

# Artifacts and Cartographic Imagination: Melding the Chasm between Time and Space

Naeema Alhosani <sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Geography and Urban Sustainability Department - (CHSS), United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). [naeemam@uaeu.ac.ae](mailto:naeemam@uaeu.ac.ae)*

\* Corresponding author

---

**Keywords:** Memory, artifacts, cartography, imagination, space, time

## Abstract:

Maps have traditionally been conceptualized and studied as visual representations. In the past few years, however, scholars from different disciplines have started to approach cartographic imaginations from new perspectives. The purpose of the paper is to explore artifacts as creations of a cartographic visionary imagination. Artifacts are conceptualized as mnemonic tools activated through different types of personal encounters that are at once visual and tactile. Here experience melds with memory to transcend the physical division and apportionment of time and space. Through this process, human experience is linked to places of encounter and origin, to cities and roads, to traces of journey and wander. The context of the study is the United Arab Emirate (UAE) an elective monarchy formed from a federation of seven emirates, consisting of Abu Dhabi (the capital), Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain located at the eastern end of the Arabian Peninsula and shares borders with Oman and Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the study is to compare and contextualize several artifacts from the UAE in terms of their biographic and cultural sense. The artifacts include the Dallah, a traditional Arabic coffee pot that is commonly used in the UAE and other Gulf countries. It is typically made of brass or copper and has a distinctive shape with a long spout and a curved handle. The Dallah is used for preparing and serving Arabic coffee, which is an integral part of the Emirati culture and hospitality. It is often considered as a symbol of generosity, warmth, and traditional values in the UAE. The Khanjar is a traditional curved dagger that is considered a symbol of male elegance and power in the UAE. It has a distinctive design with a curved blade, a wooden handle, and a sheath decorated with silver or gold embellishments. The Khanjar is often worn as part of the national dress during special occasions and ceremonies and is regarded as an important cultural artifact that represents the heritage and identity of the UAE. Al Sadu is a traditional weaving technique used by the Bedouin tribes of the UAE. It involves weaving intricate geometric patterns using wool threads on a simple horizontal loom. Al Sadu weavings are often used to create decorative items such as rugs, cushions, and tent coverings, and are considered important artifacts that represent the nomadic lifestyle and heritage of the UAE. Lastly, calligraphy is a revered art form in the UAE and holds great cultural significance. Islamic calligraphy, particularly the Arabic script, is often used to adorn buildings, mosques, and other cultural landmarks in the UAE. Examples of calligraphic artifacts in the UAE include beautifully crafted Qur'anic manuscripts, inscriptions on buildings and monuments, and decorative pieces with calligraphic motifs. Calligraphy is considered a significant art form that reflects the country's deep-rooted connection to Islam and its artistic heritage. The findings demonstrate that the artifacts tie individuals to deeply rooted biographical and cultural elements that are foundational in Emirati society. These include hospitality, social bonding, respect for elders, art and craftsmanship, heritage, protection, status, connection to nature, Islamic tradition, aesthetic beauty, language, and knowledge. Through this interaction a specific identity is associated with the Bedouin culture of the UAE. Focusing on the encounter between artifacts and their owners, the paper calls for a re-conceptualization of the ways cartographic imaginations are constructed to include artifacts as mnemonic tools that meld with time and space.