

## **Entrance to Heritage: Examining the Artistic, Symbolic, and Socio-Cultural Significance of the Najdi Door in Central Saudi Arabia**

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**Abstract:** This study explores the artistry and cultural importance of Najdi doors in central Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom's 'heartland', focusing on their symbolic, aesthetic, and communal values. By analyzing the symbolic connotations, materials used, and social meanings associated with these doors, the study aims to highlight their cultural significance. By delving into the door backgrounds, artistic designs, and social relevance, the study emphasizes their role as representations of the cultural identity and status of those living behind them, as well as stores of communal heritage. The multi-dimensional research methodology incorporates studies, visual analysis, interviews, and surveys to develop a thorough understanding of Najdi Doors' complexities and richness as an art form. This approach allows a deeper exploration of these doors' aesthetic and symbolic aspects. It provides insights into how the community perceives them and the motivations behind their creation. Through this methodology, the research connects the doors' craftsmanship with their relevance in modern contexts by presenting a new perspective on this cultural heritage. The results show that Najdi doors express identity, tradition, and artistry, reflecting the region's heritage and people's bond with their surroundings. The designs used in these doors, along with their materials and symbolic meanings, significantly contribute to Saudi Arabia's cultural story by emphasizing the importance of preserving these elements as a crucial link to history. The study's findings indicate uses for modern architectural approaches and emphasize the importance of maintaining historical links between the past and present. This investigation adds value to discussions on traditional Saudi architecture and heritage while emphasizing how crucial preservation is to safeguard cultural identity during fast-paced modernization.

**Keywords:** Najd, getaway; craft; color; proportion; motifs.

### **1. Introduction**

Najdi doors serve as a reflection of the artistic and socio-cultural essence of central Saudi Arabia, showcasing the region's environmental, religious, and communal values. The intricate designs adorning these doors draw inspiration from the landscape, incorporating patterns and hues inspired by native plants, trees, and even the sun's radiant beams. Featuring motifs like plants and

flowers and geometric shapes such as triangles and circles, these decorations hold aesthetic allure and more profound symbolism, representing elements like mountains and sunlight. Vibrant colors like green, red, and yellow sourced from acacia and pomegranate were commonly used. Additionally, these doors often bore inscriptions containing names, dates, or prayers that added a touch imbued with spiritual significance.

Beyond their role as entryways, traditional Nadji doors stood as declarations of the identity and social standing of those living behind them—particularly evident of the doors in the guest room (*majlis*) where visitors were received. Majlis doors were especially ornate to reflect the owner's prosperity and reputation within society (Almahmoud, 2015; Alnaim & Noaime, 2024). The level of embellishment varied across homes; some displayed designs while others showcased elaborate artistry indicative of social hierarchies and economic distinctions prevalent in Najdi society.

The artistry and craftsmanship that went into creating Najdi doors spanned generations, showcasing unique visual styles in each town and the expertise of grandmasters ('Abd Allāh al-Sadħān, 2023). This tradition not only emphasized the familial connections within the craft but also the deep respect for the art form. Certain families and communities were known for their individual artistic flair, adding a personal touch to each door (Kamel & Mahgoub, 2021). These doors, more than just functional elements, were works of art that provided guests with an immersive experience, aiming to evoke feelings of warmth and appreciation, similar to admiring a masterpiece or reading a poem.

This study sets out on a journey to delve into the essence of Central Saudi Arabia, with a focus on revealing the depth of artistic skill and cultural importance embodied in the iconic Najdi doors. These doors go beyond being mere architectural features; they serve as a vibrant representation of the region's rich heritage, reflecting the intricate blend of environmental, religious, and communal values. By examining their historical background, artistic patterns, and symbolic significance, this study aims to underscore these doors' essential role in nurturing a sense of cultural identity and continuity. By exploring the symbolism, visual elements, and societal meanings associated with these legacy doors, this research offers a deeper insight into their significance within Saudi Arabia's architectural and cultural landscape.

At the core of this investigation lies a goal: to document, analyze, and interpret various facets of Najdi doors, from their lively coloration and detailed patterns to the profound, embedded meanings they convey. These doors' decorations are heavily influenced by their surroundings and

represent a symbolic conversation between nature and craftsmanship. Plants, flowers, and geometric shapes not only enhance their visual appeal but also hold symbolic connections to mountains, sunbeams, and other natural elements. This study aims to investigate how these various door elements work together to provide insights into the social structure and artistic expressions of the Najdi community by illustrating a story about identity, social standing, and shared heritage.

This study aims to connect the past with the present by examining the significance of Najdi doors amidst contemporary architectural advancements and the preservation challenges of cultural traditions. By delving into the artistry passed down over generations and investigating the familial aspects of this craft, this inquiry aims to illuminate the dynamic progression of these traditional features. Through an approach that includes ethnographic studies, visual analyses, interviews, and surveys, this research seeks to uncover the intricate layers of meaning woven into Najdi's doors, focusing on safeguarding their legacy and ensuring their enduring impact in Saudi Arabia's architectural and cultural narrative.

The significance of the research lies in its documentation and interpretation of Najdi doors as significant cultural heritage and identity markers for Saudi Arabia. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these artistic expressions demonstrate the social and cultural values and aesthetic preferences of Najd people during modernization and cultural change. The research aims to connect traditional craftsmanship knowledge with modern appreciation of vernacular heritage. The research investigates three main hypotheses, which include: (1) Najdi doors function beyond their architectural purpose because they carry symbolic meanings that represent cultural, social, and spiritual values; (2) different social groups and generations understand and value the artistic and symbolic aspects of Najdi doors in distinct ways; and (3) modern preservation efforts for Najdi doors will help maintain cultural heritage while building national identity. The research methodology and analysis follow these hypotheses to support recommendations that promote better heritage education and preservation methods and traditional architectural elements in contemporary Saudi architecture.

## 2. The Door: A Literature Review

Throughout the course of history, doors have played a role in connecting diverse cultures and civilizations, enabling the sharing of ideas and commerce. The intricate craftsmanship and choice of materials in the door also reflect the artistry and creativity prevalent in these eras. Traditionally viewed as gateways between worlds or representatives of homes, doors carry profound symbolism and aesthetic importance, mirroring the cultural, spiritual, and social values of their makers (Alnaim, 2020b; Siegert & Peters, 2012).

Symbolism is deeply ingrained in the essence of these doors, made from wood and metal. They serve as protectors of privacy and symbols of hospitality, signaling the shift from public spaces in the external environment to the sanctity of one's dwelling. Beyond their utility, these doors hold cultural and historical significance. Often embellished with carvings or elaborate motifs, they embody the principles and convictions of those residing within (Miller, 2021a; Muço, 2017). As such, doors symbolize more than their outward appearance; they exude a sense of warmth and invitation to those who pass through them while safeguarding the personal spaces within. This dual nature is evident across societies where doors may embody security, prosperity, or even Divine blessings (Astakhova, 2020; Lang, 1985).

Doors have always held meaning across different cultures, often being viewed as magical or sacred thresholds. For instance, in some societies, doors are considered gateways linking the physical and spiritual worlds, acting as a bridge between these two realms (Kawash, 2000; Vera, 2011). This perspective adds depth to the value of doors, portraying them as openings to fresh possibilities and adventures. Moreover, doors can also be a means of self-expression, allowing people to display their creativity and unique tastes through them (Stalder, 2009; Witasik, 2016).

The attractiveness of doors goes beyond their visual appearance; they reveal a great deal about the individuals who live behind them and their cultural roots. Thus, the color choices in doors are closely linked to local materials, cultural meanings, and the psychological symbolism of colors. For example, blue doors in Mediterranean regions are believed to keep evil at bay, while red doors in Chinese culture symbolize luck and happiness (Tawalbeh, 2021; Wang, 2017).

Delving deeper into the appeal of the door, the intricate motifs and geometric patterns that embellish doors speak an embedded language of their own (Dilek, 2022; Elam, 2001). These designs, ranging from floral to geometrical forms, represent the artistic heritage of craftsmen and the communities to which they belong. The design of doors also highlights that in art, geometric patterns hold profound metaphysical and philosophical significance, often mirroring the boundless nature of creation. Similarly, floral patterns on doors or torans (gateways) symbolize hospitality and prosperity (Abdullahi & Embi, 2013).

The societal values and communal importance attached to doors are reflected in their craftsmanship, as doors convey norms, religious convictions, and collective identity (Cao & Mustafa, 2023; Hasanpour Loumer et al., 2024). The significance of doors is that they reflect the society's identity, showcasing styles, techniques, and symbols passed down through generations to preserve a shared heritage and history (Muyard et al., 2009). The grandeur and complexity of doors often reveal the hierarchy within a community. This was elaborated on across cultures; intricately crafted doors symbolize affluence and high social status (Alnaim, 2020b; Miller, 2021b). The size, design, and materials used in a door historically indicated the importance or wealth of the people residing in the dwelling (Cao & Mustafa, 2023). As a result, in some cultures, doors were decorated with specific motifs or symbols to convey messages about the occupants' beliefs or values. This further emphasizes the role of doors as not just functional architectural elements, but also as powerful cultural artifacts.

When we delve into instances, the colorful Najdi doors from the Middle East catch the eye with their intricate carvings and symbolic representations of nature and spirituality, mirroring desert scenery and Islamic artistic principles (Blair, 2020; Kamel & Mahgoub, 2021). On the other hand, the Indian torans not only grace doorways but also draw good fortune and ward off harmful energies, showcasing India's rich cultural diversity (Mahalakshmi, 2010). Similarly, European medieval doors, examined by Debiais (Debiais, 2013), often portrayed tales or scenes from everyday life, serving as spiritual guides and communal storytellers.

To strengthen the conceptual grounding of this study, it is useful to consider comparative frameworks from parallel cultural contexts.

For example, the toran in Indian architecture (Mahalakshmi, 2010) and threshold symbolism in Indonesian, Moroccan, and Ottoman architecture (Dilek, 2022; Louët & Geoffrion, 2016; Suartika et al., 2018) demonstrate how doors function as spiritual, social, and artistic signifiers. The study of Mediterranean architecture shows how blue doors in Greek traditions link geometric patterns with color choices to create metaphysical narratives about hospitality (Hiscock, 2016). The Najdi door functions similarly to other cultural boundaries because it serves as a ceremonial interface that connects identity with belief and space. The integration of cross-cultural analyses strengthens this research theory while placing the Najdi door within a broader global discussion about vernacular architectural symbolism.

The cultural significance of doors becomes evident in North African, Southeast Asian, and Eastern European traditions. Traditional riad doors in Moroccan architecture serve to establish social limits while showing wealth through their heavy, studded design and inscriptions, which resemble Najdi majlis doors (Cheddadi & Rifki, 2024). The geometric patterns on Moroccan doors use stars and interlocking polygons, which match the visual language seen on Najdi doors that use geometry to create both decorative elements and meaningful symbols. Balinese compounds in Southeast Asia use ornately carved doors to mark the spiritual transition from physical space (Rieger-Jandl, 2013). The Najdi door functions as both a threshold and sacred object, which parallels its role as a visual and spiritual entrance that displays Qur'anic verses. The wooden gates of Maramureş (Romania) in Eastern Europe display floral and astral symbols that represent seasonal cycles and fertility as well as cosmological concepts (ILIEŞ & ILIEŞ, 2021). The Najdi use of floral motifs to represent Divine harmony and prosperity matches the themes presented in these distinct visual designs.

Drawing on these comparisons, the researcher observes that while regional forms and motifs differ, there exists a global design consciousness in which the door serves as a codified object merging function, belief, identity, and artistry. The Najdi door stands out through its unique aesthetic system, which unites strong colors with modular symmetry and spiritual calligraphy and social indicators. The complex visual language creates an extensive symbolic system that contemporary designers can explore. The comparative approach positions the

Najdi door in a universal architectural story while demonstrating its distinctiveness as a creation of desert conditions and Islamic abstract design and Najdi social organization.

The significance of preserving these doors is profound. As they are living testaments to ingenuity, spirituality, and community life, they connect the past with the present by recounting stories of eras, past rulers, and everyday people intertwined. They serve as reminders that, amidst the pursuit of modernization, these doors are more than just artifacts; they are poignant reminders of our shared human journey. Their conservation and integration into settings signify a blend of tradition and innovation.

In summary, exploring the craftsmanship of heritage doors provides a glimpse into humanity's essence by reflecting our intrinsic urge to beautify, narrate stories, and safeguard both our loved ones and our heritage. The doors, found in palaces and simple cottages alike, hold within them the hopes, ambitions, and creative pursuits of many eras. They serve not as mere entrances but as guardians of our shared past, with each intricate detail telling a story in the rich tapestry of human civilization. Through the intricate designs and materials used in heritage doors, we can witness the evolution of cultures and societies over time. These doors are not just physical structures, but symbols of resilience and continuity in the face of change.

## 2.1 Doors in the Najd Context

In the heart of Saudi Arabia's Najd region, the doorway, referred to locally as Al-Bab, holds more significance than just a mere entrance; it tells the story of the home and its occupants. This architectural element symbolizes the cultural tapestry, implicitly conveying the status and prosperity of the household. Tied profoundly to its owner's identity, the door in Najdi culture reflects the balance between individual privacy (which is highly valued in Saudi culture) and societal norms (Alnaim et al., 2023).

The design, craftsmanship, and ornate details of these doors reflect the owner's riches, lifestyle choices, and sometimes their spiritual beliefs (Munro, 1956). An adorned door often signals wealth and a luxurious lifestyle. On the other hand, a simple door suggests modest means, or a deliberate decision to eschew extravagance, influenced by religious humility. Through these

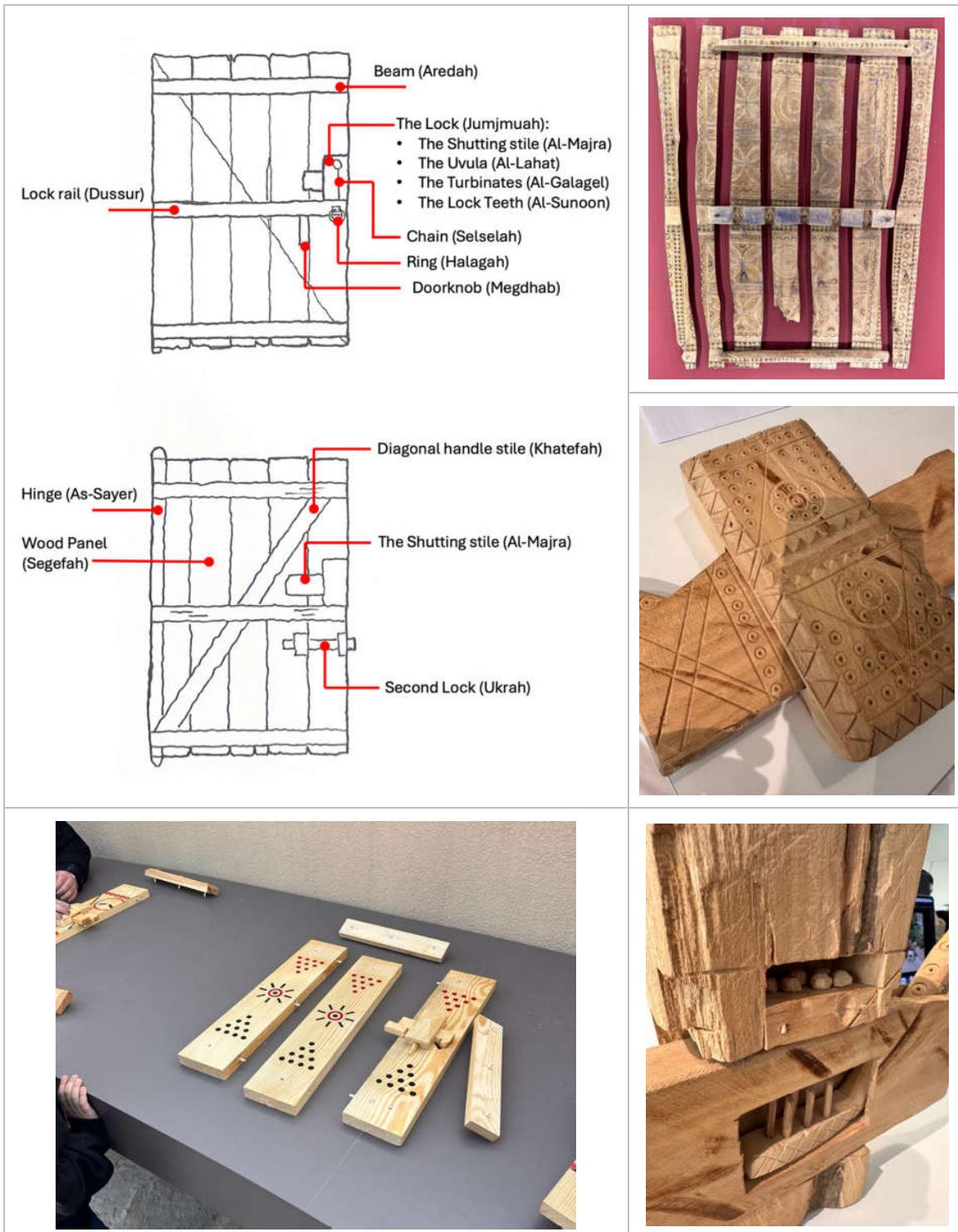


Figure (1). Illustration of the Najdi door components. Source: Author.

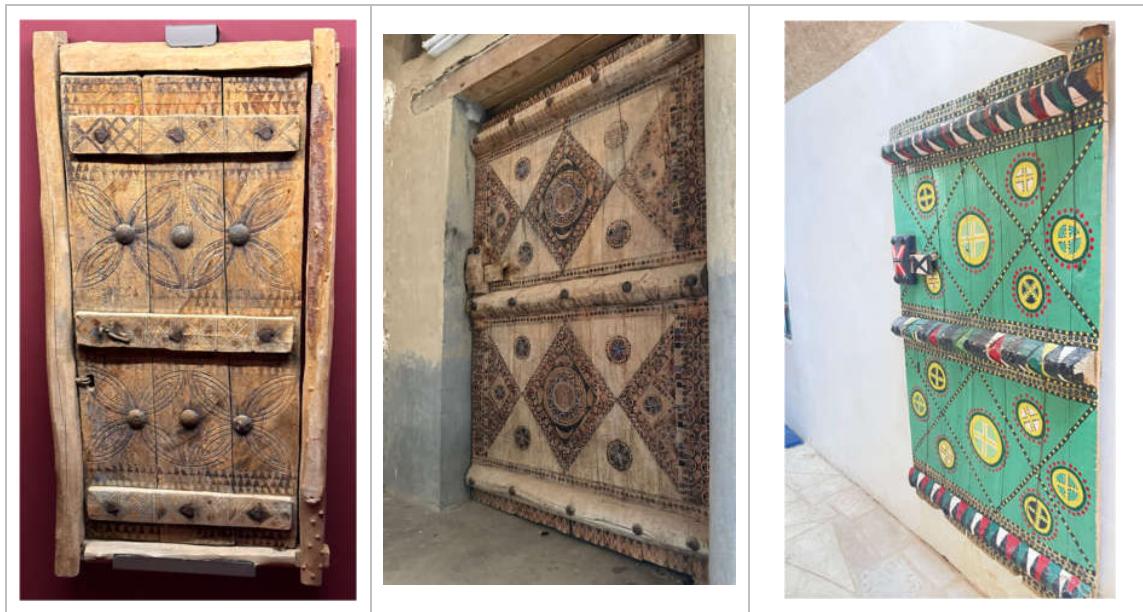


Figure (1) Continue. Illustration of the Najdi door components. Source: Author.

doors, one can unravel the layers of Najdi society, where extravagance coexists with simplicity and one's devotion can be as evident as their material wealth.

The strategic placement of doors in Najdi communities holds significant power. It mirrors broader interactions, where doors serve not only as entry points but also as carriers of implicit messages (Alnaim, 2021; Ching, 2023). The decorative front, public door serves as a welcoming symbol for guests, reflecting the warmth and status of those living inside. On the other hand, the more private family door is often simpler and less adorned, symbolizing the intimacy and seclusion of family life. This architectural contrast captures the balance between public interactions and private life, showcasing a delicate duality between being seen and staying hidden, a duality which defines Najdi social norms.

Najdi doors are typically crafted with a mix of components, such as panels, trimmings, and hardware. The panels are often embellished with designs like geometric shapes, floral motifs, or intricate calligraphies. Trim work frames these panels to enhance the door's appeal, while hardware such as hinges and locks ensures security while facilitating door movement (Al-Arifi, 2023; Nejad et al., 2016) (Figure 1). The design of the door is meticulously planned to achieve harmony

and symmetry, as each element is positioned in a way that pleases the eye and underscores the significance of the entrance as a gateway to one's homestead.

The architectural visual language expressed through Najdi doors serves as a shared code within the Najdi community. The colors, patterns, and intricate details act as signals that guide and educate those who observe them. In a landscape where external visual markers are scarce, the door becomes a defining feature, an orienting point that helps 'name' a home within the collective memory of the Najdi towns (Alnaim, 2020a; Hasan et al., 2021). It is a nuanced system of identification, relying on the shared visual literacy of the community to navigate the physical and social order.

In this way, the Najdi door goes beyond its role as a simple doorway. It serves as a cultural landmark, a non-verbal communicator of a deep social tapestry, and a vibrant record of a people skilled at transmitting meaning through architecture's implicit language. The door, at its core, is a canvas on which the tale of the home and its people is skillfully engraved, a story that is told and retold as generations pass through its doors (Figure 2). Thus, the doorway, its visual features, and keylocks have a great influence on defining the house and its residents. This architectural element, 'the door', works as a vital visual representation

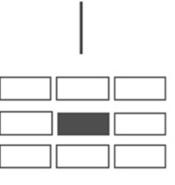
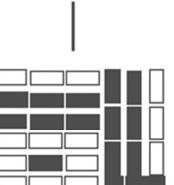
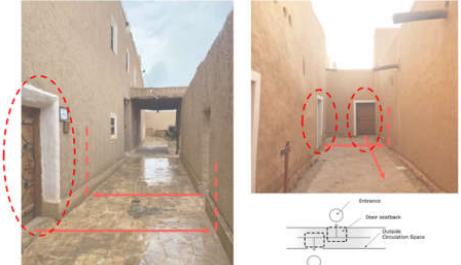
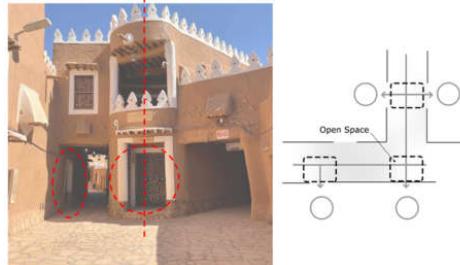
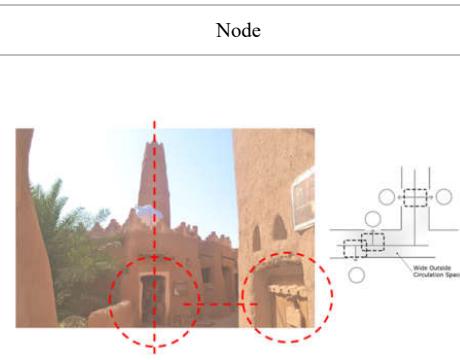
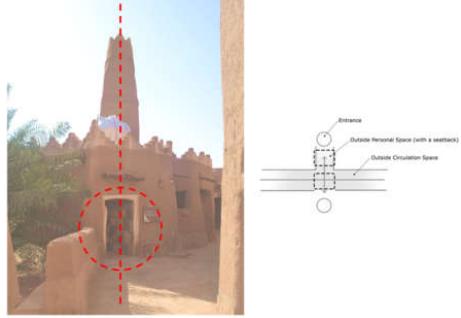
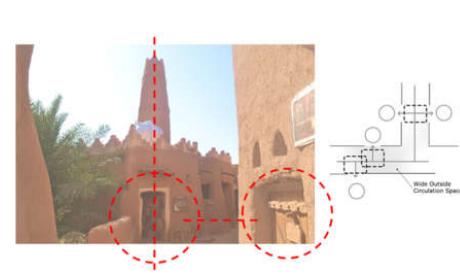
The "Five Physical Elements" by Kevin Lynch			
PATH	NODE	LANDMARK	DISTRICT
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic street point</li> <li>• Open Space</li> <li>• Junction</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decorative doors serve as a public reference point</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic placement in quarters, and neighborhoods</li> </ul>
The "Five Physical Elements" application in Najdi built environment			
			
Path	Node	Landmark	District
			

Figure (2). The Najdi door: key placement principles. Source: The five elements diagrams (Lynch, 2013); Author.

that guides local people as a wayfinding tool, much like GPS long before GPS existed, to 'name' the house and identify its location within the built environment.

Through this architectural feature, a sense of community pride and connection to tradition is maintained, ensuring that each door tells a unique

story that contributes to the rich cultural tapestry of the Najdi region. Thus, the Najdi door serves as a symbol of heritage and history, preserving the legacy of the past while embracing the present. It is a testament to the craftsmanship and artistry of the region, reflecting a deep appreciation for cultural identity and tradition.

### 3. Methodology

The study's multi-methodological approach delves into the connections between artistry, symbolism, and socio-cultural values found in the Najdi doors of Central Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom's 'heartland'. By employing a multifaceted framework that includes qualitative analysis, visual inspection, interviews, workshops, and surveys, the research uncovers valuable insights into the architectural and cultural importance of these doors. This comprehensive approach not only allows for an examination of both the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of Najdi doors, but also provides a deep understanding of how the community perceives them and the intentions of the craftsmen behind their creations. It bridges the gap between traditional practices and their relevance in modern times, offering a fresh perspective on this cultural heritage.

At the heart of this methodology is an analysis that strives to uncover these doors' symbolic meanings and artistic significance through an ethnographic lens (Figure 3). This method enables an exploration of the cultural and historical contexts in which these doors were made, emphasizing their intricate details, patterns, and materials used. Through techniques like participant observation and interviews, this study captures firsthand experiences within the community, providing a nuanced

understanding of how Najdi doors are viewed and valued within their socio-cultural environment. The goal is further supported by analyzing the visuals and breaking down the design elements of the doors, such as their shapes, colors, and overall structure. This meticulous approach helps interpret the language and its cultural significance, ensuring the research's comprehensive and reliable nature.

Dialogues with artisans, historians, and community members enrich the qualitative analysis by offering firsthand insights into the methods, materials, and cultural stories woven into Najdi door craftsmanship. These discussions illuminate the skills and wisdom passed down through generations, underscoring how these doors play a pivotal role in preserving heritage and fostering community pride. Moreover, workshops held as part of the 'Beyond the Door' exhibition in Diriyah between January 7th to February 4th encouraged hands-on exploration of this craft, inviting participants to delve into the social intricacies surrounding Najdi doors. Surveys distributed after these workshops aimed to gauge community perceptions and values related to Najdi doors, enhancing the study's conclusions with statistical data while identifying patterns in societal appreciation for preservation efforts. These study methods offer a community-driven perspective on Najdi doors, capturing their aesthetic allure, symbolic meanings, and socio-cultural significance.

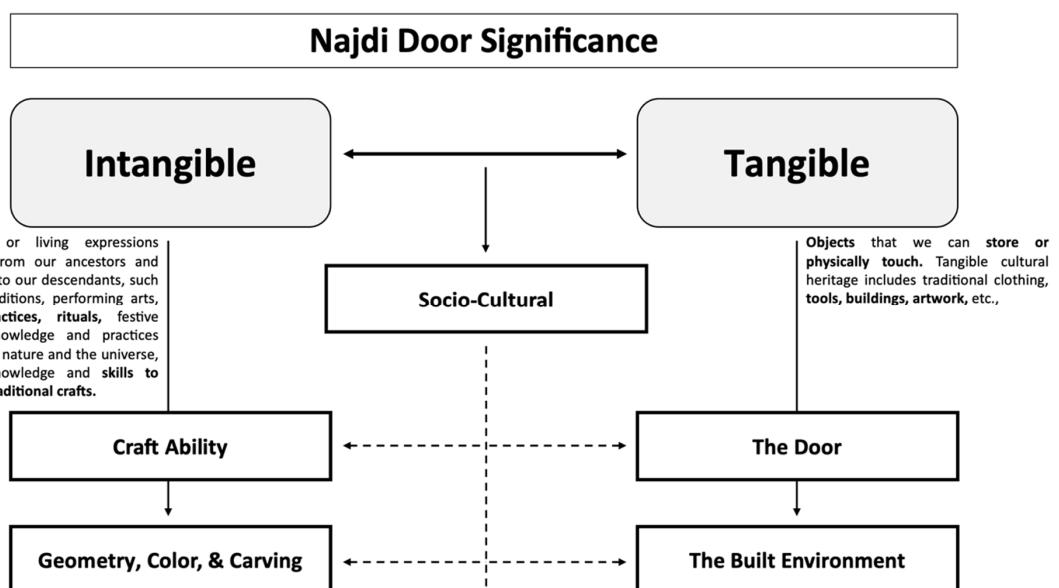
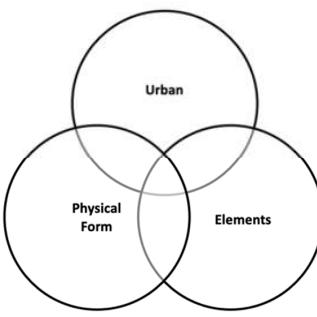
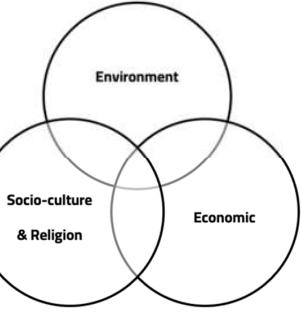
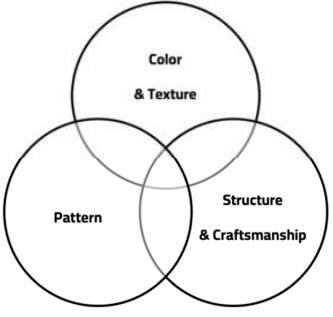


Figure (3). The intangible and tangible significance of the Najdi door. Source: Author.

While the study produced rich ethnographic, visual, and survey data, a more systematic archival approach would further enhance its scholarly rigor and future replicability. Moving forward, a database of Najdi doors requires standardized metadata fields, which should include location information, door typology and motif categorization, and material analysis. The standardized approach enables researchers to conduct comparative studies between different regions and throughout different time periods. The interview process should use standardized templates to record responses from

artisans, historians, and community members while including speaker identification, timestamped answers, and thematic coding. The implemented improvements to data and metadata design would create both deep qualitative insights and consistent analytical results. The integration of digital archival platforms such as Sketchfab and Arches Project would enable broader academic and cultural access to visual and narrative data. These methods follow current digital heritage documentation standards and match the developing framework for intangible cultural preservation.

**Table (1). Outline of the ethnographic approach framework**

<u>Three Different Levels or Scales</u>		<u>Contextual Aspects</u>	<u>Appearance Aspects</u>	
				
To explore the door positioning in the built environment	To Understand the door's contextual aspects	To identify the door's visual appearance		
Goal	Focus	Main Technique	Fieldwork	Final Product
Understanding cultural norms	Daily life and practices	Participant observation	How does the community perceive several Najdi doors	Description of community perception
Uncovering social dynamics	Relationships and power structures	Interviews	Attending Diriyah's "Beyond the Door" exhibit	Analysis of social hierarchies and interactions
Documenting cultural practices	Rituals, traditions, and ceremonies	Cultural immersion	Participating in the Diriyah exhibit event	Rich narrative of cultural practices
Analyzing symbolic systems	Language, art, and non-verbal signals	Content analysis of symbolic forms	Documenting several Najdi doors (fieldwork) Attending Diriyah's "Beyond the Door" exhibit	Interpretative framework of symbolism
Capturing lived experiences	Personal histories and narratives	Cultural Anthropology	Personal diaries and oral history	Compelling narratives and life stories

### 3.1 Qualitative Analysis

The study utilizes an ethnographic method to examine several Najdi doors. Motifs, colors, carvings, and inscriptions are analyzed from the perspective of how societies and individuals perceive them to determine their symbolic and artistic significance. This method aims to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical context in which each of the doors were created (Skågeby, 2011) (Table 1). By exploring the intricate details of Najdi doors, this study seeks to shed light on the craftsmanship and symbolism of this architectural element.

The analytical goal of ethnography is to provide comprehensive, contextual, holistic insights into people's ideas and activities, as well as the nature (and meaning) of the environment they live in, through the collection of thorough observations and interviews (France et al., 2019). This technique is commonly utilized in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and cultural studies (Glaeser, 2005).

### 3.2 Graphical Analysis

The graphical analysis of Najdi doors was divided into several key phases, each meant to dissect and comprehend various aspects of the doors' artistic and cultural characteristics (Table 2). Thus, the graphical study aimed to provide a thorough and nuanced understanding of the

artistic and cultural complexity of Najdi doors. The data from the visual mapping, as well as the color, geometric, and motif studies was combined to provide a thorough understanding of Najdi doors. Based on the synthesized data, conclusions about the doors' cultural, artistic, and historical significance was developed. The study's approach was intended to enhance the scholarly discourse on traditional Saudi architecture and cultural heritage and provide valuable insights into the importance and preservation of traditional Najdi doors.

### 3.3 Interviews

To gain deeper insights into the traditional craft of Najdi's door, interviews were conducted with local artisans, historians, and collectors. These interviews were held during the 2024 Diriyah Season as part of the 'Beyond the Door' exhibit between January and February, which supported the researcher in gaining insight into the techniques, materials, and cultural narratives embedded in the doors (Table 3). Additionally, the interviews were intended to shed light on the significance of Najdi doors in the region's cultural identity, highlighting their role in preserving heritage and fostering a sense of community pride. The personal stories of historians, and collectors added depth to the researcher's understanding of the craft's evolution.

Table (2). Najdi door graphical analysis phases

Phase	Phase Detail	Description
Data Collection	Photographic Documentation	High-resolution photographs of various Najdi doors was collected. These photographs captured details of the motifs, patterns, and color schemes.
	Archival Research	Documentation about Najdi doors was sourced from archives, exhibits, and libraries to understand the evolution of their designs over time.
Geometric Analysis	Pattern Deconstruction	Geometric patterns were deconstructed to understand their composition and structure, using principles of geometry analysis.
	Symmetry and Proportion	The symmetry and proportions within the patterns were analyzed to understand the underlying principles used in their design.
Motif Analysis	Iconographic Interpretation	Motifs were studied for their symbolic meaning, historical origin, and cultural significance.
Color Analysis	Color Palette Extraction	The color schemes used in Najdi doors was extracted using digital tools. This analysis helps in identifying the predominant color palettes and their variations.
Aesthetic Evaluation	Design Principles Assessment	The overall aesthetic appeal of the doors was evaluated based on principles of design such as balance, harmony, contrast, and rhythm.
	Cultural Aesthetics	How the aesthetic principles align with or reflect the cultural and artistic values of the Najdi region were analyzed.

**Table (3). The interview sampling size**

Interview Sampling		
Artisan	Male	6
	Female	4
Historian	Male	4
	Female	0
Collector	Male	6
	Female	0

### 3.4 Workshop

During the 'Beyond the Door' exhibit in the At-Turaif historical district in Diriyah, Saudi Arabia, a workshop was organized between January 8th and 10th, 2024, comprising a series of interactive activities. The program drew a wide range of

participants, including local craftspeople, cultural historians, artists, members of the community, and representatives from cultural preservation organizations (Figure 4). The goal was to gather a diverse range of viewpoints from audiences who contribute, directly or indirectly, to the development or preservation of, or enthusiasm for Najdi doors.

The program was intended to provide an immersive and participatory approach to learning about the cultural and social complexities of Najdi Doors. By actively engaging with the community, we had the opportunity to capture the live heritage and contemporary relevance of these traditional doors within the larger context of Saudi cultural identity. As a result, all talks and activities throughout the workshops were documented for future study and interpretation. In addition, post-workshop surveys and questionnaires were provided to workshop participants and general



**Figure (4). Sample of the workshops held during the Diriyah Najdi doors exhibit**

visitors to the exhibit to collect supplementary data and participant feedback. The goal was to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on community attitudes, narratives, and practices regarding the workmanship and symbolism of Najdi doors. The obtained data is evaluated in the discussion section of this study, and facilitates researchers learning more about the cultural relevance and preservation of this historic artwork.

### 3.5 Survey

The survey assesses and facilitates analysis of different community members' viewpoints, attitudes, and values toward Najdi doors. This methodological approach seeks to enhance the observations and interviews by offering a broader statistical framework for understanding these doors'

symbolic and aesthetic significance. Surveys were handed out at the 'Beyond the Door' exhibition in Diriyah to an audience that included visitors, artisans, architects, and historians capturing a broad spectrum of perspectives on the cultural and aesthetic value of Najdi doors in Saudi Arabian culture. The survey questions are structured around five attributes, gathering insights on visual appeal, cultural relevance in modern architecture, and interest in preservation efforts (Table 4).

In addition to supporting interviews, this survey delves into community involvement with Najdi door craftsmanship techniques to gauge awareness levels among younger generations. By analyzing the data collected, the study aims to identify trends in how society values these artifacts and pinpoint areas where educational or conservation efforts could be most impactful. This

Table (4). The survey five attributes and sampling

Attribute	Description	
Colors	This attribute evaluates community appreciation of the visual and emotional impact of the color schemes used in Najdi doors. It includes the significance of traditional colors, the interpretation of color meanings, and their aesthetic appeal in reflecting the natural and cultural environment of the Najd region.	
Materiality	Materiality assesses the community's views on the traditional and contemporary materials used in the construction and decoration of Najdi doors, including wood types, metal fixtures, and paint. It focuses on the appreciation of material quality, durability, and authenticity.	
Artistry	Artistry encompasses the craftsmanship, designs, motifs, and intricate details that characterize Najdi doors. This attribute seeks to understand the community's appreciation for the skill, creativity, and heritage reflected in the doors' artistic expressions.	
Expression of Symbolic Meanings	This attribute explores the community's perception of the symbolic meanings conveyed through the motifs, patterns, and inscriptions on Najdi doors. It includes the interpretation of geometric shapes, floral designs, and calligraphic art as representations of cultural beliefs, spiritual values, and historical narratives.	
Sociocultural Values	Sociocultural values assess the role of Najdi doors in representing the social identity, traditions, and cultural values of the Najd region. This includes the doors' significance in reflecting social status, hospitality, privacy, and the balance between public and private life spaces.	

Local Community Respondent Sampling by Number

Study Participants/Gender		Age Group		Nationality	
Female	274	<20	62	Saudi	183
		21 - 30	103		
		31-40	73	Non-Saudi	91
		41-50	64		
		51>	8		
Male	349	<20	51	Saudi	238
		21 - 30	151		
		31-40	64		
		41-50	42	Non-Saudi	111
		51>	41		
		51>	11		

phase is vital for assessing interest in and promoting current and future initiatives to preserve and honor Najdi's architectural heritage. Through an analysis of the perceptions within the community, the study aims to support and respect the significant cultural legacy of Najdi doors while also welcoming new ideas in building and design.

While the multi-method research approach yielded rich and layered data, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sampling method for interviews and surveys depended on the availability of participants during the Diriyah 'Beyond the Door' exhibit, which could have produced selection bias. The survey participants showed diversity but mostly consisted of people who took interest in cultural heritage, which might have excluded community members who were unaware or uninterested. The survey design with its five appreciation attributes provided targeted insights but restricted the discovery of broader themes. Self-reported responses in this study create two main limitations because they stem from personal perspectives and social desirability effects. The study findings remain valid despite these limitations, which future research should address by using random sampling methods and survey formats that include open-ended questions.

#### 4. Discussion: Beyond Najdi Doors

The significance of Najdi doors goes beyond their function, unveiling a rich tapestry of cultural meaning, creativity, and societal values deeply embedded in the heritage of Central Saudi Arabia. By exploring the details of colors and materials, it becomes clear that these doors are more than just practical objects; they hold great cultural importance and reflect the diverse and lively environment of the Najd region. The vibrant colors inspired by nature, combined with meaningful materials, showcase a strong bond between the people of Najd and their surroundings, embodying centuries-old traditions and environmental adaptation in their architectural designs.

As we delve deeper into the aspects and symbolism of Najdi doors, we see that they emerge as intricate canvases that carry stories from history, spiritual beliefs, and artistic aspirations. The geometric patterns, designs, and calligraphic art adorning these doors serve a purpose beyond mere decoration; they communicate complex layers of meaning and identity, bridging the physical world

with spiritual realms. This section underscores how each design element on Najdi doors is a narrative of cultural heritage, spiritual introspection, and a tribute to craftsmanship handed down through generations. In this way, these doors transcend their architectural function to become significant carriers of cultural symbolism.

The significance of Najdi doors in Najdi towns goes beyond physical structures. These doors symbolize status, hospitality, and the delicate balance between personal and communal identities. They play a role in communicating non-verbally within the community, reflecting societal hierarchies and values. By examining these doors from multiple perspectives, we can appreciate how they represent the intricate blend of tradition, artistry, personal identity, and community values in Central Saudi Arabia. In essence, Najdi's doors tell a story that transcends their material existence.

Before examining the importance of Najdi doors, a survey of community appreciation was conducted across five key indicators—colors, materials, artistry, symbolism, and sociocultural values—and percentages of appreciation and understanding were obtained (Figure 5). Among these characteristics, artistry and colors are the most highly regarded, with appreciation levels approaching 90%, showing the community's deep passion for the colorful aesthetic and meticulous workmanship of Najdi doors. Materiality, on the other hand, rates substantially lower (about 50%), showing that while the concrete qualities of the doors are acknowledged, they fail to provoke the same amount of emotional or cultural attachment as artistry or colors. Appreciation for symbolism is even lower, at roughly 30%, indicating a limited community knowledge or priority of the symbolic connotations inherent in Najdi doors despite their traditional value. Similarly, appreciation for sociocultural values, which is somewhat higher at roughly 40%, reveal a gap in understanding the larger societal and cultural narratives that these doors express. This difference is most likely since colors and art are more visually attractive and capture the viewer's attention right away. At the same time, symbolic and sociocultural components are more abstract, necessitating a greater level of cultural and background knowledge to appreciate. The graph emphasizes the importance of increasing educational efforts to foster a more comprehensive understanding of Najdi doors, focusing on their symbolic and sociological components.

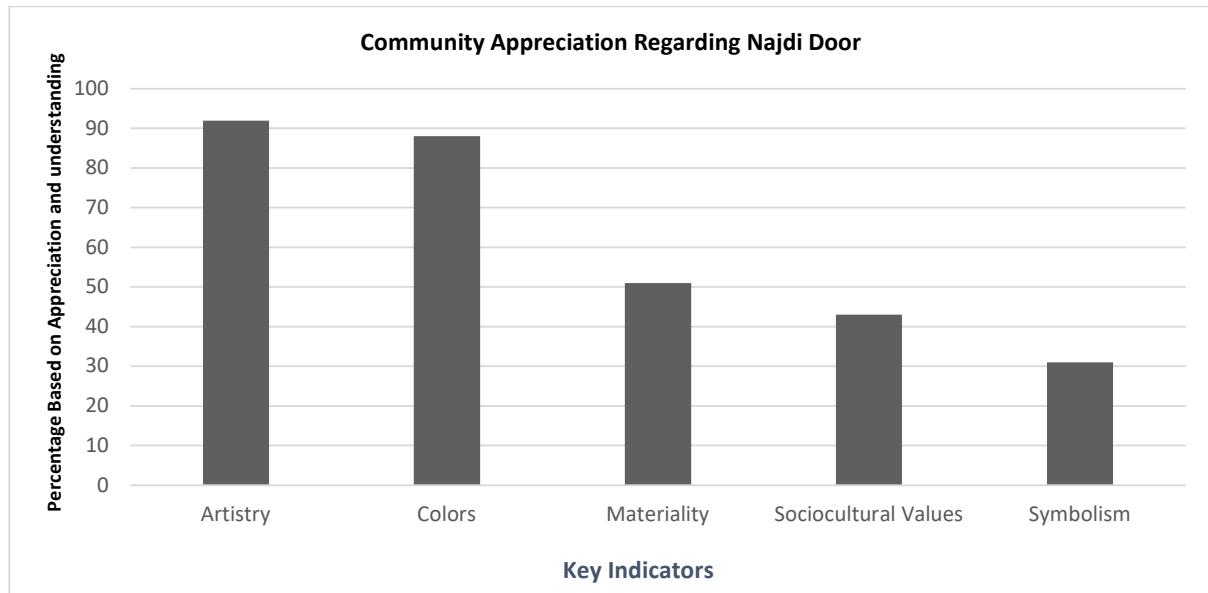


Figure (5). Survey results regarding community appreciation of Najdi doors.

#### 4.1 Color and Material

Najdi doors are commonly crafted from wood, painted in various hues, and adorned with elaborate geometric patterns and floral designs. The colors and materials utilized in Najdi doors have significance as they mirror the culture and history of the region. The doors are frequently painted in vivid colors that reflect the vibrant colors of the desert scenery. The geometric designs and floral themes draw inspiration from the area's abundant cultural heritage.

Wood is utilized in Najdi doors since it is a robust and long-lasting natural material. It is a cost-effective material, making it a suitable option for constructing doors. Additionally, wood can be easily customized to fit different design preferences, making it a versatile choice for Najdi doors. Najdi doors incorporate colors and materials that represent the culture, history, and ecology of the region. The doors, with their appeal and uniqueness, exemplify the region's craftsmanship, adding warmth and character to any space while also improving the overall aesthetic appeal.

The colors and materials in Najdi doors enhance the region's overall appeal in multiple ways. First, the vibrant colors of the doors evoke a feeling of vitality and liveliness (Figure 6). Second,

in the desert terrain, the colors of the doors provide a high level of contrast with the subdued tones of the sand and rocks. Third, the geometric designs and floral themes on the doors enhance the appeal and sophistication of the region's architecture. Fourth, the motifs are frequently influenced by the area's abundant artistic heritage, contributing to the establishment of a sense of place.

Najdi doors are often brightly colored and visually appealing. The doors are frequently painted in vibrant hues such as blue, green, red, black, and yellow. These colors are frequently used together to add contrast and visual interest. To reach this visual appeal, gum Arabic has been used extensively in traditional Najdi painting styles. Gum Arabic, derived from acacia tree sap, is used as a binder, a substance that binds colors together and sticks them to the painted surface (Yaumi et al., 2016). As a result, adding gum Arabic to color paints boosts their luminosity and vibrancy, making the colors look more vivid and translucent. It also enhances the glossiness of the dried paint when affixed to the wooden door, giving the artwork a subtle sheen that can add depth and intensity to the visual experience.

As a result, the color combinations and motifs utilized in Najdi doors are frequently influenced by the region's rich artistic tradition in a variety of ways. First, the bright colors contribute to a sense

of brightness and thrill. This is especially evident in the desert setting, where the hues of the doors contrast with the neutral tones of the sand and rocks. Second, using contrasting hues helps to create visual appeal. The contrast colors are frequently utilized to emphasize distinct aspects of the door, such as the panels, moldings, and hardware. This gives the door a sense of depth and complexity,

making it more visually attractive. Thus, using traditional colors and motifs fosters a sense of cultural identity. While interviewing local artisans, the researcher discussed several colors expressions and embedded meanings in the Najdi doors:

- Blue: a color associated with the sky and water. It is also a calming color that is said to promote peace and tranquility.

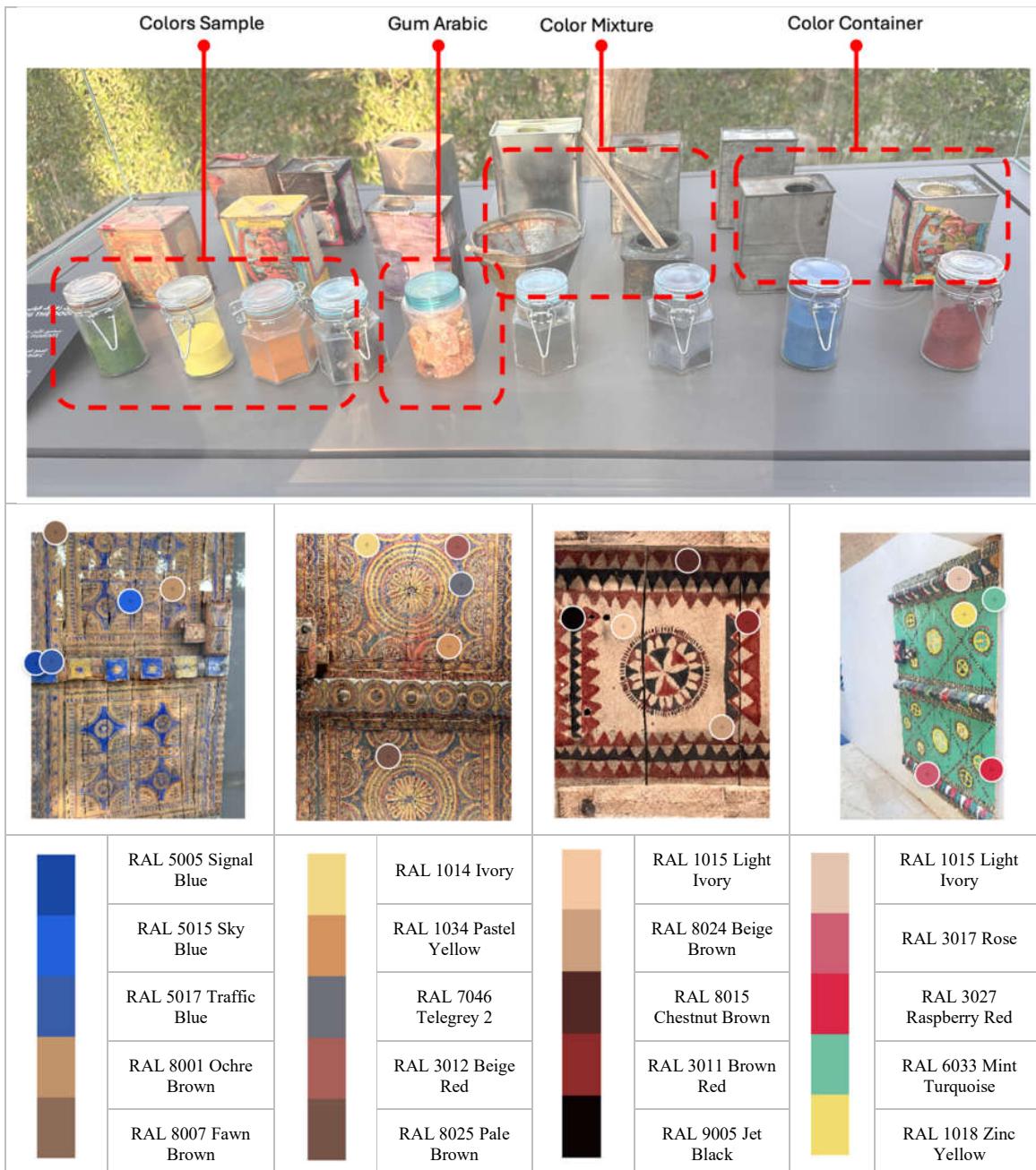


Figure (6). The colors and materials used in crafting the Najdi door artwork. Source: Author.

- Green: a color associated with nature and growth. It is also a refreshing color that is said to promote health and well-being.
- Red: a color used to highlight important elements of the door, such as the panels or the moldings. It is also a festive color that is said to promote happiness and good luck.
- Yellow: a color used to create a sense of warmth and optimism. It is also a welcoming color that is said to promote friendship and hospitality.
- Black: a color used to segregate different motifs and patterns. It is also bold color used to highlight the various carving and complex motifs.

Overall, the intense use of color, sturdy materials, and elaborate designs combine to produce doors that are not only practical but also highly symbolic and aesthetically pleasing, helping to generate a sense of place. As a result, the doors are a one-of-a-kind example of regional craftsmanship and serve as a tangible element in forming a place's identity. The intricate details and unique patterns of color usage found on these doors are a testament to the local craftsmen's skill and artistry, showcasing the region's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, their presence inside homes, frontages, and buildings throughout the region adds a sense of authenticity and traditional identity to the overall architectural landscape of Najd.

#### 4.2 Artistry and Symbolism

The Najdi doors of central Saudi Arabia are not only functional architectural elements, but also significant carriers of cultural symbolism and artistry. The design and decoration of these doors incorporate a variety of motifs, proportions, geometric patterns, and compositions that are rich in meaning and aesthetic value. Thus, the goal here is to explore the 'beyond Najdi doors' artistry and symbolism, shedding light on the conceptual artworks and hidden meanings embedded within Najdi doors that shed light on traditional Najd culture.

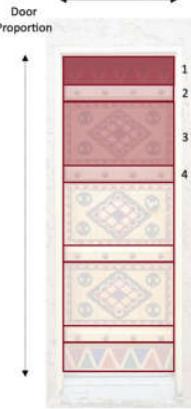
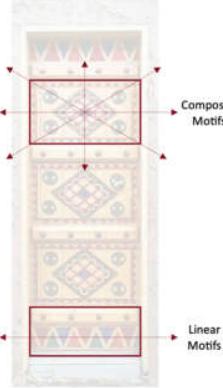
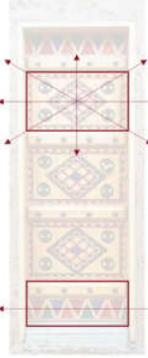
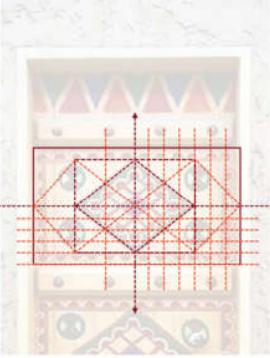
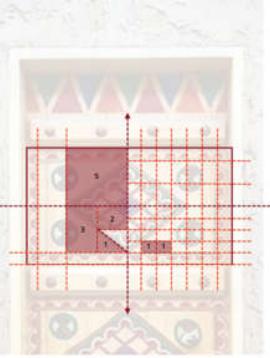
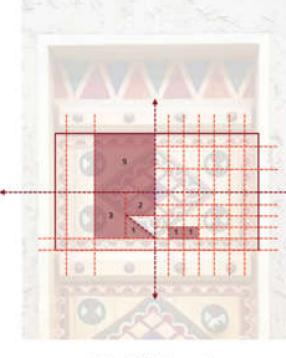
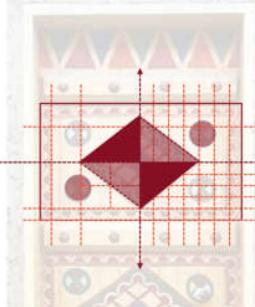
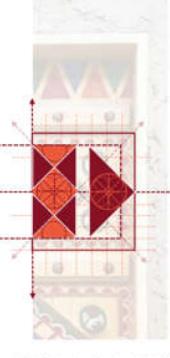
Before examining the artistry of the doors, it is important to grasp the proportions of Najdi doors as the selection of proportion contributes significantly to the final artwork. After careful examination, the height-to-width ratio of approximately (2:1) is a common proportion seen in Najdi doors and we can say that this ratio is derived from common Islamic

architecture principles (Dabbour, 2012). This proportion is perceived to be pleasing to the eye, creating a sense of balance and harmony. The doors are often divided into one or several horizontal panels, locally called 'Aredah'. These panels contribute to how the proportions of geometry and chosen motifs are applied to the door's design as well as how geometry and motifs are arranged in a symmetrical pattern. This makes symmetrical application another important principle in Najdi craftsmanship. From an interview with local artisans, the symmetry is said to create a sense of order and unity, and it is often used to emphasize the importance of certain and different elements in a door.

The technique for designing Najdi doors appears in (Table 5) as a three-part process that starts with door geometry and proportion analysis (Step 1), followed by motif composition analysis through scalar grids and proportional systems (Step 2) and motif redesign using geometric rules (Step 3). The visual analysis shows that Najdi artisans used advanced compositional principles naturally while following modern design principles. The door's vertical fields demonstrate proportional analysis, which serves as a fundamental principle in architectural and graphic design. The grid system presented in (Step 2) shows how motifs are arranged through repetition, rhythm, and alignment. The third step of motif refinement uses geometric harmony and bilateral symmetry to show design thinking, which bases its principles on spatial logic and modularity. This systematic method shows how traditional Najd craftsmanship used design systems that continue to be essential for modern visual disciplines, especially in heritage-based architecture and interior design work.

Applying these basic art principles influences the geometry of Najdi doors as the overall shape of the door is typically a rectangle. The geometrical size and shape is influenced by the available resources of wood and each artisan's ability to work with this limitation, as well as the space in which the door will be placed; thus, the horizontal panels help to create harmony and visual significance, emphasizing the different elements implemented in the door. Therefore, when the doors have two shutters, which are also arranged in a symmetrical pattern, the shutters are often decorated with geometric patterns, floral patterns, or calligraphic inscriptions in an integrated way to ensure homogeneity among different parts of the door.

Table (5). The three steps of the Nadji door design process. Source: Author

Step #1			
Understanding the door size, geometry, and function.			
Step #2			
Exploring the motifs, proportion, and intricate possibilities.			
Step #3			
Implementing artistic motifs based on the size, geometry and function of the door.			

Also, local artisans asserted that typically when a door has two shutters, they design the door patterns to be visually appealing when one of the shutters is opened. This way of designing the Najdi door is meant to add a layer of curiosity when the door is in use. Therefore, the use of geometric patterns here was a way to create a sense of order and harmony, while the use of other patterns such as floral or calligraphic inscriptions is to add attractiveness and meaning to the door.

Examining the door from this perspective leads us to argue that the motifs used on Najdi doors are not merely decorative; they also have architectural artistic and symbolic significance. The geometric patterns, for example, are often based on the principles of Islamic geometry. Islamic geometry is a complex and sophisticated system of geometric patterns that is based on the repetition of simple shapes, such as circles, squares, and triangles. These patterns are often used to create a sense of order and harmony in Islamic architecture. Najdi artisans adopted these principles and applied them to doors specifically as other parts of the built environment were intentionally designed to be plain and simple. This led the Najdi door to be a prominent architectural element, rich in colors and texture.

The motifs are usually inspired directly from nature and the surrounding environment. The floral pattern, for example, includes flowers, plants, and geometrical shapes often seen as symbols of life and fertility in Najdi culture. The use of floral patterns on doors is therefore a symbolic representation of this belief and a non-verbal form of communication intended to welcome visitors and create a sense of abundance and prosperity. Similarly, calligraphy is a highly developed and highly valued art form in Islamic culture, and the use of calligraphic inscriptions on doors is a way to show respect for the written word. The inscriptions are often verses from the Qur'an or other religious texts, and they serve as a reminder of the importance (and ubiquity) of faith in Islamic life.

Therefore, Najdi doors are considered conceptual artworks, where the aesthetic elements are imbued with deeper meanings. These doors serve as a canvas for expressing the cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and artistic aspirations of the inhabitants of the Najd region. The integration of artistry and symbolism transforms each door into a unique piece of art that speaks to the viewer on

multiple levels, transcending its functional purpose.

As a result, Najdi doors can be seen as conceptual artwork in several ways (Figure 7). First, they are often decorated with motifs that have symbolic meanings. For example, the geometric patterns may represent the order and harmony of the universe, while the floral patterns may represent the attractiveness and abundance of nature. Second, Najdi doors are often used to create a sense of mystery and intrigue. The heavy, wooden doors are often covered with intricate carvings and inscriptions, which can make them appear both inviting and forbidding. This sense of mystery and intrigue can be seen as a way to encourage visitors to contemplate the deeper meanings of the door and the home it protects. Third, Najdi doors can be seen as a way to express the identity of the homeowner. The motifs and inscriptions on the door are used to communicate the homeowner's religious beliefs, cultural values, and personal style. In this way, Najdi doors can be seen as a form of self-expression and a way to connect with others who share similar beliefs and values.

Many elements of Najdi doors carry hidden meanings, accessible only to those familiar with the cultural context and religious codes of the region. For example, the geometric patterns on the doors may be seen as a representation of the hidden order of the universe. Similarly, the inclusion of specific floral or faunal motifs and their order reference local legends, proverbs, or spiritual teachings. The calligraphic inscriptions may be seen as a reminder of the hidden power of the written word. These hidden meanings add a layer of complexity and depth to the doors, making them an integral part of the region's cultural heritage and spiritual landscape. In addition, the heavy, wooden doors themselves may be seen as a symbol of protection and security. The doors can be locked to keep out unwanted visitors, and they can also be used to create a sense of privacy and intimacy within the home.

Overall, Najdi doors are rich with symbolism and hidden meaning. They can be interpreted as conceptual artwork, a method for the homeowner to express his identity, and a reminder of life's deeper significance. Furthermore, the complex carvings and decorations on Najdi doors generally represent the artisans' craftsmanship and talent, contributing to their cultural significance. Thus, the Najdi doors serve as an artistic representation of the region's

history and customs, showcasing the distinct blend of artistry and utility that distinguishes Najdi architecture.

Designs of traditional Najdi doors embody aesthetic values that are indispensable design principles for contemporary design education and practice that are rooted in modern Arab heritage. Traditional Najdi artisans use symmetry and proportion alongside repetition, rhythm, and contrast to create visually sophisticated compositions. The balanced arrangement of geometric and floral motifs with harmonious color schemes in panels demonstrates universal design principles while

maintaining regional uniqueness. The design elements in Najdi doors follow fundamental design principles that match modern design education standards, including balance, hierarchy, and unity. The traditional doors of the Najdi region serve as educational resources and design inspiration for contemporary Arab and Islamic design curricula because they provide a culturally rooted system for innovation. The symbolic elements and artistic techniques within these doors function as historical references while providing adaptable design systems for contemporary architecture, interior design, fashion, and visual communication.

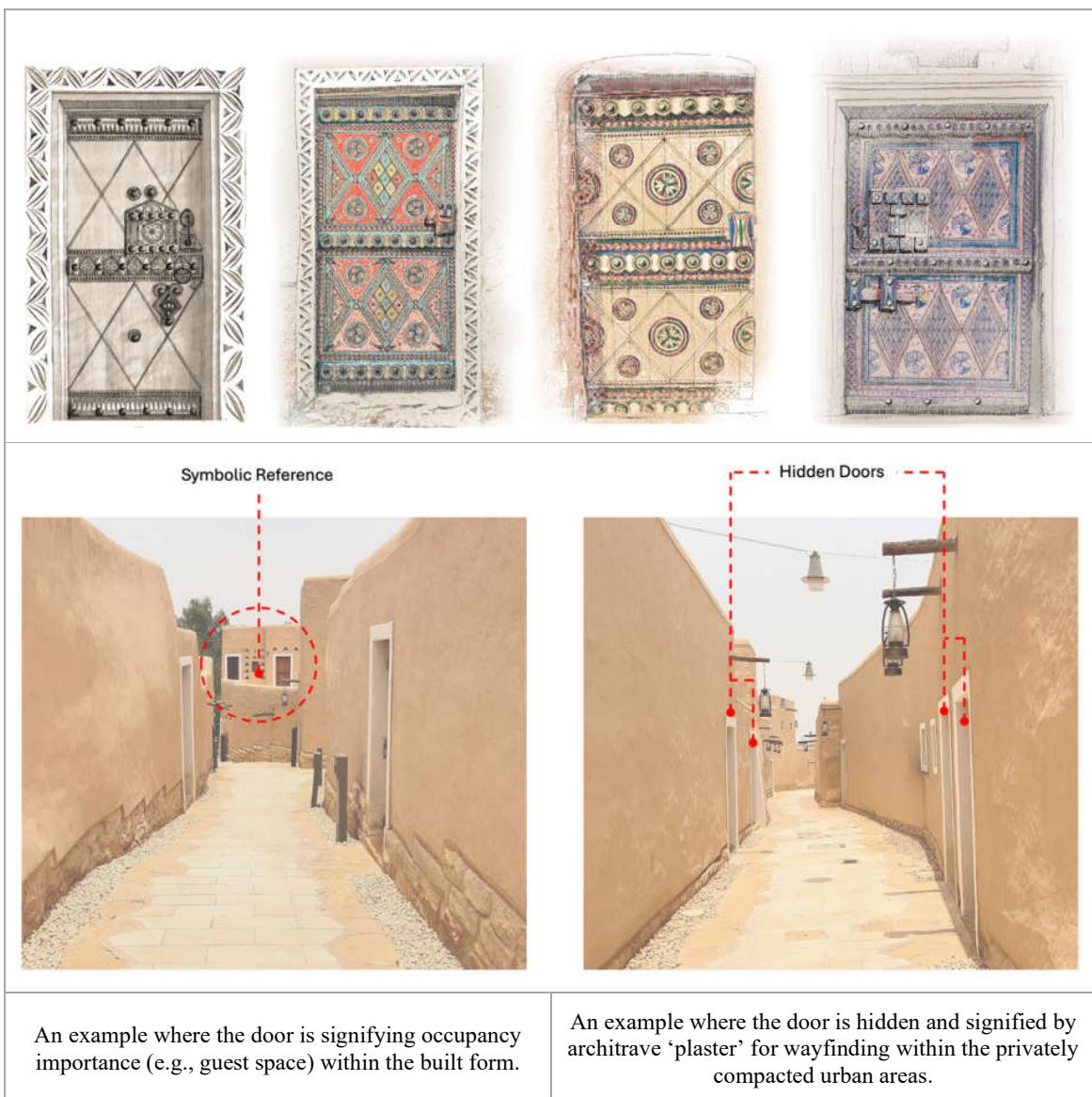


Figure (7). Sample of the motifs and intricate details observed in Najdi doors. Source: Author

### 4.3 Socio-cultural Values

The intricate designs and symbolic meanings associated with Najdi doors deeply reflect the towns of the Najd region. The doors serve as physical entrances and communication tools, facilitating nonverbal interactions between a home's residents and the community. The ornate detailing on the doors often signifies the homeowner's wealth; an adorned door, especially the main entrance used for guests, could suggest considerable affluence, a rarity in Najdi society, with extreme wealth implied if the family entrance is equally elaborate.

Thus, the evolution of Najdi doors can be illustrated across four levels of artisanship, namely, the foundational or utilitarian, enhanced utilitarian, decorative, and symbolic (Figure 8). The foundation stage of the process, where the door structure is as straightforward as it needs to be with no elaborate designs, represents the first level of development. The development to an enhanced utilitarian level is defined at the structure stage, where a basic geometric form is incorporated to ensure the design is functional and aesthetically pleasing. The next level is the decorative level, where the refinement stage polishes the geometric forms and adds more elaborate and intricate designs to the door to make it appear more aesthetically engaging than the previous level. Last, the process reaches the symbolic level of art, where a high level of artwork is achieved through two stages, namely, the aesthetic, which involves the incorporation of stylistic features and visual unity, and the ornamentation, which consists of the use of elaborate and intricate designs to enhance cultural symbolism and artistic complexity. The result of the development of a Najdi door's design is how it developed from the most basic to the most complex while still adhering to its cultural meaning.

This tradition of using door ornamentation as a symbol is deeply ingrained in the practical values of the Najdi people, who typically prefer simplicity in their architectural surroundings. Doors act as expressions portraying different aspects of social life, allowing for distinctions between houses and their purposes while maintaining the fundamental spatial organization within the neighborhood. This emphasis on door ornamentation reflects the importance of social status and hospitality in Najdi culture and the desire for privacy and security within the home. The intricate designs also serve as a form of artistic expression, showcasing the

craftsmanship and creativity of the region's artisans.

A combination of external sociocultural forces like religion, customs, shared values, and geographical and climate-related factors shaped the traditional urban landscape in Najd. These towns stand out from meticulously planned city layouts because of the order that emerged from the interaction of these sociocultural factors that gave rise to their distinctive organic shapes. The narrow, winding streets and clustered housing units reflect the close-knit community structure and emphasis on privacy in Najd. The traditional urban landscape also features prominent landmarks such as mosques and markets and standout symbolic doors that serve as focal points for social gatherings and economic activities.

The profound influence of culture in shaping the physical environment is evident, with symbols often carrying deep social and cultural meanings. In urban settings, people utilize spatial and tangible symbols for nonverbal communication purposes, a testament to the depth of cultural influence. For example, homes in societies may be designed to prioritize private spaces, reflecting societal structures and gender dynamics, further emphasizing the cultural imprint on the physical environment.

In exploring Najdi towns, the research delved into features such as doorways that derive significance from socio-cultural values and environmental requirements. Urban planning and building design principles are processes that influence the development of the built environment. These factors shape the layout of cities and towns, determining the spatial organization and architectural styles and, more significantly, the location of symbolic and ornate architectural doors prevalent in a particular region.

The 'Al-Bab', also known as the doorway, plays a role in expressing social and economic aspects without words. The craftsmanship, choice of design, and materials used all reflect the standing and preferences of the owner. In buildings with two doors, the entrance for guests is typically wider, more embellished, and more vibrant compared to the family entrance, which is narrower and less adorned. These decorations not only guide visitors but also indicate the owner's social position. This silent form of communication is essential for managing interactions and is deeply rooted in Najdi cultural traditions.



Figure (8). The Najdi door: four levels of the artistry process. Source: Author

These insights offer an understanding of how Najdi doors go beyond just being architectural features. They symbolize the values, beliefs, and economic position of the residents while serving as messengers of identity and status in traditional Najdi communities. By studying these elements, researchers can gain important, locally relevant insights into the historical and cultural influences that have shaped urban landscapes.

## 5. Findings: Evolution and Continuity

The constancy of Najdi door architecture demonstrates a distinct combination of functionality and cultural relevance. Influenced by environmental variables such as climate and internal socio-cultural factors such as religion and custom, distinctive urban shapes with organic irregularities have emerged. This irregularity, while not disordered, is maintained by an internal order based on deeply

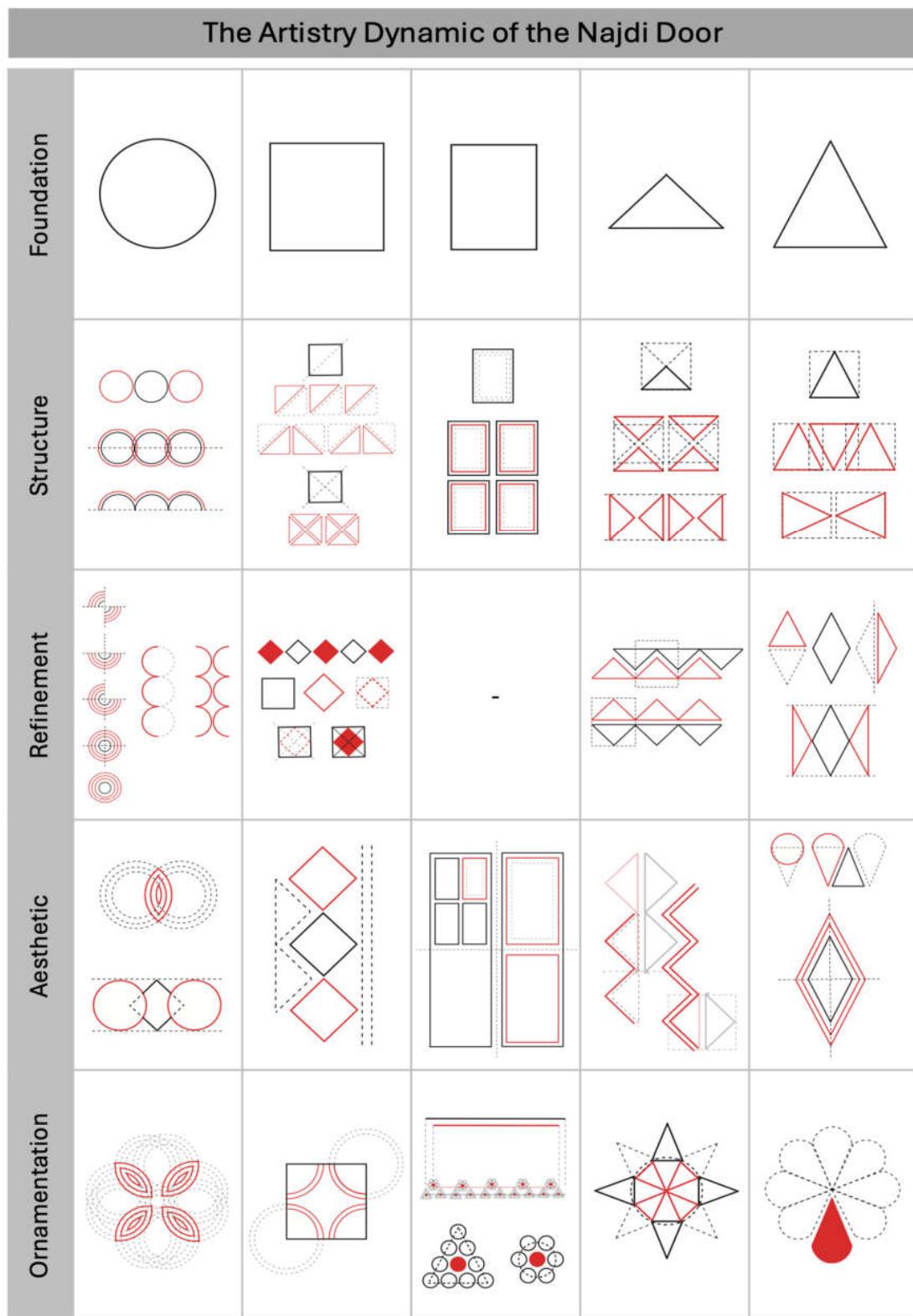


Figure (9). The artistry dynamic of the Najdi door. Source: Author and developed by (Alnaim, 2024)

established cultural norms and a shared concept of space and place.

The design of Najdi doors, with their motifs and proportions, plays a crucial role in the interaction between form and function. These doors are not objects but rather dynamic components that evolve to meet the changing needs and preferences of the community (Figure 9). They serve as a representation of tangible characteristics that not only serve practical functions but also embody the essence of the place. The visually appealing appearance of these doors, coupled with their embedded cultural significance, is highly valued and preserved by the residents. The intricate details and craftsmanship of Najdi doors reflect the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the region. Each door tells a story and contributes to the overall aesthetic of the community, creating a sense of identity and belonging for its inhabitants.

This architectural heritage has nurtured an environment where buildings and their components develop gradually, mirroring the quality of residences and communities' craftsmanship abilities. Thus, the preservation of Najdi doors serves as a reminder of the region's history and the skills that have been passed down through generations. This makes the distinctive designs and motifs on these doors highlight the skill and inventiveness of local craftsmen, making them a source of pride for the community. Such slow growth is lost in modern urban developments, which frequently overlook the complex interplay between cultural values and architectural styles.

The enduring presence of Najdi doors in this changing environment highlights their ability to uphold design principles while adjusting to contemporary trends. By incorporating elements that serve multiple purposes, the community demonstrates its creativity in utilizing these features to enrich diversity within a cohesive architectural style. This flexibility reflects a shared heritage and shared values, contributing to an urban landscape that respects the preferences and traditions of its inhabitants. As a result, Najdi doors serve as a reminder of the importance of preserving cultural heritage in modern society.

Najdi doors represent the necessity of maintaining tradition as cultures evolve. Their slow evolution demonstrates respect for customs, ensuring that changes are monitored within the current socio-cultural context. This approach preserves the essence of Najdi identity, allowing

future generations to respect and reinterpret it. In essence, Najdi doors serve as emblems of cultural continuity and pride, rather than architectural elements. Communities can honor their past while welcoming development and innovation by incorporating these historic characteristics into modern urban contexts.

Finally, the evolution and continuity of Najdi doors reflect a fusion of heritage and modernity, individuality and communal spirit, shape, and significance. The doors represent the history of the Najd region, showing that real sustainability in architecture involves safeguarding the essence of a community along with its tangible structures. By following the lineage of these doorways, we can map out the evolution of a culture that embraces its identity, values community bonds, and sees architecture as a medium for societal creativity.

## 6. Implication and Recommendations

Studying Najdi doors goes beyond admiring their attractiveness; it delves into the core of Saudi Arabian societal values and cultural identity. These doors serve as a window to the shared memories and heritage of the Najdi people, embodying their traditions, beliefs, and way of life. Exploring these remains provides insight into how architectural elements can reflect the social and cultural dynamics of a community, showcasing aspects like societal structure and personal expressions. The intricate craftsmanship and storytelling details in each door showcase a blend of artistry and narratives, offering a wealth of information for cultural historians and anthropologists.

Moreover, ethnographic research sheds light on the significance of preserving crafts as a form of safeguarding culture. It emphasizes how these elements help maintain ties to the past by carrying significance and communal values. Continuing these craft traditions not only honors the skilled artisans who have passed down their knowledge through generations but also serves as a testament to the region's distinct cultural identity amidst rapid modernization.

Furthermore, studying Najdi doors has implications for modern architectural practices, especially in incorporating cultural heritage into contemporary designs. By grasping the values and beauty reflected in these doors, architects and designers can craft spaces that honor heritage while meeting modern needs. Striking a balance between

richness and practicality is key to developing structures and neighborhoods that embody the cultural essence of their residents while serving their current requirements.

### 6.1 Cultural Heritage

Najdi doors symbolize the cultural heritage of Saudi Arabia. They blend aesthetic quality, historical significance, and cultural context to transmit an intricate balance of iconicity, form, and function (Figure 10). The craftsmanship displayed in these doors not only represents a history of collective work and artistic brilliance but also speaks volumes about the social standing of the residents living behind the doors. These doors serve as storytellers of an era, with each pattern and color choice resonating with echoes of the past.

Preserving Najdi doors is akin to safeguarding a chapter of Saudi Arabian history that holds as much importance to the nation's identity as any ancient text or artifact. These doors' vibrant colors and elaborate designs go beyond decoration; they tell tales inspired by the natural surroundings, from sky-blue hues to sunlit yellows that reflect the desert landscape. Through their shapes and floral motifs, these doors offer a window into a world where art seamlessly intertwines with daily life, showcasing

the region's rich artistic legacy.

Studying and conserving Najdi doors underscores tangible cultural relics' role in maintaining heritage continuity. They stand as a tribute to the spirit and resilience of a community that has skillfully expressed its identity through architectural design. These doors, like pieces of art, play a role in the ongoing story of the region, offering future generations a window into their cultural roots.

Moreover, the significance attributed to Najdi doors in terms of heritage clearly calls for safeguarding and celebrating local craftsmanship. It encourages an appreciation for skills and methods that face the threat of being overshadowed by modern industrial practices. Serving as vessels of shared history, these doors embody a cultural heritage that deserves acknowledgment and respect.

Lastly, within the realm of heritage, Najdi doors represent the fusion of beauty, functionality, and tradition. They embody the values and dreams of the people of Najd and carry within them the tales and spirits of those who carefully crafted them. Preserving these doors is not about safeguarding physical objects; it's about recognizing and paying respect to the human stories and societal progressions that these doors have silently observed over centuries.

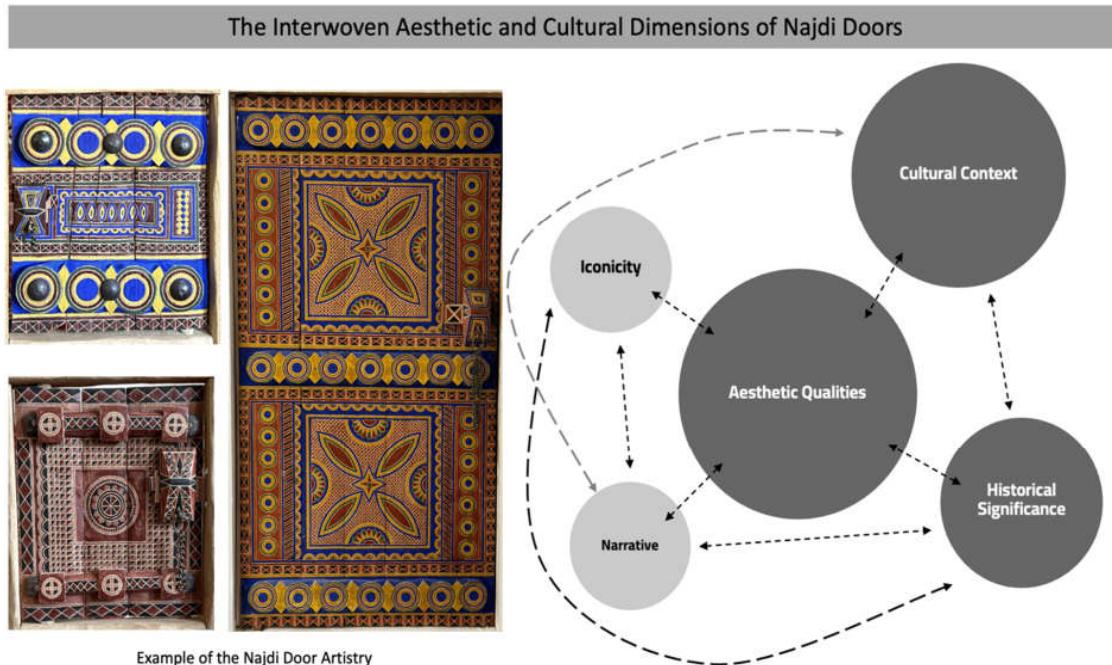


Figure (10). The symbolic significance of Najdi doors. Source: Author.

## 6.2 Contemporary Relevance

The significance of Najdi doors in today's architecture goes beyond their use. They act as a connection between the cultural history of the region and its modern architectural direction. In the changing world of architecture, these doors challenge designers to blend cultural elements with contemporary functionality. With their craftsmanship and beauty, Najdi doors provide a model for incorporating traditional design aspects into new buildings, ensuring that cultural heritage remains a vital part of architectural storytelling (Figure 11). This harmony of old and new enhances the visual appeal of modern structures and roots them in a cultural context that adds depth and significance.

The current architectural practice in Saudi Arabia and beyond shows how heritage aesthetics get adapted through door reinterpretation. The Riyadh revitalization projects, including King Salman Park and Al-Diriyah Gate Development, use Salmani architecture, which incorporates stylized entrances and calligraphic panels and woodwork elements that draw from Najdi traditions. The Najdi door replicas used in AlUla boutique hotels and Hail eco-lodges combine sustainable materials with laser-carved motifs that both respect historical designs and meet contemporary building standards and environmental requirements.

Beyond Saudi Arabia, parallels can be drawn to Marrakesh's Moroccan riad renovations which share similarities with Saudi Arabian heritage

door conservation. The mentioned cases show how heritage doors function beyond their symbolic and aesthetic value by improving thermal buffering and ventilation systems and spatial zoning capabilities. The researcher explains that prototypes backed by public or private conservation initiatives can function as scalable models for building new housing typologies and hospitality spaces and cultural institutions. Heritage-driven design has become a preferred source of innovation for architects and designers instead of nostalgic replication. Najdi doors present a powerful model for contemporary design because they incorporate compositional logic with color theory and symbolic elements that create culturally rooted, human-centered designs.

In spite of significant outside influences, the cultural symbolism of Najdi doors is of great significance in Saudi architecture. As symbols of tradition, they serve as reminders of the country's heritage in craftsmanship and aesthetics. The task at hand is to preserve these expressions in today's architectural landscape by reinterpreting them in a modern context rather than simply replicating the past. This calls for a design approach that honors traditional patterns and colors while adapting to current trends and lifestyles. Through their efforts, these doors continue to narrate tales of heritage and identity, underscoring their enduring cultural value in modern times.

From one perspective, Najdi doors continue to captivate with their intricate designs and vibrant hues that break away from modern architecture's simplicity. Today, architects and designers face the

		
Façade artwork	Interior decorative sculpture	Souvenir

Figure (11). Examples of Najdi door modern application. Source: Author.

task of blending the geometric patterns and lively colors of these doors seamlessly with the sleek lines and subtle charm of contemporary design. Striking a balance between intricacy and minimalism can establish a visual connection between tradition and modernity, giving distinctive character to buildings that might otherwise blend into the cityscape.

While Najdi doors were functional in their context, adapting them for today's needs poses a unique challenge where security, climate considerations, and technological integration take precedence. Modern interpretations must ensure that these doors' cultural and aesthetic essence remains intact without compromising their functionality in structures. This might involve using materials and construction methods to recreate the look of traditional doors while enhancing their performance to meet present-day requirements.

Preserving Najdi doors within today's landscape presents its own set of obstacles, as urban development often neglects cultural heritage preservation, resulting in the disappearance of significant, culturally-relevant architectural features. The importance of incorporating Najdi doors into architecture highlights the lasting impact of cultural relics and their capacity to evolve and resonate in different ways as time passes. When architects and communities blend these elements into present-day structures, they actively honor their cultural roots, guaranteeing they remain vibrant components within urban landscapes.

## 7. Conclusion

The exploration of Najdi doors in this research has uncovered layers of historical and artistic importance ingrained in this iconic, traditional architectural feature, showcasing its lasting impact on Saudi Arabia's cultural scene. As highlighted in the study, Najdi doors transcend being mere architectural elements; they embody identity, tradition, and skilled craftsmanship that reflect the region's heritage and the community's bond with its surroundings. The thorough examination of their patterns, materials, and symbolic significance not only deepens our understanding of the Najdi region's 'heartland' architectural legacy, but also emphasizes the necessity of preserving these aspects as a crucial tie to history.

Through this approach, the study has shed light on how these doors remain relevant today by influencing contemporary architectural trends and

cultural expressions in Saudi Arabia. By merging beauty with modern functionality, Najdi doors demonstrate how cultural traditions can endure amidst rapid change. Their incorporation into present-day structures serves as a tribute to Saudi Arabia's history and stresses the significance of blending cultural heritage into future developments to ensure that Najdi's identity remains cherished for generations ahead.

The lasting charm and importance of Najdi doors highlight the seated respect for traditional art in Saudi Arabia, showcasing a society that values its historical stories and creative expressions. This research adds to the discussion on traditional Saudi architecture and cultural legacy, emphasizing the crucial role of conservation efforts in preserving the link between the past and present. As Najdi doors grace buildings, they serve as poignant reminders of our shared human history, enriching our lives today with the heritage of previous generations and inspiring a future where tradition and innovation coexist harmoniously.

While the research offers significant insights into the cultural, symbolic, and design values of Najdi doors, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The ethnographic and visual data collection focused on exhibits and regional settings, which restricts the ability to generalize the findings to the entire Saudi society. The survey participants who were culturally engaged outnumbered those who were indifferent or unaware, which may have resulted in underrepresentation of these groups. The study provides comparative insights, but its focus remains limited to Najdi traditions without exploring other regional or transnational door typologies found in the Arab and broader Islamic world (Ummah). The research maintains its value despite these limitations, which point to future research opportunities that include expanded geographic scope, longitudinal data collection, and interdisciplinary methods.

Exploring the historical and artistic significance of Najdi doors reveals numerous opportunities for future research that can deepen our understanding and admiration for these architectural marvels. One promising avenue for further exploration lies in technology, such as digitally documenting and recreating Najdi doors with their intricate designs. This safeguards their visual and structural intricacies for future generations and opens up these treasures to a wider global audience for appreciation. Cutting-edge technologies such as

3D scanning and augmented reality could provide experiences that bring to life the craftsmanship and symbolism embedded in Najdi doors through innovative interactive methods.

Moreover, conducting research on Najdi doors in relation to other architectural traditions within Saudi Arabia and neighboring regions could provide valuable insights into the exchange of artistic styles, techniques, and symbols across various geographic and cultural settings. Such studies would enhance our understanding of how architectural heritage is interconnected and the common themes that transcend local boundaries. Additionally, exploring the anthropological aspects of Najdi doors presents a promising avenue for future investigation, especially in deciphering their significance in present-day Saudi society. Research efforts could delve into how interpretations and uses of Najdi doors mirror evolving social norms, values, and identities in the Kingdom. This exploration could also touch upon the influence of globalization on craftsmanship and the methods artisans employ to safeguard their heritage amidst societal transformations.

Furthermore, there is a call for educational programs designed to raise awareness among younger generations about the cultural importance of Najdi doors. Developing curricula, hosting workshops, and creating interactive museum displays could instill a sense of pride and responsibility towards this heritage among individuals, ensuring its preservation for future generations. Involving communities in conservation endeavors could empower people to participate actively in protecting their cultural legacy. The combination of these opportunities and fields of research highlights the exciting possibilities for further exploration into Najdi's doors. This work aims to enhance our understanding of Saudi Arabia's legacy and play a vital role in safeguarding it for future generations.

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## مدخل إلى التراث: دراسة الجوانب الفنية والرمزية والدلالات الاجتماعية والثقافية للباب النجدي في وسط المملكة العربية السعودية

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قدم للنشر في ١٤٤٦/٨/١٣ هـ؛ وقبل للنشر في ١٤٤٦/١١/٢٧ هـ.

ملخص البحث. تتناول هذه الدراسة الإمكانيات الفنية والأهمية الثقافية للأبواب النجدية في منطقة وسط المملكة العربية السعودية، مع التركيز على قيمها الرمزية والجمالية والمجتمعية. ومن خلال تحليل الدلالات الرمزية، والمواد المستخدمة، والمعاني الاجتماعية المرتبطة بهذه الأبواب، تهدف الدراسة إلى إبراز مكانتها الثقافية المتميزة. وتستعرض الدراسة خلفيات هذه الأبواب وتصاميمها الفنية وأهميتها الاجتماعية، مسلطة الضوء على دورها كأصول مادية للهوية الثقافية والمكانية الاجتماعية والتراث الجماعي. تعتمد منهجية الدراسة متعددة الأبعاد على التحليل البصري، والدراسات السابقة، والمقابلات، والاستبيانات، لتقديم فهم شامل للجوانب المختلفة المتعلقة بالأبواب النجدية. وتحاول هذه المنهجية من التعمق في استكشاف الأبعاد الجمالية والرمزية لهذه الأبواب، وتوفير رؤى معمقة حول نظرية المجتمع إليها ود الواقع إنسانيها. ومن خلال هذا النهج، تبرز الدراسة الصلة بين الحرف التقليدية وأهميتها في السياقات المعاصرة، مقدمةً بذلك منظوراً جديداً لهذا النوع من التراث الثقافي. وتبين النتائج أن الأبواب النجدية تجسّد الهوية والتقاليد والفن، وتعكس تراث المنطقة وصلتها العميقه بالبيئة المحيطة. كما أن التصاميم المعتمدة في هذه الأبواب، إلى جانب المواد المستخدمة ودلالاتها الرمزية، تُسهم بصورة ملحوظة في السرد الثقافي للمملكة العربية السعودية، وتحوك على أهمية الحفاظ على هذه الأصول كحلقة وصل جوهرية مع التاريخ. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى إمكانية توظيف هذه القيم في التوجهات المعمارية الحديثة، كما تُبرز أهمية الحفاظ على الروابط التاريخية بين الماضي والحاضر. حيث تسهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء النقاش حول العمارة التقليدية السعودية والتراث العثماني، مؤكدةً على أن الحفاظ عليها يعد أمراً جوهرياً لضمان استمرارية الهوية الثقافية في ظل تسارع وتيرة الحداثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المدخل، الحرف، اللون، النسب، الزخارف.