

# TATREEZ

## PALESTINIAN CROSS-STITCH EMBROIDERY

### Tatreez dates back 3000 years in the Middle East

In its modern form, it has survived in Palestine through generations under Ottoman, British and Israeli rule, as a form of expression and resistance for Palestinian women.



### The Culture

*"We embroidered the side panels for such a long time!*

*Remember Halimeh, when we were pals?*

*We embroidered the chest panels for such a long time!*

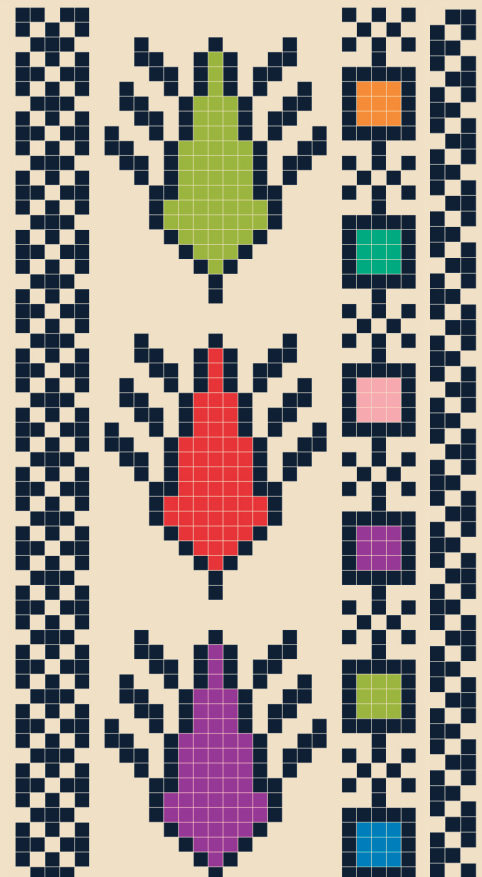
*Remember Halimeh, when we were girls?"*

Lyrics of a nostalgic wedding song from former village of Beit Dajan, near Jaffa, recalls the long process of preparing the 'wedding trousseau'.

### Techniques

In the 19th Century there were two main embroidery regions in Palestine – southern Palestine and Galilee – each with a distinctive style. Every village then has its own distinctive style.

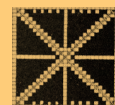
The main technique was (and still is) cross stitching. But Bethlehem uses a distinctive method of couching with silk and metallic cord.



### Reoccurring Symbols and Motifs

Tatreez patterns are mostly geometric shapes, but also include motifs from the daily, rural life of Palestinian women, such as: the cypress tree, bunches of grapes, birds of paradise or a rainbow.

The geometric designs were given creative and humorous names, with the most traditional patterns shown here.



'Foreign moon'



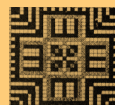
'Cow's eye'



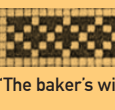
'Mill wheel'



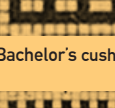
'Crab'



'Moon with feathers'



'The baker's wife'



'Bachelor's cushion'



'Old man's teeth'



'Old man upside down'



### A Thob Malak or Malekeh

The best dress for a bride is traditionally contributed by the groom to the 'wedding trousseau', and commissioned from professional embroiderers, mostly based in the Bethlehem area.

### The Nakba through Tatreez

Rachel Dedman's exhibition Labour of Love showed how the Nakba played out through Palestinian women's embroidered clothing. One dress on display was given from one refugee to another just after the Nakba, and had been stitched with an UNRWA aid rice sack to fit the recipient's size.

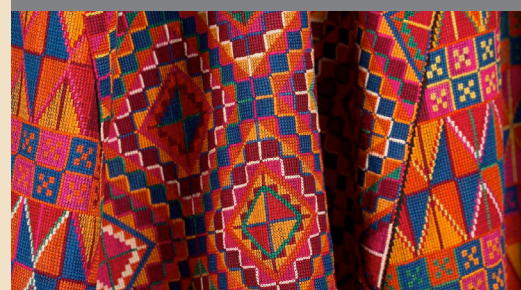
### Intifada Dresses

During the Intifada, Palestinian women embroidered symbols of resistance onto the dresses, such as rifles and the Palestinian flag.



### Glossary

- Satin = "Atlas"
- Taffeta = "Heremzi"
- Royal = "Malak"
- Fabric = "Kermesot"
- Dress = "Thob"



REFERENCES: *Palestinian Embroidery* (1988) by Shelagh Weir and Serene Shahid and *Embroidery from Palestine* (2006) by Shelagh Weir. Both books published by The British Museum.