High-collared women's shoe (Matrouh), Museum of Folk Arts in Giza
(Photographed by the researcher)**

There are different types of traditional slippers: some for daily life and others specially designed for brides" These shoes differ in color and in the simplicity or intricacy of their decorations and embroidery, Marriage is considered the most important occasion in a Bedouin woman's life, A mother devotes all her attention to this event to ensure her daughter appears in the most beautiful form, From early childhood, the mother prepares her daughter for marriage, In Siwa Oasis, wedding traditions are unique compared to other oases, The groom offers the bride a dowry that includes several items, among them a high-collared leather shoe embroidered with colorful silk threads"⁽¹⁾

The bride takes special care in decorating her wedding shoes with geometric motifs such as diamonds and triangles that represent the "eye" believed to ward off envy, She embroiders the shoes using silk threads in colors symbolizing the ripening stages of dates red, orange, yellow, green, and blue adding mother-of-pearl buttons and finishing the shoes with a fringe of intricately tied colorful silk tassels, This is illustrated in **Figures (5) and (6)**, These shoes date back to the late 20th and early 21st centuries, with each design differing from the other in its decorative composition, buttons, and tassels.



Figure (5) Bridal shoe, Siwan House Museum, Siwa Oasis⁽²⁾

1 Ashraf Mohamed (1989): "Benefiting from the Attire and Ornamentation of Bedouin Women in the New Valley as an Entry to Enriching Art Education", **Unpublished Master's Thesis**, Faculty of Art Education, Helwan University, P38

2 Bridal shoes from the Siwa Oasis• Egypt. | Bridal shoes• Oasis fashion• Oasis clothing



Figure (6) Women's shoe (Zarabeen), Siwa Oasis⁽¹⁾

Figure (7) shows an identification chart illustrating three traditional women's shoes of different styles, "The first shoe, with a brown-colored upper, is designated for married women, The second, with a beige upper, is for single women, If blue dominates the front of the shoe, it indicates a divorced woman, while widows typically wear shoes with yellow at the front, Blue and red embroidery together signifies a single girl, while blue alone indicates a widow, Predominantly red embroidery represents a married woman, as seen in the third shoe" ⁽²⁾



Figure (7) Identification card with illustrations of three traditional women's shoes (Siwa Oasis), National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Photographed by the researcher)

C- Traditional slippers in the New Valley

"The oasis communities are known for a unique slippers style that reflects their distinct identity and deep-rooted cultural history, Studies have shown that the designs of some oasis slippers are very similar to those found in the governorates of Sharqia and Nubia" ⁽³⁾

Most traditional shoes worn by Bedouin women in the Bahariya Oasis are also similar in shape and design to those worn in rural areas of the Nile Valley, This resemblance is likely due to the close proximity of Bahariya Oasis to the Nile Valley and the frequent interaction between the two.

Most of the slippers from Bahariya shares the same structural features, with only minor differences, However women from the villages of Zabou and

1 <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-marriage-shoes-from-the-siwa-oasis-egypt->

2 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-marriage-shoes-from-the-siwa-oasis-egypt->

3 Kafaya Suleiman Ahmed and others (2010): Ibid, P141

Mandisha still preserve the distinctive oasis character in their slippers to this day, Their traditional slippers is heavily decorated, with elaborate embroidery in multiple colors such as red, green, yellow and violet, These high-collared and heeled shoes are known as zarabeen, and are made from natural brown leather, They are embroidered from front to back with geometric and organic motifs, **as shown in Figure (8)**, Since ancient times, women in the Bahariya Oasis have also worn al-midass al-jildi (leather slippers), also called al-markoub, This is a light, pointed-toe shoe without a heel, made of brown or black cowhide leather, and devoid of any decoration or embroidery, **as shown in Figure (9)** The Bahariya bride traditionally wears white balgha slippers.



Figure (8) Women's shoe (Zarabeen) (Bahariya Oasis and Mandisha), National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Photographed by the researcher)



Figure (9) Markoub (slipper) worn by women in Dakhla, Farafra, and Bahariya oases⁽¹⁾

In Farafra Oasis, women wear the markoub a type of shoe similar to that worn by brides, except that it is black in color and resembles the markoub of Bahariya Oasis, Before use, it must be soaked in olive oil to soften the leather and darken its color, These shoes are typically purchased from Dakhla Oasis, In earlier times, Bedouin women in Farafra used to wear shoes woven from palm fiber, as they were practical for moving easily between farms and gardens.

"Dakhla Oasis became renowned for the production of markoub shoes, It served as a center for leather tanning, supplying southern oases and Bahariya with tanned hides, The tanning process was traditionally carried out by some of the oldest markoub makers in the village of Balat in Dakhla, They would begin by applying quicklime to the animal hide after skinning to remove the hair, The hide would then be washed and rubbed with fine sand, beaten with a wooden

¹ Ashraf Mohamed (1989): Ibid, P288

block, stretched, and sprinkled with salt to dry, After drying, the surface would be coated with oil to soften it and make it pliable for shoemaking, The shoe would then be inverted, its edges sewn, and a piece of leather placed over the stitched areas, Finally, the shoe would be fitted into a wooden mold to stretch and shape it for use, and coated again with oil to maintain its softness"⁽¹⁾

Dakhla also produced markoubs without collars or heels, made from dark gray cowhide leather and without any decoration, These shoes have pointed toes to make walking easier on thorny or brush-covered terrain, Most women in the oasis wear them in black, while brides wear a deep red version, These shoes are also undecorated, **as shown in Figure (10).**



Figure (10) Bridal Markoub slipper, 20th century (Dakhla Oasis), Geographical Society Museum (Photographed by the researcher)

In Kharga Oasis, traditional slippers is called kandarah, and it takes the same forms as the shoes in Dakhla, Some elderly women in Kharga still prefer wearing them over modern slippers.

E- Traditional slippers in Nubia

"Nubian clothing and its accessories, especially slippers, are known for their authenticity and their role in preserving Egyptian cultural identity throughout the ages, The Nubian people are distinguished by their traditional slippers, which reflects their civilization, customs, traditions, and the environmental and climatic conditions in which they have lived, This slippers remained prevalent until the beginning of the 21st century and is called darkoh in the Nubian language"⁽²⁾

Nubians wear markoub shoes daily men and women alike as they go about their daily tasks, These are crafted with skill and precision, often more finely than the shoes of the oases, The markoub is made from goatskin in several colors, including yellow, red, orange, and brown, and is free of any decoration or embroidery, It is stitched by piercing holes into the sole through which threads or leather strips are passed, The front of the markoub curves upward, This type of shoe resembles those worn in the New Valley, **as shown in Figure (11)**, Men's and women's markoubs are similar in shape but differ in color: men usually prefer a brownish orange shade, while a Nubian bride traditionally wears a red markoub at her wedding.

1 Ashraf Mohamed (1989): Ibid, **P287**

² <https://islamic-forums.com/2020/11/18/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8>



Figure (11) Nubian slipper (Darkoh), 20th century, Museum of Folk Arts (Photographed by the researcher)

It is observed that Nubian slippers is relatively limited and simple in terms of decorative elements compared to those found in Egypt's desert regions, This may be due to certain biogeographical influences, Additionally, the traditional women's garment in Nubia is the jargār, a long, flowing dress that covers the entire body and extends to the feet in the front while trailing on the ground at the back, As a result, Nubian women typically paid little attention to the decorative aspects of their slippers, as it remained hidden beneath the jargār, Moreover, due to Nubia's extremely hot climate, Nubian women avoided using heat-absorbing colors in their shoes⁽¹⁾

• **General Characteristics of Traditional Women's slippers in Desert Regions**

- 1- The slippers exhibits bilateral symmetry, with the right and left sides featuring matching decorations.
- 2- Motifs are arranged in a way that maximizes the visual coverage of the shoe, using repetition and contrasting embroidery colors.
- 3- Silk threads are predominantly used across all types of embroidery.
- 4- Mother-of-pearl buttons are frequently incorporated, as this material is naturally available in desert environments.
- 5- Footwear from the oases and Nubia is characterized by simplicity in both form and appearance.

F- Traditional Women's slippers in the Central Delta (Sharqia and Gharbia Governorates)

Since ancient times, women in the 'Arab Sharqia region have worn the midass al-jildi a light, simple, flat shoe made from cowhide leather, in its natural color or dyed brown or black, These shoes are devoid of any decoration or embroidery, as shown in Figure 12, This type of slippers resembles some of the traditional shoes of the oases and Nubia in both simplicity and lack of adornment, However, brides paid particular attention to decorating and embroidering their shoes, as shown in Figure (13)⁽²⁾

1 Kafaya Suleiman Ahmed and others (2010): Ibid, P126

2 Kafaya Suleiman Ahmed and others (2010): Ibid, P119

The variation in whether traditional slippers is decorated or plain may be attributed to several factors, For example, traditional attire in Sharqia is generally modest in terms of ornamentation, which is reflected in its accessories, including slippers, Additionally, the limited attention given to slippers may stem from differing tastes and the varying social and economic conditions in the region.



Figure (12) Leather slipper, 20th century ('Arab Sharqia), Museum of Folk Arts (Photographed by the researcher)

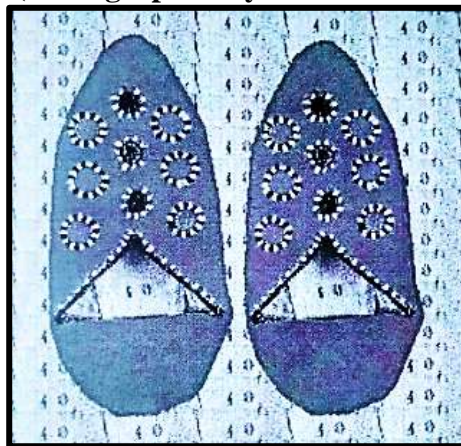


Figure (13) Heeled bridal slipper (Arab Sharqia)⁽¹⁾

"The artisan who makes balgha and khuff shoes is known as a bulghati, He works at a round table elevated about half a meter off the ground, The bulghati uses two curved needles simultaneously to attach the leather upper of the balgha to the sole, The balgha is made from buffalo leather, and the bulghati begins by piercing both the leather and the sole with an awl, He then inserts the two needles into the same hole one from the right and the other from the left before pulling both threads tight using his fingers"⁽²⁾

"Traditional women's slippers in Gharbia is similar in shape and material to that of Sharqia, Nubia, and the oases, However, the bridal shoe worn in Al-Aaysha Village in Gharbia differs from those found in other governorates, Among the bridal instructions to her mother is the request for a shoe with a

1 Kafaya Suleiman Ahmed and others (2010): Ibid, P195

2 https://fakosbalady.blogspot.com/2015/11/blog-post_76.html#

buckle, Therefore, the shoe is often decorated on one side with a buckle, a flower, or what they refer to as a loza (almond-shaped ornament), Other types include simple leather sandals and slippers"⁽¹⁾

• Description of Traditional Women's slippers (Zarabeen) in Egyptian Folk Heritage

The researcher provides descriptions of selected types of traditional women's slippers from Egyptian folk heritage, based on research and field visits to various museums, including the Siwan House Museum in Siwa, the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, and the Museum of Folk Arts in Giza.

(Item No, 1)



Figure (14) Women's shoe (Zarabeen) (Matrouh), Museum of Folk Arts (Photographed by the researcher) + Diagram showing the motifs on the shoe's surface

- **Type:** Women's high-collared and heeled shoe.
- **Source:** Museum of Folk Arts, Giza.
- **Dimensions:** Length: 25 cm, Width: 8 cm, Height: 28 cm.
- **Materials:** Cowhide leather, suede, silk threads, metallic braid, and cotton.
- **Techniques:** Embroidery (satin stitch, tassel technique).

Description:

A pair of high-collared women's shoes known as zarabeen, a term commonly used for this type of slippers in desert regions, These shoes date back to the late 20th and early 21st centuries, They are made entirely of thick cowhide leather in its natural color, suitable for the harsh desert environment where thinner leather

1 Thuraya Ibrahim Ali (1988): "The Bride: Her Adornment and Beautification in Folk Arts (Applied Study on the Village of Al-Avesha, Gharbia Governorate, Egypt)", 1st ed., Madbouly Library , P29.

would be impractical, The shoe consists of three parts: the front, the back, and the collar all joined together using machine stitching.

(Item No, 2)



Figure (15) Bridal shoe, Siwan House Museum, Siwa Oasis⁽¹⁾+Diagram showing the motifs on the shoe's surface

- **Type:** Women's Shoe (Bridal Shoe).
- **Source:** Siwan House Museum, Siwa.
- **Dimensions:** Length: 25 cm, Width: 8 cm.
- **Materials:** Soft leather, silk and cotton threads, mother-of-pearl buttons, beads.
- **Techniques:** Leather embellishment (using threads, mother-of-pearl buttons, and shells).

Description:

A pair of women's shoes (bridal shoe) known as zarabeen a common term for this type of slippers in desert regions, These shoes were crafted in Siwa Oasis between the late 20th and early 21st centuries, specifically for the bride to wear during her henna night and wedding ceremony, setting her apart from other women in the family, This type of shoe stands out from those of earlier periods due to its refined craftsmanship and the precision of its decorative elements, It is made entirely from thick red soft leather.

¹ Visit Siwa Oasis | Facebook.

(Item No, 3)



Figure (16) Women's shoe (Zarabeen), Siwa Oasis, Museum of Folk Arts (Photographed by the researcher)+ Diagram showing the motifs on the shoe's surface

- **Type:** Women's Shoe (Zarabeen).
- **Source:** Museum of Folk Arts, Giza.
- **Dimensions:** Length: 25 cm, Width: 8 cm.
- **Materials:** Natural leather, silk and cotton threads.
- **Techniques:** Leather embroidery (satin stitch, tassel technique).

Description:

A pair of women's shoes known as zarabeena common term used in desert regions for this type of slippers, These shoes were crafted in Siwa Oasis between the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Siwa is still known for producing this type of embroidered shoe with the same decorative motifs, though now in significantly smaller quantities and typically made to order, This particular type stands out from older styles due to its skilled craftsmanship and refined embroidery, The shoes are made entirely from thick, shiny red soft leather.

(Item No, 4)



Figure (17) Women's shoe (Bahariya Oasis, Zabou and Mandisha), National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Photographed by the researcher)+ Diagram showing the motifs on the shoe's surface

- **Type:** Women's Shoe.
- **Source:** National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Textile Hall).
- **Dimensions:** Length: 25 cm, Width: 8 cm, Height: 20 cm.
- **Techniques:** Embroidery (satin stitch, tassel technique).
- **Materials:** Cowhide leather, suede, silk threads, metallic braid, cotton.

Description:

A pair of short-collared women's shoe with heels, known as zarabeen a popular term for this type of slippers in desert regions, These shoes were made in the Bahariya Oasis, specifically by Bedouin women from the villages of Zabou and Mandisha, during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, This type stands out from earlier slippers due to its skillful craftsmanship and intricate decorations, It also differs from other zarabeen in that it is made entirely from thick, textured cowhide leather.

(Item No, 5)

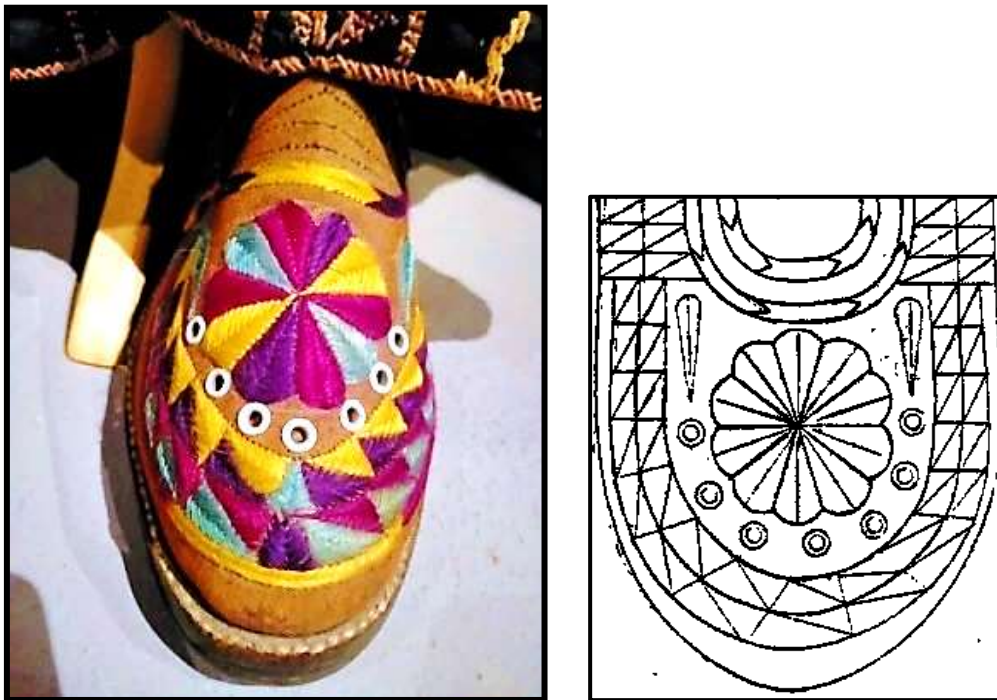


Figure 22: Women's shoe (Bahariya Oasis, Zabou and Mandisha), National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Photographed by the researcher)+ Diagram showing the motifs on the shoe's surface

- **Type:** Women's Shoe.
- **Source:** National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Textile Hall).
- **Dimensions:** Length: 25 cm, Width: 8 cm, Height: 20 cm.
- **Materials:** Cowhide leather, suede, silk threads, metallic braid, cotton.
- **Techniques:** Leather embroidery (satin stitch, tassel technique).

Description:

A pair of short-collared women's shoe with heels, known as zarabeena familiar term for this style of slippers in desert regions, These shoes were crafted in the Bahariya Oasis by Bedouin women from the villages of Zabou and Mandisha, during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, This design is notable for its refined construction and intricate decorations, It also differs from other types of zarabeen in that it is made entirely from thick, textured cowhide leather.

• Materials Used in Traditional Women's slippers:

There is a wide variety of materials used in traditional women's slippers. Basic materials such as natural leather and wood are commonly relied upon by craftsmen. These are combined with other materials used to complete the decorative and ornamental aspects of the slippers in a harmonious and cohesive manner, such as various types of threads, shells, and sea snails.

• **Motifs Used on Traditional Women's slippers:**

Folk art has its own materials, tools, and symbolic elements. The folk artist uses symbols as simple decorative units, reinterpreting them into forms that carry aesthetic and artistic value. These symbols act as a language through which the artist interacts with their surrounding environment in an intuitive and spontaneous way, expressing their feelings and environmental influences through various simple visual forms.

Motifs are considered the fundamental basis for constructing any artistic craft. Our Folklore emphasizes the importance of these units, which are passed down through generations. The need to decorate these crafts is instinctive. Thus, decorating traditional women's slippers has been of great interest due to its ideological significance in folk heritage.

Traditional women's slippers is rich and diverse in its decorative elements. These decorations are characterized by movement, rhythm, and harmony. Geometric and floral decorations dominate, along with the use of various types of lines. Naturally, these decorations differ from one region to another, depending on the beliefs and customs of each area. The origins of these units are deeply rooted in cultural accumulation throughout history. Some types of traditional slippers trace back to Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, and Coptic periods, while others are linked to Islamic heritage, such as wooden clogs. This shows that traditional costumes do not disappear with each era but rather undergo decorative modifications while retaining their character.

The decorations on traditional slippers convey symbolic meanings hidden within geometric or floral motifs, characterized by distinct folk colors. Undoubtedly, decorations in Bedouin communities are closely linked to the desert environment. Bedouin women play a major role in spontaneously creating these traditional decorations, which are typically inherited from mothers and grandmothers.

The decoration of wooden clogs, in particular, follows a balanced composition with a geometric ornamental nature, representative of Islamic art. The decorations on traditional slippers follow a system of repetition and symmetry of decorative units, which include both geometric and floral motifs.

Findings

- 1- The decorations of traditional women's slippers show notable diversity, ranging from floral to geometric motifs. It is also evident that these shoes do not include any inscriptions, due to their function and nature.
- 2- Traditional women's slippers is unique in its form, design, and ornamentation, distinguishing it from the slippers of ancient civilizations. This uniqueness stems from the materials, techniques, and decorations being drawn from and inspired by the environment in which the slippers originated.

- 3- Folk women relied on a specific color palette for decorating their shoes namely, the colors representing the ripening stages of dates (green, yellow, orange, red),
- 4- Embroidery is the dominant technique used in decorating traditional women's slippers, as it was also prevalent in their clothing and widely practiced in desert regions.
- 5- The aesthetic value of traditional women's slippers is achieved through the skillful selection of materials, harmonious construction techniques, and ornamentation that reflects Egyptian folk heritage.
- 6- The field of art crafts can be enriched by drawing inspiration from traditional women's slippers in Egyptian folk heritage.
- 7- This opens up opportunities for researchers in the field of art crafts to conduct in-depth studies of our folk heritage, providing ongoing, original, and creative inspiration for the field.

Recommendations

- 1- The researcher recommends visits to heritage museums that showcase various forms of tangible heritage, in order to observe, explore, and better understand them and to promote awareness of their value.
- 2- Researchers are encouraged to study and delve deeper into Egyptian Folklore to benefit from its artistic and design features and to reinforce Egyptian identity.

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