

This article documents a recent sociolinguistic phenomenon at work in the Arabian Peninsula. Being Badu used to be associated with a pastoral lifestyle, but sedentarism turned this lifestyle into an ethnic identity. The nomadic population of Kuwait, on the other hand, was concentrated in and around the town of Jahra (KA ilʔjahraa, MSA alʔjahraay), about thirty–two kilometers from Kuwait City, but it moved freely within Kuwait as well as between Kuwait and KSA, Iraq, Qatar, or Iran. The epicenter of this phenomenon is probably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), but these codes also exist in the State of Kuwait (henceforth Kuwait) and the State of Qatar (henceforth Qatar). The sedentary population lived within the walls of densely populated Kuwait City (KA madinat liʔkweet), while the nomadic population moved in search of pastures in the sparsely populated remainder of the country. In Kuwait, both Hadhar and Badu are now sedentary and, although the Hadhar dialect and lifestyle define the contours of a national melting pot, dialectal and social differences remain between these two co–cultures, as we see in the next section. Members of this group are known as Badu (KA sg. bduwiyy, pl. badu, MSA sg. badawiyy, pl. badw). They lived in the walled city of Kuwait City, which was divided into four districts called jibla 'prayer direction' (MSA qibla), oarg 'East' (MSA oarq), ilʔwaso ato 'the center' (MSA alʔwasato), and ilʔ. Some Badu tribes have always lived in Kuwait, but the 1960s and 1970s saw significant Badu immigration from KSA. Since the beginning of the twenty–first century, some young people of Badu origin (also known as Bedouin) have been using numeric codes to refer to their tribes in digital media, such as social networks, and in public areas, such as bumper stickers on cars and graffiti. 1 These codes express pride in their heritage and are used and discussed openly. The Badu gave up pastoralism and settled down in newly built houses in Jahra or distant suburbs of Kuwait City. Its urban dwellers are called Hadhar (KA sg. Rdo iriy, pl. Rado ar, MSA .sg. Rado ariyy, pl. Rado ar). 2