

BABBAR RUG: CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE SERVICE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Picture 1 Babbar Nemamcha Rug (Dragga) Taken by Researchers in Babbar (22/03/2022)

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Abstract: The Babbar Rug is a cherished cultural heritage of the Babbar region in Khenchela province, in Algeria, embodying a unique blend of tradition and sustainable development. This study stems from ten months of fieldwork conducted as part of a local association's ambitious project, supported by the European Union's CapDel program, which aims to strengthen the capacities of local development actors. This article examines the historical significance, cultural symbolism, and economic relevance of the Babbar rug. Deeply rooted in the region's nomadic history, the rug serves as a vital expression of the identity of the Chaoui people. Woven primarily by women, it incorporates symbols of fertility, protection, and strength, reflecting a practical craft that has been handed down through generations. Women play a pivotal role in preserving this tradition, using weaving as both a source of income and a means of transmitting cultural values. Despite its cultural importance, the Babbar rug faces threats from globalization and competition with inexpensive, mass-produced alternatives. However, opportunities to safeguard this heritage are emerging through initiatives such as cultural tourism, fair trade practices, and education programs aimed at engaging younger generations. Furthermore, leveraging modern technology—such as online marketing and eco-friendly production techniques—presents new pathways to promote and sustain this craft. This study underscores the Babbar rug's dual role in cultural preservation and economic development, linking it to the global Sustainable Development Goals. Safeguarding the Babbar rug requires a delicate balance between respecting traditional techniques and embracing innovation, ensuring this significant cultural heritage remains a vibrant and enduring symbol of the region's identity for future generations.

Keywords: Babar; crafts; development; heritage; rug.

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1. Introduction

Uncovering the past, delving into its depths, and conducting thorough research are essential steps in restoring respect for the cultural heritage of any nation. In the case of the Babbar region, exploring the collective memory of its inhabitants can help preserve a vital element of their cultural legacy: the unique tradition of the Nemamsha, or Babbar rug. This traditional craft, renowned for its intricate weaving techniques, has been enriched and embellished over generations, earning its place as one of the region's most significant applied arts. The continuity and preservation of this tradition have largely been driven by the contributions of Chaouia women, tracing back to ancient times.

According to local perspectives, the origins of this craft are deeply intertwined with the nomadic lifestyle of the region's early inhabitants. The transient nature of nomadic life necessitated minimizing material burdens, prompting the use of wool from livestock as a practical solution for insulation and protection against harsh climatic conditions. Wool, being both abundant and essential for warmth, was sheared and adapted to meet various daily needs. Among these adaptations, the Babbar rug emerged as a unique blend of utility and artistry. Its textile processes closely imitated the natural forms of animal hides (*hedorah*), reflecting a profound interaction with the environment. Much like cattle hides, the rug served a dual purpose: providing protection from the elements and functioning as bedding for human use. (Golvin, 1956, p. 34)

Over time, the precision and craftsmanship invested in this art have evolved to such a degree that the Babbar rug now serves as a testament to its rich historical development, embodying the cultural narratives of successive generations. Informants have drawn parallels between the Babbar rug and Roman mosaics, noting that in antiquity, wealthy travelers encountered similarly intricate designs adorning temple walls, palace floors, and private residences. Captivated by the aesthetic beauty of these human-made creations, these travelers likened the artistry of the Babbar rug to the meticulous craftsmanship of Roman mosaics. The enduring contributions of Chaoui women, through their skilled knitting and weaving, have ensured the survival and transmission of this tradition across generations. However, contemporary observations reveal a growing disconnect between this cultural heritage and the modern world, as advancements in technology and societal changes have disrupted traditional practices (Babbar web, 2024).

This analysis prompts us to consider the following critical questions:

1. What role do traditional textile crafts, such as Babbar rugs, play in preserving cultural heritage?
2. What are the motivations and factors that drive residents of the Babbar region to uphold this craft?
3. What symbolic meanings are embodied in the Babbar rug?

2. The Art of Weaving: Exploring its History and Significance in Babbar

2.1. Weaving as a Historical Milestone

The history of weaving and rug-making dates back thousands of years, fulfilling a wide range of purposes in human life. Rugs have been utilized by kings, princes, and common folk alike—as furnishings in tents, decorations for horses, and even as coverings (زكار، 2000، صفحة 18). Throughout history, rulers and emperors took great pride in acquiring rugs to embellish their palaces. While weaving is an ancient craft, its origins are believed to trace back to around 500 BCE. This is supported by the discovery of the Pazyryk rug in the Altai Mountains of West Turkestan, now preserved in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.



Picture 2: Babbar Rug (Dragga) Taken by Researchers in Babbar (22/03/2022)

Weaving as a prominent craft did not achieve widespread recognition until the 11th century CE, when the Seljuks took control of Iran and Asia Minor in 1037. (القطار، 2018، صفحة 188). The craft reached its peak during the 16th and 17th centuries under the Safavid dynasty, particularly during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great (1587–1629), but later declined during the Afghan occupation of Iran in 1722. A revival of weaving occurred in the 19th century. In Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), and as attested by the inhabitants of the Babbar region in Algeria, weaving has long been shaped by historical shifts, with a widespread acknowledgment of the superiority of Iranian Persian rugs. Ibn Khaldun (1406), in his *Muqaddimah*, notes that around 800 CE (179 AH), a tribute agreement was made between the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid and Ibrahim ibn al-Aghlab, which included the delivery of 13 million dirhams and 120 rugs from the region. These rugs gained fame across Iraq, the Levant, and the Hijaz (الزيداني، 2005، صفحة 132).

2.2. Traditional Crafts and their Historical Significance

Vivien (2017) describes traditional crafts as deeply rooted in history, reflecting the distant past and serving as a testament to ancient ways of life. Craftsmanship has been an integral part of human existence since its earliest days, beginning with the use of simple tools (خليفي و لعلاوي، 2021، صفحة 1029). The Aurès region, renowned for its enduring textile traditions, holds a prominent place in Algeria's cultural heritage. Its traditional industries, particularly weaving, have been preserved and passed down through countless generations, showcasing the profound skill and knowledge embedded in this craft.

The weaving process begins with yarn spun from materials such as wool, linen, and cotton, which are woven lengthwise and interlaced widthwise to create a strong, durable fabric suitable for various applications. Some fabrics are woven for warmth, such as woolen coverings, while others are used to produce garments made from cotton or linen. Another branch of the textile industry focuses on creating fabrics of different shapes and textures, which are cut into pieces tailored for specific uses. These pieces are then sewn together using tight stitching, resulting in finished products that may be joined or spliced, depending on their intended purpose (atnzab.net, 2006).

2.3. Cultural and Religious Contexts of Weaving

In urban environments, the production of woven garments evolved into a refined art, while Bedouins relied on simpler, non-stitched clothing. The art of sewing and tailoring garments is often regarded as a hallmark of civilization. This cultural significance also explains the prohibition of stitched clothing during the pilgrimage (Hajj), where the sacred journey requires abandoning worldly luxuries and returning to God in a pure, unadorned state. Pilgrims renounce all material comforts, including perfumes, women, and stitched garments, as a symbolic act of detachment from the fleeting pleasures of life. In this state of purity, the pilgrim approaches God like a newborn—cleansed of sins and worldly attachments. Ibn Khaldun (1406) eloquently reflects on the spiritual significance of this practice, emphasizing the kindness and mercy of God toward His servants (ابن خلدون، 1988، صفحة 516)

The art of weaving and the craft of tambourine-making are ancient traditions, with origins deeply rooted in early human civilization. While weaving played a vital role in urban societies, particularly in regions with temperate climates, areas with extreme heat, such as Sudan, relied less on clothing for daily life. The antiquity of these crafts is often linked to the Prophet Idris (Enoch), who is also identified by some as Hermes. Ibn Khaldun (1406) highlights the connection between weaving and the legacy of the prophets, emphasizing the sacred and divine significance of these ancient practices.

This study is among the few that focus on the Al-Namushia rug of Babar, a significant yet understudied aspect of traditional crafts (معط الله، 2010، صفحة 34). The scarcity of written documentation on this subject can be attributed to its origins among the nomadic Bedouin tribes, whose challenging and transient lifestyle left little time or opportunity to record their traditions in writing (بن عرفة، بوطوقة، و سالمى، دليل زربية بابار، 2022، صفحة 22). Consequently, the secrets of rug-making and weaving were preserved and passed down orally from one generation to the next (مرزوق، 1997، صفحة 121)

Historically, the Algerian Berber house, known as *Taddart* in the Chaoui language of the region's inhabitants, was traditionally constructed from cattle hair and wool. This type of dwelling was referred to as *axxam*, meaning "house" in the North African context, derived from the verb *qim/sim*, which translates to "stay" or "reside." In contrast, the word "tent" in these regions was expressed as *qaytoun*, with the term *agittun* originating from the dialectal root *gittun* (Haddadou, 2015, p. 111).

The craft of weaving is a highly revered tradition, carried out with meticulous care and precision. According to Haddadou (2015), weaving in Algerian society is predominantly a winter activity. After fulfilling their familial and communal responsibilities, women would return to the loom, dedicating long winter nights to weaving. This seasonal focus likely arises from the necessity of completing the work within a specific timeframe, whether for personal use or to sell and address economic needs.



Picture 3 :Hand Spinning Wool Process Taken by Researchers in Babbar (22/03/2022)

3. Weaving in the Popular Belief of the Aurès Population

As humans are shaped by a complex interplay of innate, psychological, historical, and social influences, studying popular and religious beliefs is a vital component of academic inquiries into folk culture. This section focuses on the interaction between these influences and the craft of weaving in the Aurès region. In this context, the human body is inseparable from the space it occupies, a space imbued with symbolic meaning, behavior, and creativity. Weaving, as an expression of human creativity, originates in a geographically confined area yet holds significance within the broader spectrum of global human culture. As Max Weber aptly remarked, “you must be Caesar to talk about Caesar” (الزاهي، (الزاهي، 2005، صفحة 6) (الزاهي، (الزاهي، 2005، صفحة 6) underscoring that authentic understanding of a practice requires direct experience or profound knowledge.



Picture 4 : Traditional Weaving Loom Taken by Researchers in Babbar (22/03/2022)

4. Beliefs About Weaving and the Warp (*Mathia*)

Weaving is deeply embedded in the cultural identity of the Chaoui household. According to Gaudry (1932), the loom and fabric are not merely practical tools but are also imbued with profound reverence. In popular belief, the warp (*Mathia*) and the act of weaving are perceived as vulnerable to the evil eye, prompting the use of various rituals and practices to protect the weaver and her craft from misfortune (Gaudry, 1985, p. 169). The warp is regarded almost as a guest, deserving of care and safeguarding from harm, and the entire weaving process is accompanied by spiritual protections.

To ward off bad luck and harm, rituals are performed even before the first thread is woven. The warp is typically prepared in a secluded room, hidden from public view, to protect the fabric from negative influences. Additionally, the loom is set up on auspicious days—Mondays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Fridays are considered the most favorable. It is also preferred to begin the weaving process during a full moon, as this timing is believed to safeguard the family from misfortune (Crane, 2024).

The *Reggam*, or weaver, employs several protective practices to safeguard the loom. For instance, salt is sprinkled into the corners of the room where the loom is located, as it is believed to repel negative energy and harmful spirits. While performing this ritual, the weaver recites protective phrases, such as, “The evil eye does not prevail in a needle that contains salt or worms,” to strengthen the protective aura surrounding the weaving process. Additionally, talismans may be placed on the loom, purportedly to bless the work and ensure that no harm comes to the fabric (سالمي، 2022).

Food-related rituals also play a significant role in the weaving process. The traditional dish *tamina* is prepared, with a portion scattered around the base of the loom before anyone partakes of the meal. This act is believed to invoke divine blessings on the weaving process and ensure its swift completion. Afterward, the dish is shared with relatives and neighbors, symbolizing communal prosperity and collective protection (مديرية السياحة والصناعة التقليدية تبسة، 2024).



Picture 5: The Process of Weaving, Stitching and Knotting Wool Taken by Researchers in Babbar (22/03/2022)

The weaving process is highly labor-intensive, often taking anywhere from two to seven months to complete, depending on the complexity of the design and the weaver's familial obligations. Due to the significant time and effort involved, certain precautions are observed when the weaver steps away from the loom. For example, a dried red pepper is placed at the center of the loom to ward off the evil eye and cleanse the space of envy or negative energy. The pepper is believed to possess powerful protective energy, and upon returning to her work, the weaver draws renewed strength from this symbolic safeguard, approaching her task with determination, as if inspired by the pepper's fiery essence (سالمي, 2022).

This intricate connection between weaving and popular beliefs in the Aurès region highlights the profound cultural and spiritual significance of the craft, where weaving is not merely a material endeavor but a practice deeply rooted in ritual, community, and protection from unseen forces (Barry, 1988, p. 253).

5. Feminine Spaces and Behavioral Upbringing

From a traditional perspective, the workspace within the home is regarded as a distinctly feminine domain and a sacred duty that women are expected to fulfill. This role is seen as a natural assignment to women, who are responsible for managing the household and engaging in textile crafts. Since the textile industry carries educational significance, women are tasked with training their daughters in this field. The first step in this training involves teaching them to care for the home and maintain its cleanliness, as it is believed that a house only "shines" in the presence of its owner—the woman. Girls are taught to manage household responsibilities, fostering a sense of duty and a love for work. This focus on domestic skills stems partly from the absence of leisure time in their daily routines and partly from the need to prepare them for other essential tasks, such as bread-making and cooking (السباعي, 2011, صفحة 197).

5.1. Culinary Skills and Household Responsibility

One of the foundational tasks for young girls is learning to prepare bread, such as *kasrah*, a daily yeast-based flatbread, or *rakshas* (also known as *tarkhasis*), often served with soup in the Babbar region. Alongside mastering these culinary skills, girls are taught to cook a variety of dishes, ensuring they grow into competent and distinguished housewives. These skills are viewed as essential steps toward mastering traditional crafts, particularly in the textile industry. This training not only prepares girls for adulthood by fostering responsibility at an early age but also enhances their desirability as marriage prospects. In contrast, urban girls may engage in different hobbies or activities, but for rural girls, proficiency in traditional crafts is key to their social value. Sociologist Homans (1989), in his behavioral interpretation of economics, observes that humans reward each other for valuable contributions and that individuals learn to replicate behaviors that are recognized and rewarded (بوحسون, 2018, صفحة 150).



Picture 6: Various Wool Forming and Production Processes Taken by Researchers in Babbar (18/1/2022)

5.2. Symbolic Exchange in Behavioral Upbringing

This highlights that the process of upbringing in this context involves both material and symbolic exchange. Drawing on Bourdieu's (2002) theory of symbolic exchange, individuals and groups participate in a dynamic of give-and-take, where symbolic value is derived from social relations. In his work *Exchange and Society Before and After Mauss*, Bourdieu (2002) argues that the cumulative symbols generated through these interactions represent the broader benefits gained from social relationships.

This reveals that the process of upbringing in this context entails both material and symbolic exchanges. According to Bourdieu's (2002) theory of symbolic exchange, individuals and groups engage in a dynamic of mutual interaction, where symbolic value emerges from social relationships. In his work *Exchange and Society Before and After Mauss*, Bourdieu (2002) asserts that the cumulative symbols derived from these exchanges signify the broader benefits attained through social connections.

It becomes evident that the process of upbringing in this context involves both material and symbolic exchanges. Drawing on Bourdieu's (2002) theory of symbolic exchange, individuals and groups participate in a reciprocal dynamic, where symbolic value arises from social interactions. In his work *Exchange and Society Before and After Mauss*, Bourdieu (2002) posits that the symbolic capital accumulated through these exchanges embodies the broader benefits derived from social relationships.

In this traditional context, women assign household responsibilities to their daughters, offering in return a symbolic benefit: the skill of weaving, which is closely tied to a woman's honor and social standing. In Babar, the craft of weaving holds profound cultural significance, representing not only a woman's practical abilities but also her purity, chastity, and intelligence. The Babbar rug itself becomes a symbol of these virtues, celebrated as a valuable cultural artifact that embodies the unique identity of the free Chaoui woman. Through the sale of these prized rugs, the craft draws attention to the Babbar and Khenchela regions, further enhancing their cultural and economic prominence.

This profound connection between weaving, household responsibilities, and social upbringing demonstrates that traditional crafts are not merely practical skills but also bear

significant cultural and symbolic value, shaping the roles and identities of women within their communities. (السباعي، 2011، صفحة 194).

6. Weaving Between Folklore and Sustainable Development

Proverbs and folk tales offer a rich tapestry of narratives that celebrate the craft of weaving and traditional crafts more broadly. These stories highlight the esteemed status of weaving within the cultural heritage of the region and underscore its importance in the community's educational framework. Below, we explore some notable examples:

6.1. Proverbs and Songs

Among the proverbs associated with traditional crafts, particularly weaving, one symbolically ties wool to both a profession and a pastime for women: *“The wool after the birth, and the woman after the birth”* (kaddouche, 2021)

This proverb reflects the strength of the local value system and society's commitment to it, as well as the clearly defined roles and tasks women are expected to master in this region. A woman is required to learn the craft of weaving in all its stages, from shearing and washing the wool to the actual weaving process. The deeper meaning of the proverb lies in the parallel between wool undergoing various preparatory processes and a girl passing through the stages of life. These stages include mastering domestic responsibilities, such as washing clothes by rivers or water sources—an arduous task that fosters endurance and resilience. This preparation equips a girl to shoulder the burdens of her family and household, ultimately making her a representative of the Babbar region and the Aurès as a whole. Similarly, the saying *“A woman after giving birth”* implies that a woman is not considered complete until she fulfills her natural role of motherhood, as childbirth is seen as teaching life's challenges and the responsibility of nurturing others. (بن عرفة و سالمى ، زربية بابار هوية ثقافية ومحرك للتنمية المحلية، 2022، صفحة 31)

A traditional song sung by women while weaving beautifully underscores this theme.

*“Oh mother of the rug, teach her hands,
And give me the screen, and I see him crying over me”.*

Our informant (S.J.), a 72-year-old from the lineage of Belkacem bin Ali in Babar, reflects that women were created to endure life's challenges and hardships. According to her, God designed women to be wives, workers, warriors, protectors of honor, and caretakers of children. Chaouia women, particularly those from Babar, are described as “the daughters of men and the sisters of men”, capable of bearing great responsibilities and excelling in the craft of weaving—a skill they believe endures even after the loss of their parents.

A well-known proverb encapsulates the complexities of the weaving profession: *“The Ahwad of the Knowing Ones are the Ahwad... of Khalala and the Naghadah, cutting off my wishes”.*

According to craftswoman Kh. Qadoush, weaving is both one of the most challenging and most rewarding crafts. She explains that a woman cannot easily abandon it. If she steps away from weaving for a while, she risks being overwhelmed by idle time. However, if she weaves consistently, her household responsibilities may suffer. Thus, weaving is a craft that is both sweet and bitter, balancing beauty with difficulty.

Another informant (Q.Y.), an 80-year-old from the lineage of Belkacem Ben Ali in Babar, shares a critical perspective on weaving. She explains that in popular culture, women who neglect weaving are often the subject of mockery, with social criticism frequently

stemming from within the family, particularly from mothers-in-law. A verse commonly sung to such women is:

*“O Lamshouma, O Raqqada, your wool is felt under the pillow and sleep; oh rest,
I swear to God; I am not lying in my stomach with a child; grow up and get the camel.
My work is light”.*

Mrs. Khadra, a 54-year-old resident of Babar, shares her perspective, stating:

“If you don’t sacrifice or have dinner, how can you step down?”

This saying conveys the idea that the weaver should make the most of her free time, particularly after her husband departs for work, by dedicating the afternoon to working on the warp. The evening, considered ideal for weaving, provides her with the opportunity to balance the demands of her craft alongside her household responsibilities (Gaudry, 1985, p. 169).

Regarding the importance of lightness and diligence in work, informant T.Z., a 62-year-old from the lineage of Si Thabet, highlights the values of “lightness and cleverness” in weaving. She likens the effort required in weaving to the endurance needed for fasting or the preparation for a raid, emphasizing its collective nature. Weaving is often carried out collaboratively by women in the village or neighborhood through a practice known as *tawiza*. This teamwork is compared to an army waging a battle, where strength, energy, and cooperation are essential for success.

A song from the time of the Algerian Revolution highlights the role of weaving in supporting the freedom fighters:

*“Buy me the wool, and we will do the work of the barn and protect my soldiers.
Gunpowder, Sahan Sahan, speaks at the top of the mountain without smoke”.*

This verse, sung by women during the Algerian Revolution, symbolized their psychological and social support for the *mujahideen*. The weaver would send her husband to purchase wool and begin crafting garments, such as the *Kashabiya*, to shield the fighters from the cold, thereby actively contributing to the war effort for Algeria’s liberation.

Another song from the Aurès, sung by a mother to her son during his father’s absence for *jihad*, carries a message of reassurance:

Sosem Ola Mimi... Sosem Ola Mimi

Elegant, your father... Your father, I will go and come to you.

Elegant, high-quality, with a barbash... Your father, I will go to the throne.

Elegant, Alawo, Dhu Qashabi... Your father, I go, meaning Al-Ghawabi.”

Pride in cultural identity is also expressed in folk songs. Women would sing:

“Furniture for a bed and increase the rug.

Oh, my dearest boy, the engraving of the rug that is dear to me...

He furnishes my beloved and pleases me”.

Informants confirm that the Babbar rug, a symbol of hospitality, is exclusively laid out for esteemed and respected guests. Due to its high cost and cultural significance, the rug is reserved for special occasions, reflecting the region’s deep sense of honor and generosity (بن عرفة و سالمى ، زربية بابار هوية ثقافية ومحرك للتنمية المحلية، 2022).

6.2. Puzzles

Puzzles hold a significant place in the lives of weavers, serving as both educational and entertaining tools. During the weaving process, women would often pose these puzzles to their daughters and one another to pass the time and alleviate the monotony. Some of the most common weaving-related puzzles include:

- Puzzle 1: *“A camel lying in a valley and two lambs interrupting its hope. Give him a meal, and give him dinner”.*

Answer: *The comb, or khalala, which separates the textile threads and connects the rows of fabric.*

- Puzzle 2: *“he palm of the hand contains a hundred and a thousand”.*

Answer: *The khalala, which is used to weave thousands of knots in the rug.*

- Puzzle 3: *“Give him a morsel of food and divide it into two”.*

Answer: *The qardash, a traditional tool used to separate wool fibers, preparing them for weaving.*

- Puzzle 4: *“On his bed, he was sent to the land of the Romans”.*

Answer: *The decorations and designs on the back of the rug, referencing the ancient Roman monopoly on colored dyes.*

In conclusion, weaving is deeply intertwined with the folklore, traditions, and daily lives of the people of the Aurès region. This craft endures not only due to its practical utility but also because of its profound symbolic and cultural significance, making it an essential component of both heritage preservation and sustainable development (بن عرفة و سالم ، زربية ، بابار هوية ثقافية ومحرك للتنمية المحلية، 2022، صفحة 43).

7. The Symbolic Aspect of Babar’s Rug

When individuals settle in a particular land, they forge a profound connection with their environment, creating unique symbols and expressions that shape their identity and experiences. Over time, these symbols become deeply embedded in their emotional and subconscious worlds, reflecting their relationship with the surrounding landscape. Marcel Mauss, in his theory of symbolism, posits that symbols significantly influence people’s lives, shaped by legal systems, religions, customs, social structures, and modes of thought (بيتيم، 2009، صفحة 100).

Symbols in traditional cultures often originate from natural elements such as stones, caves, water, plants, animals, and celestial bodies. Dermenghem (1971) identifies widely recognized global symbols, including the eye, tree, flower, crescent moon, star, and various geometric shapes. While these symbols are universal, their representation, meanings, and color schemes differ across regions. They range from simple to intricate designs, conveying profound emotional and spiritual messages. As Dermenghem (1954) observes, these symbols serve as channels for the human soul to express itself, granting “freedom to the hand and fingers of the human soul” (p. 135).

In the context of Babar’s Eurasian rugs, many of the symbols and decorations are inspired by the region’s natural environment and psychological expressions. For the textile artisans and craftswomen, these symbols embody their emotions, memories, and life experiences, intricately woven into the fabric of the rugs. Among these motifs, there are remnants of ancient pagan beliefs and deities, notably the goddess Tanit, the Carthaginian goddess of fertility (wikipedia, 2022).

Symbols in Babar's Rug

- **Tanit.** Tanit is represented by symbols such as the palm tree, dove, and fish, all signifying fertility and abundance. She was believed to preside over sowing and harvesting and was invoked during childbirth. Tanit is commonly depicted as a triangle with two horizontal arms extending from its center and a circular point representing her head. In some depictions, an upward hand symbolizes a gift or offering, while an upward scepter represents power. Tanit was worshipped across North Africa from the 5th or 6th centuries BCE until the 3rd century CE (Wikipedia, 2022). These symbols have endured through the centuries and are still incorporated into the traditional fabrics of Babar, alongside other motifs such as stars and spike (wikipedia, 2022).



Picture 7 : The Goddess Tanit, Goddess of Fertility in the Aurès Region. Taken by Researchers (29/03/2022)

- **Pomegranate Seed.** The pomegranate seed motif on Babbar rugs symbolizes fertility, quality, and the resilience of Chaoui women. It reflects their strength and ability to endure harsh conditions, paralleling the challenges of the region itself (بن عرفة، بوطقوفة ، و سالمى، دليل زربية بابار، (صفحة 79)، 2022).



Picture 8 : A Symbol of the Symbols Embroidered on the Rug Taken by Researchers of Pomegranate (29/03/2022)

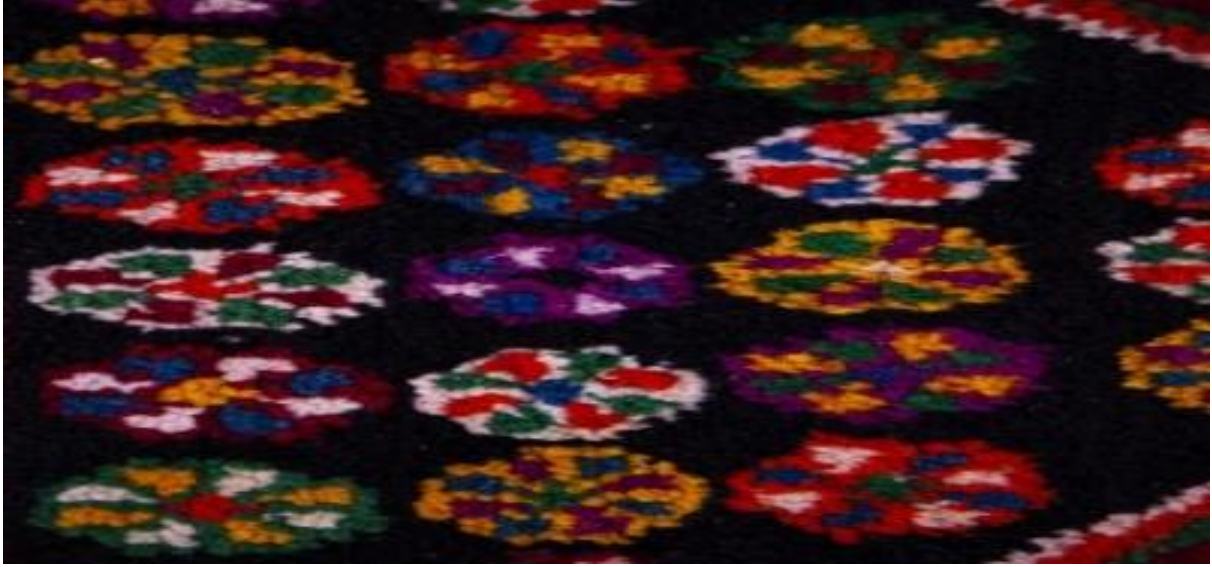
- **Snake and Scorpion.** In Babar's folklore, snakes are regarded as long-living creatures tied to humanity's fall from paradise. The serpent, known for shedding its skin and renewing itself, symbolizes both death and resurrection. It also represents danger and protection, with its depiction in Babar's rugs serving as a warning to those with malicious intentions. Similarly, the scorpion conveys themes of danger and endurance, reflecting the harsh realities of the region and the resilience required to overcome them. These symbols are intricately woven into the rugs, embodying beliefs in survival, perseverance, and longevity (بن عرفة، بوطقوة، و سالمي، دليل زربية بابار، 2022، صفحة 88).



Picture 9: Scorpion and Ostrich Neck Symbol Taken by Researchers (29/03/2022)

The mythological elements in these symbols reflect linguist De Saussure's (1913) observation about the repetitive nature of rituals in popular culture. He argues that people tend to repeat certain symbols and rituals as a means of reliving time, even though time itself cannot be recreated. This repetition serves as a form of collective memory, preserved through rituals and cultural practices (Lévi-Strauss, 1986, p. 5).

- **Wolf Palm.** The wolf palm symbol, as explained by textile artisans, traces its origins to a time when wolves attacked a herd of cattle. Over time, it came to be interpreted as a representation of strength, cunning, and resilience. This symbol has since been incorporated into fabric designs, serving as an emblem of these qualities (بن عرفة، بوطقوة، و سالمي، دليل زربية بابار، 2022، صفحة 86).



Picture 9: Wolf Paw Symbol Taken by Researchers (29/03/2022)

- **Fish and Spears.** Another significant symbol is the fish, often depicted alongside spears pointing in the same direction. This motif is linked to fertility rituals and water-related devotions, as water holds profound significance for the people of Babar. Water is not only essential for sustaining life but is also regarded as a powerful force capable of rejuvenating the land and fostering human reproduction. The vulva, represented in some designs, further emphasizes these themes of fertility and abundance (بن عرفة و معتوق، الماء بين المقدس والطقوس الممارسة، 2017، صفحة 13).

The symbols woven into Babar's Namushi rug have been the subject of various studies, emphasizing their profound connection to the region's beliefs, natural environment, and cultural traditions. These rugs, adorned with symbolic designs, hold both artistic value and cultural significance, serving as powerful expressions of the region's identity, history, and spiritual heritage.

8. Weaving as a Message to Preserve Heritage

Establishing a framework for local development rooted in community and economic participation requires a thorough understanding of the region's cultural realities. As Dr. Rushdi Saleh observes, "...every development effort is likely to be futile if it does not take into account cultural difference, authenticity, and values" (مدني، 2017، صفحة 167). This underscores the importance of crafting development plans that are attuned to the region's distinctive cultural identity and heritage.

One of the most striking messages from the Babbar region is conveyed through its richly decorated, colorful, and intricately woven textiles, which stand as a testament to local identity, heritage, and pride. These textiles carry a symbolic message to every family, community, and especially to every woman: the vital importance of preserving cultural identity in the face of modernity (لابورت، تولرا، و فارنييه، 2004، صفحة 94).

8.1 Heritage and Cultural Continuity

The customs, traditions, and values of the Chaouia region are central to its cultural identity. This rich folklore provides a strong foundation for promoting local development while meeting international standards by highlighting its unique heritage. Through participation in global exhibitions, the region can highlight its cultural wealth to a broader

audience, making it more accessible and appealing. Such exposure enables visitors and tourists to engage with the region's distinctive culture, sparking their interest in exploring it further. Tourism, in turn, amplifies awareness of Chaouia heritage as visitors interact directly with local crafts and traditions, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of these cultural practices. (مدني، 2017، صفحة 167)

Tourists and visitors often come across the region's textile art without fully understanding the story behind it—the intricate craftsmanship, the history woven into each design, or the cultural significance of the colors and symbols. Involving tourists in the process of discovering how these textile mosaics are created can ignite a passion for preserving these crafts and establish a meaningful connection between the local community and a global audience (مدني، 2017، صفحة 167).

8.2. The Role of Tourism in Cultural Preservation

Tourism plays a vital role in preserving the textile industries and traditional crafts of Babar. By promoting cultural tourism, local artisans can demonstrate their weaving skills and share firsthand knowledge about the creation of these textile pieces. This direct interaction offers visitors an authentic understanding of the craft, elevating it from a simple decorative item to a meaningful cultural artifact.

Through tourism, the traditional textile industry can connect more closely with both locals and visitors, fostering a dynamic environment where heritage is preserved, shared, and celebrated. This process not only ensures the sustainability of these crafts but also reinforces the region's identity and its ability to engage in global cultural exchanges. Weaving, therefore, transcends being merely a craft—it becomes a living message, a vital means of preserving and promoting the region's heritage while ensuring its legacy for future generations (بن عرفة و سالمى، زربية بابار هوية ثقافية ومحرك للتنمية المحلية، 2022، صفحة 51)

8. Conclusion

No matter how extensively the topic of crafts and material heritage is explored, the history of this craft will remain incomplete and underappreciated unless it is meticulously studied, documented, and analyzed through rigorous academic and scientific inquiry. While efforts to convey the beauty and significance of this unique art form are valuable, words alone cannot fully encapsulate the essence of the intricate decorations, forms, and symbolic messages embedded in these textiles. These woven pieces serve as living testaments to the deep-rooted heritage and authenticity of the Babbar region and the Aurès Al-Nemmasha in eastern Algeria.

These textiles, rich with historical and cultural layers, transcend the physical realm, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the vibrant interplay of colors and symbols. Each piece bears the weight of ancient times, forging a connection to distant eras while starkly contrasting with the present. This contrast evokes a profound sense of alienation from today's fast-paced, disconnected world.

In essence, the rugs woven by the skilled hands of Chaoui women, especially those from Babbar Al-Namushi, embody a profound love for knowledge, beauty, and tradition. These women, who may have never held a pen or written on paper, have instead created masterpieces that narrate the history, culture, and identity of their region. Through their artistry, weaving becomes more than a means of preserving heritage—it is a celebration of the enduring spirit and resilience of their people.

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