

## Study the Textile Motifs in Islamic Middle East (Case Study: Ottoman and Saudi Arabia)

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### Abstract

Islamic textiles include the textile produced in Islamic countries and regions, as a reflection of art and poetry of this religion. When Islam came to power, the tax paid by the non-Islamic countries to the Islamic government included valuable fabrics and textiles. Their style and early designs of the fabrics were inspired by the traditions and art of the tribes. But gradually the method of texture and decoration on the fabrics was influenced by the Islamic art of that era. So that on some of the pieces one can observe the Quranic verses and religious ritual. In this article, the textile motifs have been studied in the Ottoman Empire and Saudi Arabia. The weavers in this region other than paying attention to the customs, tradition and Islamic poetry's also looked for innovation so as to prevent textiles with religious application. The paper is based on descriptive-analytical method and data collection were from library studies.

*Keywords:* Textile; Motifs; Ottoman; Saudi Arabia

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### 1. Introduction

The Ottoman Empire continued from the end of the 4th century to the beginning of the 20th century. The empire has been established from the Moroccan frontier in the west to Iran in the east and Venice. The Ottomans were the Turks who came to Asia Minor country after the Seljuk period, and settled in Ankara. They entered the Balkans by taking over the power by the Seljuk, and took Serbia and Bulgaria before the extinction of the east Roman Empire and called it as Essenbol (or Istanbul) and converted the Bursa capital. The Ottomans formed a community with the combination of central Asian traditions and civilizations.

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Since the fall of Constantinople, the Ottomans were known as the Turks, the name was used for the central Asian tent inhabitants. The Ottomans, through family relation with Christianity were able to bring in many traditional Byzantine fabrics weaving with skilled labor force. The Byzantines were very famous in fabric design textures through texture and shuttle machines. The Ottoman period was known for its richness and fabric weaving.

### 1.1. Designs and Motifs

The Ottoman court in the 10th, 11th, 16th and 17th centuries used the color spectrum from live and vibrant colors to graceful colors. The darker colors were usually used as the background color for silk clothes. A small amount of metallic fiber was used for color motifs and the patterns looked like floating waves on the surface of the fabrics. In contrast to the light color shadows with simple forms in the texture was used when the base was silver or golden fibers which induced a better two-dimensional effect.

The coloring and design of the oldest work of art of the Ottoman era, called as Sultan Bayzid, are quite similar to the striped silk fabrics of Iberian Islamic and Central Asia that may be linked to the movement of Turk romanticism in the early 9th and 15th centuries. Three types of fabrics was produced in large amount which were velvet (cadif), golden stripe fabrics, similar to lampa fabric and gold or silver texture fabric, similar to the French tattoo fabric.

The atlas fabric was woven with silk warp and cotton weft woven with Satin texture with color and knot technique. There was also various cotton fabrics produced in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire. Usually, the fabrics were made of goat's hair, the mohair (Arabic word means selection). The ordinary people used goat wool. The Muslim cleric's clothes were usually made of wool, which was the sign of simplicity and purity.

## 2. Materials

### 2.1. Sheep Wool

Due to the presence of extensive pastures for sheep in Anatolia always huge amount of wool was found. Wool because of its insulating properties was used for weaving blankets. In the past villagers used wool to make their clothes. The second grade wool was used to weave mufflers and shepherd clothing.

### 2.2. Camel Hair

Anatolia for the past fifty years has been the home of thousands of camels. The camels were used to transport goods between mountain villages and local towns and transporting coal from mines to Turkish ports. The camel hair because of its softness and been expensive was used for making carpets and clothes. It was usual for the fabrics to have braid of white hair of the anchor goat. Today there is no camel and camel hair in Anatolia.

### 2.3. Anchor Goat Hair

The anchor goat hair was obtained from small goat hair of the central Anatolian. Anchor (presently as Ankara) was the main center for the trade of goat's hair, which was the reason for its named. The anchor goat's hair is silky and fluffy, and is warmer than other wool. This type of wool because of been expensive was mixed with sheep wool. Nowadays the Anchor goats are

commercially grown and there is no longer any good quality of the goat hair. The goat's hair is water-resistant the villagers and the tent people believe that there is a magic in the goat's hair. The goat's hair can repel the snake and scorpion bite. Black goat's hair was traditionally used for making tents and carpets.

#### 2.4. Flax (Linen)

Hemp is cultivated in area and after processing is woven. As flax is strong, light, durable, and resistant and cool, are used for making clothes for businessman and wealthy people. The Ottoman people used linen for embroidery; they imported linen from Egypt which was the historical center of flax.

#### 2.5. Cotton

Traditionally, in west and south of Anatolia on small-scale cotton was cultivated for the use of domestic and industrial purposes. Cotton was used for making clothes, beans bags, and floor mat, drying of fruit, such as apricots and tomatoes. Cotton like Hemp has benefits for the flow of air within itself. The thread was suitable for making rugs and bags. Today cotton is cultivated in south-east Turkey in the Atatürk dam area. It has an annual income of twenty million dollars for Turkey in the towel industry.

#### 2.6. Silk

The raw silk of the Ottoman silk weaving industry was imported from Iran, or from Anatolia and the Greek islands. The city of Bursa was the center for the production of silk weaving before the conquest of Constantinople. The designs and techniques were influenced by Italian art and, to a degree, by the Mediterranean art, which was the cause of the blend of European-Islamic designs. Flower and vegetative motifs were common. The Bursa's fabrics did not have the complexity of the Safavid fabrics and the Indian Mughals. The Italian silk and velvet, like the Ottoman fabrics were used until the eighteenth century, and were always influenced in the Ottoman's designs.

#### 2.7. Hemp

Hemp was cultivated in the Central and Northern Anatolia. But in the 1970s its cultivation was prohibited, because it was used to produce marijuana and hashish. The hemp fiber has the property of flow of air within itself and because of this reason it is used to make clothes and wheat bags and storage of fruits and vegetables in the winter. The strong hemp was used to make the rope. Hemp has medicinal property, when people of Anatolia sleep outside in summer, they use hemp floor spread for cooling purpose. Today, hemp is imported from India to Turkey, which does not have the color and softness beauty of Anatolian hemp. With the prohibition of exporting precious metals, the designed silk fabric decorated with images of Christ and the symbols of Christianity were exported to the Orthodox churches of Balkans and Russia.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Needlework

The needlework in the Ottoman period was the most common method to decorate fabrics. Hand-made needlework in the early centuries and machine embroidery in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries was common. There was domestic and commercial (for sale) needlework aspect. Rudy Taylor a fabric researcher says, “Although women were engaged in needlework, but men made larger fabrics with metal threads”. The ottoman needlework remains with the commercial aspect, and the Ottoman needlework has been lost with the domestic aspects.

The multi-layer clothes of men and women of Ottoman were equipped with designed shawls. The short shawls (Yoqur) for women and long shawls (Cusack) for men were plain or striped. The looped shawls were wrapped around the waist that was not included in thin shawls of cotton or linen (flax). The two ends of the shawl were suspended from the front of the waist and had big flower patterns. As the shawls were seen from both sides, their design was embroidered on both sides. Motif was another needlework of loose trousers that was worn by men and women. The cutting and raw materials implemented in it differed for men and women, but the common parts of women's and men's trousers were the loose thigh part and one band to tie around the waist. The needlework of the women's trousers was lots and the designed section were seen on the anklets, and there was no place left without needlework.

The style of the Anatolia (Asia Minor) needlework was different from the European-Turkey style of needlework which was called as Rommeli style. The first needlework style in the shawls was motifs or single or repetitive floral designs, and the second needlework style in shawls was used as vertical row of flowers with chain stitches. Less has remained from the type of trousers, but has preserved the Rommeli needlework trousers. The Turkish Muslim women clothes were collected and burned after their death. Much needlework was sold to Jews and Armenians, which were used as rectangular and complex shawls. The city of Salem of Ottoman (Thessaloniki), and the city of Kavala, Greece, were the trading center for Western Europe. Beautiful needlework fabrics were used to wrap gifts. These fabrics were large, square shaped and decorated with floral patterns. Other needle fabrics were used for turbans, bedspread, backrest, floor cover mat and mirrors.

### 3.2. Embroidered Border

The most distinctive fabric of Turkey is the border embroidered (IA/BEBILA), which has been used to create head band border for men and women. But today it is only used for handkerchief borders which has plain and floral patterns or three-colored block printing in Istanbul and Anatolia region.

### 3.3. Beaded Work

The Turkey's artists in the past used Murano beads in Venice's coral lake. It is likely that this profession has flourished because of the cooperation and business with Venice. Currently, Czech Bohemian beads are used. The main technique of beading is used for making wallets and decorative bags.

### 3.4. Block Printing

The printing workshops of Turkish fabric used wooden blocks for printing on cotton in two, three or four colors. The printing of women's scarves and prayer stools were considered with floral blocks. The Armenian fabric printing workshops was in Istanbul and other textile printing workshops in Bursa and wester Anatolia. This technique was transferred from India to Iran and then to Turkey.

### 3.5. ICAT and Tie-Dye Technique

The color technique and knot warp and giving them patterns before fabric weaving was applied in many parts of Turkey. Today this technique has been used for the fabric production with the combination design of margins; which is limited to the Trabzon Black seaport and the city of Gaziantep in the eastern Anatolia. In this port, towels and wrappers of three color cotton are produced. Gaziantep is a famous city in the production of satin silk fabrics (Mashruba) with hidden cotton weft and seen warp with colors and knot technique. This type of fabric used designs of repetitive row motifs or yellow arrow design to make long dresses for Ottoman women's. Presently, this fabric is exported to Syria and used for making women's bordered coats.

### 3.6. Weaving with Two Bars

Weaving with two bars in Anatolia Mountains region with cold winter weather and extensive pasture for herds of sheep is the main reason for weaving tradition in this region. Girls wear strong colorful socks for themselves and their family members. The men's socks were long and women's socks were short. Each region had its own particular style in weaving socks that was related to the status of people of that region. A single man in the Sivas region wore Kuk socks and married man wore Buick socks (which mean a young and complete man). In the villages of Turkey, for corporal and army sergeants had special designs. Men's socks had more decoration but women's socks were plain and short.

### 3.7. Felt Work

Among the clothes manufactured by the Anatolian women, the felt as the cover garment had an important role in protecting the shepherds from environmental factors. The sheep are washed with river water; the wool is trimmed and beaten so as to fix the small particles in the wool. Comb is used for better separation of wool fibers. The wool can be colored to get colored felt. Then the wool is uniformly spread on the mat, and then sprinkled with hot water. The entire wool gets rolled and then opens, this is possible with the help of several people's forearms and elbows. After drying, a denser fabric is obtained which has the capability of cutting and stitching. The shepherds shoulder strap and floor cover mat of Anatolian's are made of felt. In recent years, the city of Konya has been famous for the production of colorful and decorative hats of felt.

### 3.8. Harak Production

Reza Pasha, the Minister of Defense of the Ottoman Empire, in 1259/1843, was the founder of a small netted silk and cotton fabric factory in Herak (city outside Istanbul). Sultan by observing the equipment helped him to develop this faster. The factory was developed in 1267/1850; by importing one hundred Austrian jacquard weaving machines, including raw materials and different designs from Vienna. A general manager from Vienna and an engineer named Mriver from Lyon in France joined this collaboration. All the royal palaces products were according to present style. The designs of some sections were beautiful and imported. These designs, which were recently obtained in 1267/1850, had three designers, one Italian and two German. The lack of planning and training program faced problems at the production, where only one-tenth of the weaving machines worked. However, at the London Exhibition in 1268/1851, a number of silk fabrics from Herak were exhibited. Also, in 1272/1855, the exhibition held simultaneously in Paris and Izmir exhibited, textiles and military uniforms, printed cotton fabric of Zeytinburnu (near the current airport in

İstanbul), velvet of Herak, Moroccan silk, Satin fabric, Taffeta, lace fabric and ribbons. In 1274/1857, decision was made to stop the weaving of velvet fabric on which decorative flowers with golden fibers, because the quality was below the standard. Instead, began the production of silk fabrics and cotton velvet.

### 3.9. Embroidery

Although the European travelers were not interested in the domestic textiles, instead were interested in embroidered fabrics. References related to embroidery are more often seen in the 13th and 19th century logbook. Considering the embroidery in the writings of European writers, including women writers, has been observed. Women's writers had the right to enter the family privacy and royal shrines. These sources show that decorative embroidered textiles are the best substitute for patterned textiles. In the late 13th and 18th centuries, as the needlework technique was used, the Ottoman weavers simultaneously used embroidery techniques. In this technique special needles were used and the final shape of the work was similar to those of the hook chain weaving. This works gradually diverged from the traditional Ottoman patterns. In delicate example, the creation of skilled imagination using silk with a variety of shade of colors to enhance the effects of light and shadows and this action creates a smooth texture in embroidery. Most works are still stitched in two types of embroidery. In the process of implementation of change program, there was more the influence of European designs. The printed cotton fabrics were embroidered with golden thread to resemble the French embroidered silk fabrics. The knotted strip design and butterfly knot with flower bunches were very popular in rococo style. These decorations were done on silk fabrics, and decorative elements such as the use of delicate decorations in embroidery lacing were repeated.

## 4. Saudi Arabia

Since the foundation of Allah's house by Abraham, this land has been greatly appreciated. The country with the emergence of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) became the center for the foundation of world civilization. Saudi Arabia is considered to be the heart of Islam in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Kaaba is the focal point of Islam in Mecca. The Kaaba or the house of Allah is a black stone cube covered with a large cloth (kisawa) with Arabic writing and needle embroidered the name of Allah with silver thread. The cloth was a gift from the caliph, and during the Ottoman period was woven in Cairo or Damascus and annual ceremony was sent to Mecca and Medina with camel caravan. Kisawa was needle weaved at Khan Khalil of Cairo workshop, but now it's done in Mecca.

Saudi Arabia is a vast country, desert with hot climate with dispersed population. The Arabic tribes were living in tents, semi-nomadic shepherds nomadic, farmers and people living in towns. The women's of the tribes weaved the tents fabric from sheep wool and goat's hair with a ground knitting machine, with a loop rod to lift the warp. Abundant wool and short-term migration of shepherds and women had made them skilled weavers. The city of al-Hassa is in the northeast of Saudi Arabia's urban center for knitting. It has been mentioned in the narrations that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not like the strong smell of the woolen garments. This shows that, to remove the normal fat from wool, potash was not used. The use of woolen garments in the Muslim world was the symbol of simplicity and honesty.



**Fig 1** Traditional weaving (Saudi Arabia)

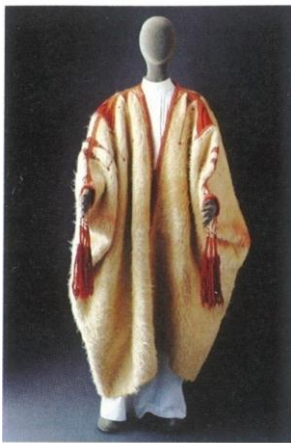
## 5. Local Costumes

**Urban Clothes for Women and Men:** The people clothes of Hijaz a region between Medina and Taif, reflects the cities of Mecca and Medina. The global Haji with various fabrics weaving arrived in Mecca and Medina. Men's clothing consists of two pieces long white seamless fabric that can be made with any material, except silk. One of the fabric is wrapped around the waist and the other around the left shoulder. There is no special coverage for women except that they need to cover their face and wear slippers like men. Women's clothing is usually made of Indian needlework silk clothes with Indian golden thread. In the past, urban men used ottoman hats and silk headband with floral chain stitching. The headband consists of two style namely a needle embroidered with wild silk (Mugallari), which was made in Kolkata, and the other was a colored embroidered made in west India and Iran made by Indian and Iranian workers living in Hijaz. The basic clothing for men throughout the country was long and relatively tight and for women it was loose.

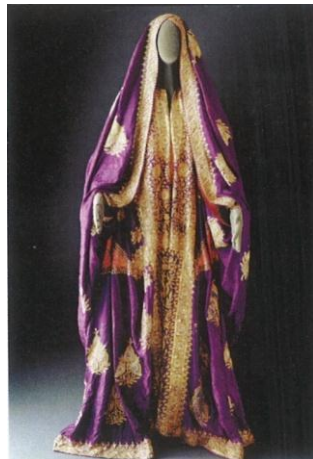
**Traditional Women's Clothing:** Typically these were t-shirts clothes with thin or wide sleeves used in warm and humid areas to facilitate the flow of air. The women lifted up their sleeves while working and tied around their back. Women's wore these t-shirt clothes during cold mountainous winter, which has been decorated by silk and triangular embroidered with orange and yellow colors and with beads. Silver-lead beads are made by women and glass beads are purchasable. The beads are punctured by perching a thorn into the hot metal. The stamping and embroidery is used to decorate the edging sleeves and back of the dress. The head cover is of seven layers. Benny Malik tribes used similar clothing with shorter sleeves to show their bracelets. Their garments and headband are crocheted with small yellow glass beads and red knotted. Tegif tribes clothing is made up of band with black and blue cotton and the edging of applique with mesh patterns; and the collar and wrist pattern is embroidered with red and white thread. The Hoodil tribal clothing is made of solid cotton fabric with color and knot technique and patterns of white circles in rhombic with bright blue background. The women of this tribe do not use mask to cover their face.

In the north of Hijaz near Medina, along the trade route, between the Najd and Mecca, Medina and Jeddah are the Harb tent tribal. The women's clothing of this tribe is usually blue colored cotton. The edges are decorated with pearl buttons. The women of these tribes wore long-face mask with vertical rows of Ottoman coins, Indian rupees, and French franc.

Salim tribes, like fishermen, merchants and shepherds, have a semi-settled life on the Black Sea coast. The women of this tribe do embroidery work, which includes collars, sleeves and edges. The main characteristic of their dress is the use of embroidery with metal thread to decorate the chest and shoulder area. The Ashir area extends to the south of Hejaz to Yemen. This is an agricultural area for tribes. The people use similar clothes as the Yemenis. Women wore velvet dresses with embroidered designs. Riyadh is located in Najd, and Al Saud lives in this city. The costumes of Najd city women are influenced by Indian dresses that are mobaraktahob, which is long wide silk dress and embroidered with Indian zari metal thread.



a) Men's long cloak (Aba) made of goat's white hair with decorative front and shoulders with wavy sleeves, Albaha



b) Mubakartahub clothes which is the Indian silk embroidered with beads and gold, long and wide sleeves to cover their head, Najd



c) Mubakartahub clothes were stitched with various bands, edging with applique, collar and wrist band embroidered, Vadi Mehrab

**Fig 2** Traditional women's clothing

## 6. Kuwait

Kuwait has the land boundaries with Iraq and Saudi Arabia and sea boundary with Iran. Kuwait as the major naval center with the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean has commercial business and market for northeastern Arabia. Kuwait has been a supporter for seafarers, merchants and nomadic. The nomadic people are called al-Bodu, and semi-nomadic as local Arab.

### 6.1. Methods

**Nomadic Clothes Weaving with Hand Knitting Machine:** Weaving clothes with sheep wool or goat hair was the art of the Bedouin Arabs, and was considered as a symbol of the luxury life and tribal identity. Women were engaged in making bags, zip, animal jewelry and shelter. The tent was the largest product of the Bedouin women. This type of tent was made of long ribbons side by side. The goat's hair absorbs heat and is strong, durable and waterproof. The tent is a favorite of the Bedouin Arabs, dividing the tent into the men's area in front of the tent and the private women's area behind the tent. The decoration side of the tent divider is located towards the general section of the tent; that is, the location where coffee is served to the guest. Tent curtains are made from warp



and weft displayed strips which are stitched together. The nomadic women of Bedouin and semi-Bedouin weaved the bags, blankets and zein (horse saddle).

Nowadays, the primitive women work with ground looped knitting machines that, working with it is difficult and usually worked with two individuals. The Bedouin women called “alsudo” to the machine and weaving fabric, which means reaching ahead. The ground knitting machine is easy to collect and portable and does not cause any damage. The importance of this device is the use of complementary patterns of warp and weft in the decorative weaving fabrics.



**Fig 3** Rich bag woven with camel wool hair with pattern of warp displayed by Bedouin women

**Weaving with Hooked Knitting Machines of City:** Kuwait's weavers worked with hooked knitting machines. They used wool thread or camel hair for a long, loose-fitting dress with front openings and used golden embroidery for the collar. Most of the clothes sold today are made from factory fabrics imported from Saudi Arabia and Syria, but samples of hand weaves from Najaf has the best quality in the south Iraq or Iran.

## 7. Oman

Oman leads from the east to the Arabian Sea and ends the north to the Oman Sea. The Oman region includes a large part of the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula. Oman has created the marine business routes in Mombasa, Zanzibar Island, Pomba, Baluchistan, and Pakistan, and took the hooked knitting machine to east Africa to replace the Indian and Arabian devices. The industry of clothes weaving and traditional dyeing has boomed in the coast area and small towns such as Nezvi and Bahal.

**Local Clothes:** Each Oman men have a carved dagger on his waist. The waist belt decoration is with black metallic border strip made in Rustock city. But today, China is producing it. The dagger leather is needlework woven with wire or silver strip. The Omani men's clothing is simple and consists of a long white cotton dress, dagger, a belt, embroidered hat, and a turban consisting of square shawl folded woolen or cotton with cashmere embroidered. Omanis call turban as Mussar. The coma (embroidered hat) is decorated with edged holes. This is woven by women's of the family. The Aba is made of brown, cream or black woolen material and worn in formal occasions.

**Women's Clothing:** Their clothes are long and loose fitting as men's clothes. The traditional type is colorful and its current type is black. Muscat women wear long-to-knee dress on the trousers and bright cotton shawl as the Eastern Africa's Kanga style. In many parts of the country, Kuwait women's wears face covering (or mask) which covers the forehead area and the nose around eyes.

These coverings are made from thin, indigo, blue or green leather. Another head covering for women in the tribes of Wahaba and Junaba can be referred to as “Shakbah”. This is woven from leather and decorated with silver plates. This cover uses silver spacing and small coins in the leather.



**Fig 4** Head cover, called “Shakbah”, made up of creased leather with beautiful silver material, Vahaba

## 8. Yemen

Yemen located in the southwest of Asia and south of the Arabian Peninsula. Yemenis converted to Islam at the time of Prophet and the Iranian ruler Bazan became Muslim in 628. Agricultural evidence suggests that ICAT fabrics and governmental clothes with calligraphic writing on cotton fabrics were woven in Yemen from the start of Islam. Local fabrics were of good quality and were exported to Iranian nobles.

**Local costumes:** Yemeni men clothing had short waist covering band to knee-length, an embroidered waist belt to hold the dagger, a cotton shirt and a second-hand sweater. The men's turban was made up of squared scarf with floral pattern and silk chain stitch. But nowadays, the cotton or synthetic cloth white and yellow color are used.



**Fig 5** Men's belt with card-weaving (dagger)

**Women's clothing:** Yemeni women are humble and use shawls and face covering mask. The urban women wear a lightweight woolen face covering mask with color and knot technique and black, white and red circular pattern in a black background. The face covering mask is called “mamur” that is embroidered on rectangular cloth with red glass beads and silver chain called “Rasaja”. The rasaja is attached to the women hair in a way that covers the face. The face covering mask goes back easily so that the women can see the product and purchase. Also, women wear full-length clothes with wide sleeves and large cotton shawls (Sitara), which are imported from Ahmedabad, India and have block prints.



**Fig 6** North Ameran women's clothing embroidered with colored fabrics with indigo

## 9. Iraq

Iraq is in the Middle East and Southwest Asia. Baghdad is the capital established in the eighth century as the Muslim city and the capital of Abbassi caliphs. Historically Baghdad has been the largest centers of cloth weaving. Baghdad is the center of clothes production and one of the world's largest business centers in valuable products, clothes, paints, spices from China, Spain, Africa, and Java. The provinces of Mosal, Baghdad and Basra were famous for knitting. The northern Iraq, Kurd was famous because of wool weaving and Mosel because of embroidery work with metal thread.

**South Iraq:** Women choose the wool as thread for embroidery and spun and dye them. The motifs are arranged in order or placed on each other in a floral rectangle. The bed-spread embroidered of Samova region has ordered design, but the Babylonians use small designs close to each other. Many of these motifs have a symbolic meaning; for example, the palm tree means long life, the cedar tree means the resurrection, the three flowers means unity of the family, the lion means power, the bear means victory and glory, and the camel means wealth and happiness.

**Iraqi Kurds:** The semi-nomadic Kurds live in mountainous region that forms the border between Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Kurdish women wear bright colored clothing and men wear loose black trousers. Until the Second World War, men of some tribal Kurds wore jacket and straight silk trousers. The city of Sulaymaniye was famous for its production of waist shawls and embossed design turbans. The Iraqi Kurds provided the needs of the main silk market and the outstanding patterns with Syrian metallic thread.

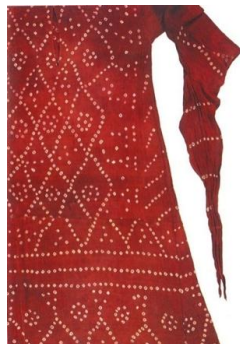


**Fig 7** Woolen embroidered carpet or blanket

## 10. Syria

It is located in the southwest of Asia along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The country has villagers, nomadic people and highly skilled artists. It is considered to be a great textile weaving industry. Since ancient times, there were conflicts for this country, and the tradition of cloth weaving dates back to the period of the Ottoman Empire, Byzantium and Rome and beyond. Syria has enough agricultural land, but maximum area of this land is desert.

**Methods:** The color and knot technique (Tie-dye) of the city of Hama was renowned for the manufacturing of cotton fabrics used for clothes and waist shawls for nomads, villagers and urban women. The long sleeves cotton clothes was called “Tahub-easy” which has loose weaving and silk is used instead of cotton. It has a rotating pattern in different parts. After the cloth is ready the rotating pattern is tied to the front and sleeve. The cloth is dyed with yellow, red and brown colors respectively. When the women are working, they tie their long sleeves behind the back.



**Fig 8** Cotton cloth with color and knot technique (Tie-dye), Hama

**ICAT:** Men and women of Syria used the bathroom cotton towels with ICAT warp display. Beautiful wrappers and lightweight cotton and silk were woven in the cities of Alpine and Damascus with colored techniques and warp knots. ICAT fabric of silk warp or synthetic silk (Rayon) and cotton weft they are known as cottonic which are still woven in the cities of Alpine, Hama, and Damascus.



**Fig 9** Cotton towel warp display of ICAT, Alpine

**Batik:** In 1940s, the city of Alpine was the main center of the Indigo color, and a kind of batik with limestone resistance material on silk was common in the city. The limestone resistance material with wooden engraved mold was printed on silk, and then the fabric was turned black by

dyeing with aniline color. Screen printing has replaced this traditional method. Scarves produced by this method are sold in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

**Knitting Method:** The cities of Alpine and Damascus were the main centers of cloth weaving. Satin silk fabric and cotton weft (Mashrou) were made from detail ICAT weaving. The cotton three-dimensional design fabric with metal thread (Zuk) from Syria was famous. Zuk was the fabric weaving center of Lebanon. This fabric was used for furniture and geometric patterns of Arabian long veil dress. Two zuk stripes with bright colors were stitched in the neck, shoulders, and skirts of the long dress. The Alpine city was the center for weaving woolen scarves imitated by scarves of Kashmir and Kerman in Iran. The square or rectangular scarves were used as the waist shawls by rich urban men.

**Card Weaving or Strip Weaving:** Syria once upon a time, was famous for the production of men silk belts with card weaving technique. The silk industry is still active in this country, but there is no more of card weaving. Typically, the strips were square-shaped, but also used strips of triangular, hexagonal, octagonal and other shapes. Based on the complexity of the design, for weaving a single band it took nearly three hundred to seven hundred strips.

**Crocheting or Hook Knitting:** Syrian cap for prayer are made of silk hook weaving or variety of geometric patterns and it is famous in the near east.



**Fig 10** Men cap by hook weaving method



**Fig 11** Embroidery on velvet with metal thread, Damascus

**Embroidery or Needlework:** The embroidery cloths of men's and women's are found throughout Syria. The professional individual are specialized in working with metal yarns and different decorative short sweaters with long sleeves. Each region has a particular style. The delicate floral silk embroidered with a variety of stitches is found on the bridal dress of the Kotayev village. This type of dress is made of red fabric without collar with long triangular sleeves. In the past, most of the villages embroidery work was done on idigo color handmade fabric. The village of Suken is located on western Syria and the women's clothing is coats, blouses and skirts. The coats and skirts are embroidered with floral patterns of palm trees, silk thread or acrylic. The red, purple and yellow colors are used in the black background. The embroidery of the village of Sokhn has been forgotten.

**Cotton weaving embroidery:** Syrian girls and women after bathing wear cotton embroidered clothes. The color of this dress is blue or bright and is sold in the Istanbul market. There exists a simple technique where the layers of the fabric are placed on top of each other, after the placing the

cotton, the waste in between is sealed with each other by pins. The layers of clothes are sewn around the edges and the center distances. Sometimes stitching rows is in decorative geometric forms such as zigzag and military uniforms are stitched.

**Block Printing:** The background to the use of block printing in Syria fabrics dates back to ancient Rome. The shawls of block printing were made in Alpine and Damascus markets. Now only black and white cotton bags are produced with durable block printing. Wooden blocks are made of pear wood. Different parts of the pattern are carved on all types of wood blocks to prevent from making heavy blocks.

## 11. Conclusion

Centuries ago, luxury fabrics of Saudi Arabia and Ottoman were more exquisite than the fabrics produced from Europe and elsewhere. Nowadays, local textiles of these areas are of unsatisfactory quality in the field of design and production. The presence of foreign labels on textiles shows proudness. In the past, the value of European fabrics was increased by adding Arabic, Persian and Turkish words, but today it has been vice-versa. Since the Islamic regimes of the Middle East responded to the new global economic system, and visit from many parts of Saudi Arabia and Ottoman show the complete Western dominance. The Islamic Middle East may never have had the outstanding textile products of the past and of the Middle Ages business and later, but the designers and artists around the Islamic world will have the inspiration from this work.

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