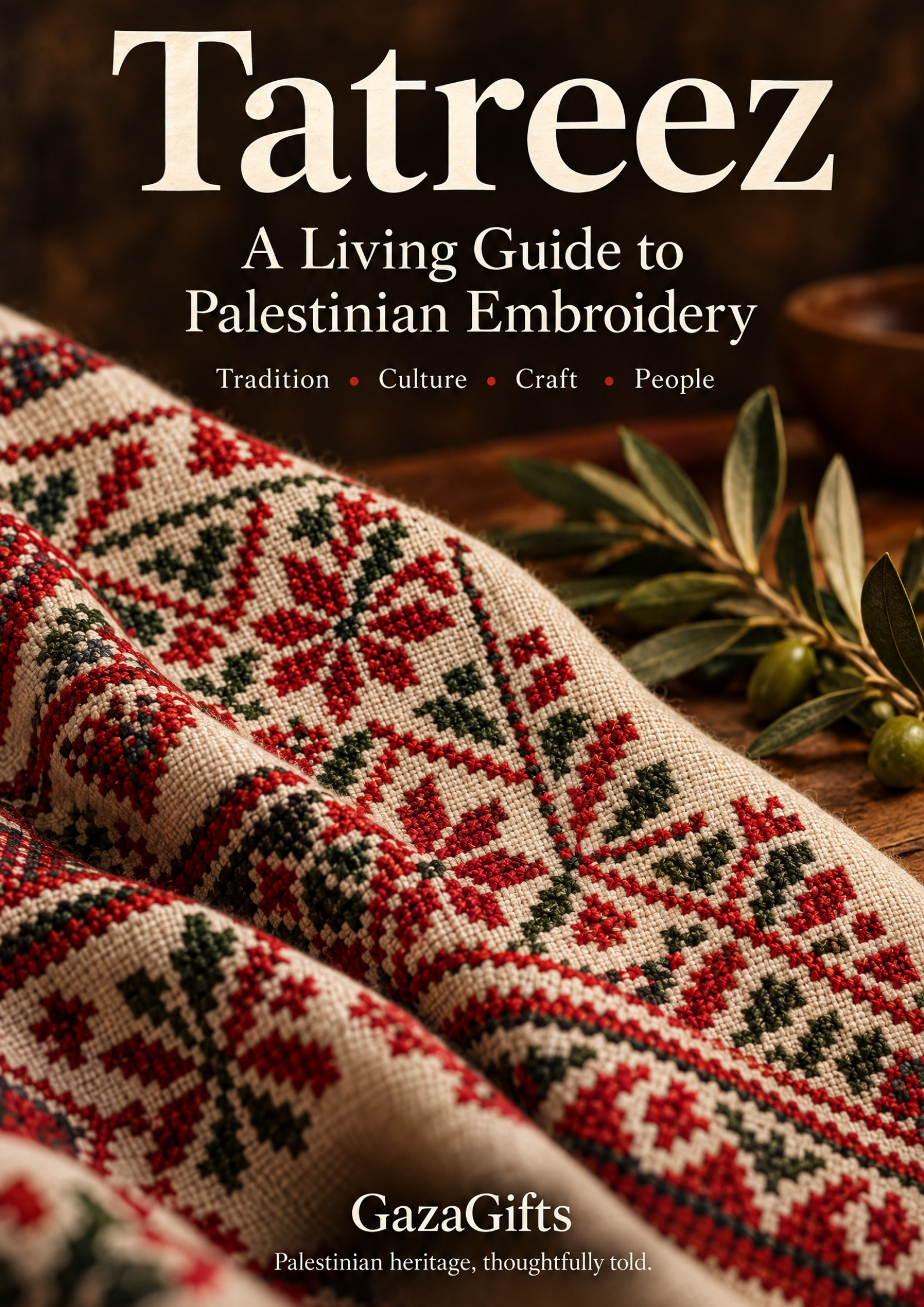
Tatreez

A Living Guide to Palestinian Embroidery

Tradition • Culture • Craft • People



GazaGifts

Palestinian heritage, thoughtfully told.

WELCOME

A thread is never just a thread



AI-generated educational illustration: hands demonstrate counted stitching; no named maker, place or historical object is depicted.

Tatreez is a practice of making—and a way knowledge travels between people, places and generations.

In Palestinian life, embroidery has adorned clothing, marked occasions, carried memories and created income. Its story belongs to the women who stitched, taught, traded, adapted and wore it, and to the communities continuing that work today. A thobe is not simply a canvas for attractive symbols: it is a garment made for a body and a life. [1] [2] [3]

This expanded GazaGifts guide combines cultural explanation with close-looking exercises, museum photographs, precise stitch diagrams and an original beginner chart. It welcomes curious readers, makers and the Palestinian diaspora without treating any short book as a complete regional archive.

> **Three kinds of evidence**
>
> **Documented:** a museum record, a named account or a cited source. **Interpreted:** an explanation linked to that source or a maker's own testimony. **Illustrative:** a new diagram, learning chart or concept image—not proof of a historic style.

Use the photographs to examine real objects; use the diagrams to learn construction and counting. The AI-generated cover and additional educational illustrations are identified in captions and image credits. All learning motifs are original schematic studies, not authenticated village patterns.

Language: this English edition retains the source guide's publication language. Arabic terms have several English transliterations; thobe, thob and thawb can refer to the same dress.

An illustrated cultural introduction and a step-by-step first stitching project · PLACE · MEMORY · MATERIAL · PRACTICE

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Choose your route

For a cultural introduction, read pages 4–12 and 25–28. To start stitching, gather the kit on page 13, learn the mechanics on pages 14–19, then follow the project on pages 20–23. Sources are linked in the text and collected at the end.

Page numbers refer to the PDF's pages, including the cover. The chart on page 21 can be printed separately; its paper size does not determine the finished embroidery size.

More than a decorative tradition



Documented detail: nineteenth-century Palestinian dress, The Met, C.I.41.86.20. Public domain; not a universal regional pattern.

In 2021, UNESCO inscribed the art of embroidery in Palestine on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The inscription recognises practices, skills, knowledge and rituals—not one approved design or a frozen historical style. UNESCO describes embroidery as a social, intergenerational practice, learned in homes and through formal courses, and now practised throughout Palestine and the diaspora. [1]

Rural women's clothing was an important setting for the craft. Embroidery could communicate local belonging and aspects of a wearer's life, but its meaning depended on place, period, occasion and personal circumstances. A colour or motif is not an automatic identity code.

Change is part of the heritage

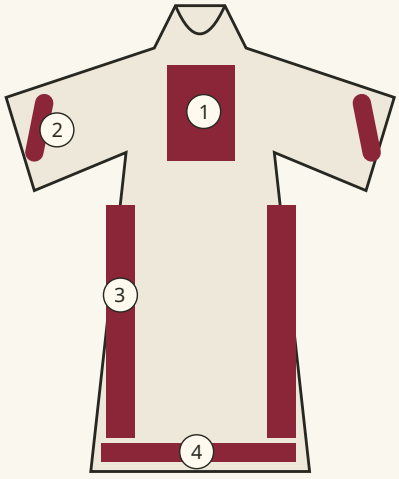
Trade affected cloth and thread. New dyes, pattern books and schooling influenced designs. Displacement after the 1948 Nakba reshaped livelihoods and the settings in which embroidery was produced. Family practice continued alongside cooperative work, teaching, commercial production and new artistic forms. [2] [3]

> **What the inscription does not establish**
>
> UNESCO recognition is not a product certificate. It does not verify that a particular item is handmade, fairly paid, made in Palestine or accurately attributed to a village. Those claims require evidence for that item.

Living heritage survives through people's choices, not by remaining unchanged.

Read the garment before the motif

A thobe is a long dress whose cut, cloth, embroidery and finishing vary by locality and period. Many garments have an embroidered chest area, worked sleeves or cuffs, and panels or bands along the skirt. Components could be embroidered separately before assembly. [1] [3]



Structural schematic only: not a reconstruction of a particular regional dress.

1 / Chest area

Often a focal point. Compare its shape, neckline and embroidery density.

2 / Sleeves and cuffs

Notice the sleeve cut and how work follows edges and movement.

3 / Skirt and side panels

Vertical bands can help organise the garment's visual rhythm.

4 / Lower edge

Inspect borders, hems, wear and repairs—not only decoration.

Not every thobe uses this arrangement. Some include appliqué, couching, mixed textiles or other surface work. A diagram helps name parts; a documented object tells you how those parts were actually made.

> **A better first question**
>
> Instead of "What does this flower mean?", ask "Where is the stitching placed, and how does the garment's construction shape what I see?"

LOOKING EXERCISE

One dress, several kinds of evidence



The Met, Dress, nineteenth century, made in Palestine. Linen and silk; embroidered. C.I.41.86.20. Public domain.

Start with the record

The museum identifies the date, place and materials shown in the caption. Its current online record does not specify a village. Avoid supplying one from the garment's appearance alone. [10]

Then look

A dense chest area contrasts with long, quieter sections of dark cloth. Coloured stripes and broad sleeves help organise the silhouette.

Separate the two

These visible features are observations. They do not establish who stitched the dress, what it cost or what its wearer intended.

> **Try a 60-second object note**
>
> Write five lines: title and accession number; recorded place; date or date range; materials and techniques; one observation. Add "not recorded" rather than filling a gap with a plausible story.

A museum accession number identifies an object in a collection. It is a useful route back to evidence, not a guarantee that the object's full life history is known.

Ramallah: a style that changed

Ramallah offers a particularly well-documented example of why regional descriptions need dates. The Met's "Tatreez in Time" discusses red cross-stitch on undyed linen as a distinctive everyday style, but also traces changes in bridal dress, embroidery density, motifs and thread colours. [2]



Comparative image: Ensemble, nineteenth century, made in Palestine. The Met, C.I.39.91.18a–c. The current Met record does not specify Ramallah. Public domain.

Not a permanent colour code

The essay describes a mid-nineteenth-century dark indigo bridal overcoat dress and a lighter everyday thobe. Later, white became a preferred bridal colour. Occasion and colour relationships changed.

Not an isolated design system

Schooling, imported fashions and new materials influenced what women made. Motifs and palettes were not sealed within regional boundaries.

The Met's separately documented Ramallah-region dress, C.I.42.176.1, is dated about the 1860s–1870s and includes linen, silk and glass beads. The essay's suggestion that a girl and an older, more experienced stitcher worked on it is an interpretation—not an identified family biography.

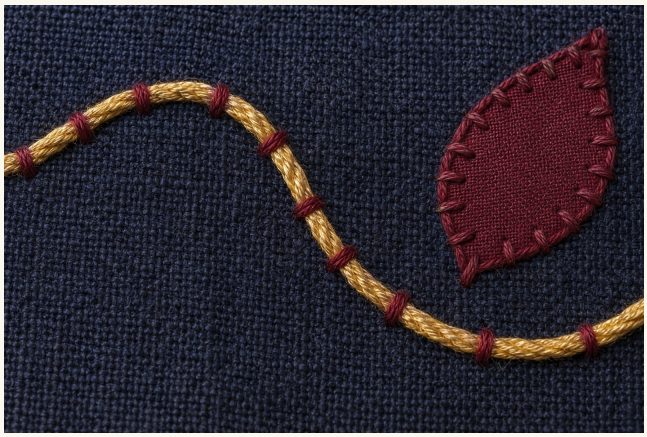
> **Keep the attribution honest**
>
> A photograph broadly catalogued as "Palestine" is not automatically proof of a narrower regional label. Consult the linked object record and distinguish it from a stylistic comparison.

Bethlehem: look beyond the cross

Cross-stitch is central to many tatreez traditions, but it is not the whole story. The Palestinian Museum's Bethlehem thobe record describes tahriri, or couching, on a chest panel with plant-like shapes, as well as gilded and silk threads, mixed fabrics and later repairs. [4]



A miniature, not an adult garment: Palestinian Doll's Thob al-Malek Royal Dress, nineteenth century, attributed to the Bethlehem region. Cotton and silk; appliqué and embroidery. Length 52.7 cm. The Met, C.I.X.52.8. Public domain.



AI-generated technique study: laid gold thread is held by smaller anchor stitches. A generic couching/appliqué sample, not the museum's Bethlehem thobe.

In couching, a thread laid on the surface is held down by smaller anchoring stitches. Its line can behave differently from a counted cross-stitch grid. Appliqué adds pieces of fabric rather than building every shape from embroidery thread.

> **Compare without flattening**
>
> The miniature above is useful for examining panel placement and contrasting fabrics. It is not evidence that every Bethlehem dress looked this way, nor a substitute for an adult garment's construction details.

The Palestinian Museum's adult thobe and the Met's miniature are different objects. Their captions and descriptions should not be merged into a single invented garment.

Al-Khalil, Gaza and the cloth between

Al-Khalil / Hebron

The Met describes densely worked garments with small colourful cross-stitches and elaborate silk appliqué. It discusses named motifs and village-specific versions of the “Tent of Pasha.” This is a regional umbrella with local variation, not one standard Hebron chart. [2]

Gaza and al-Majdal

The ground cloth is part of the history. The Palestinian Museum’s account of textile-industry transformations stresses Gaza and al-Majdal’s weaving heritage and the changes to production and raw materials associated with displacement after the Nakba. [5]

One object can cross a regional boundary

Brooklyn Museum’s pre-1920s thobe, 1992.79.1, combines indigo majdal cloth from north Gaza, Syrian saya fabric and al-Khalil-associated tricolour appliqué. Its embroidery includes designs associated with al-Khalil and Gaza. The museum suggests an origin in an affluent village between the two regions; it does not claim a securely identified village. [6]

What is recorded	What must stay qualified
Place made: Palestine; collected in the Gaza Strip	Collection location is not necessarily production location.
Materials and motifs from several places	The entire object cannot be reduced to one motif’s association.
Museum interpretation of a likely origin	“Suggests” is not the same as “proves.”

This mixed-material case is a useful reminder: trade, movement and individual decisions are part of regional history, not exceptions to it.



Comparative detail of a different Palestinian dress: The Met, C.I.41.86.20, nineteenth century. Public domain. This is not Brooklyn Museum’s thobe.

A village is more precise than a stereotype

The British Museum documents a thōb al-Na’āni from Beit Dajan, in the Jaffa area, dated to the early 1930s. Its cream linen, pointed sleeves and multicoloured silk work combine cross-stitch with couching, fishbone, satin stitch and appliqué. [7]

That object-specific description is stronger than a sentence such as “all coastal dresses use these colours.” A region contains villages, families, workshops and different moments in time. Even neighbouring communities could have distinct ways of cutting and ornamenting clothing. [3]

Compare this	Rather than assume this
Cut and sleeve shape	One silhouette belongs to an entire region forever.
Ground fabric and applied cloth	Every coloured area is embroidery.
Stitch types and placement	Tatreez means only cross-stitch.
Recorded date, maker and locality	A modern chart proves a historical origin.
Alterations and repairs	The garment has remained unchanged since it was made.

Why no six-city pattern dictionary?

A grid of unproven “Hebron / Gaza / Jerusalem” swatches can look authoritative while hiding uncertainty. This guide instead uses documented case studies. It does not assign a fixed motif or palette to Nablus, Jerusalem or any other place without object-level evidence.

Regional knowledge grows through comparison, not through a single decoding key.

Describe the shape. Question the story.

Trees, flowers and birds appear in Palestinian embroidery, alongside geometric and abstract forms. The counted grid can turn a plant into stepped angles or make a repeated shape appear almost architectural. [1] [2] [3]



Stepped diamond



Branched tree



Eight-point study



Rosette study

Original schematic studies for this guide. These are shape exercises, not historic charts or regional attributions.



AI-generated modern shape studies: sprig, pomegranate, bird, flower, tree and diamond. Illustrative forms only; no fixed meanings or village attributions.

A name is a starting point, not a universal translation. The same design may be named differently by different makers; the same name may describe several designs. A cypress or “tree of life” reading should be attached to the person, collection or account that supplies it.

> **Avoid attractive but unsupported certainties**
>
> Do not write “a bird always means freedom,” “a pomegranate always means fertility,” or “red proves marriage.” If a maker gives that meaning to a particular piece, attribute the explanation to that maker and piece.

For Brooklyn Museum’s thobe, the museum links sarw, the cypress/tree of life, to resilience. That is a cited interpretation of the object—not a dictionary rule for all Palestinian embroidery. [6]

A pattern is also an arrangement

Meaning is not carried by an isolated shape alone. A motif's scale, orientation, repetition and setting can change the way a panel reads. So can the occasion and the life of the person wearing it.



Detail crop from The Met's nineteenth-century Palestinian ensemble, C.I.39.91.18a–c. Notice borders, spacing and the relationship between separate surfaces. Public domain.

Three useful observations

Unit: identify the smallest shape that repeats. **Rhythm:** count the spaces between units. **Frame:** notice whether a border encloses, links or separates them. Record what is visible before attaching a symbolic interpretation.



Five identical units, with one blank chart column between units

Original counted-grid band: five identical units separated by one blank chart column. Not a historical Palestinian pattern.

Political meanings also have histories. The Palestinian Museum describes how, after 1948, embroidery increasingly served as an emblem of national heritage. During the First Intifada, existing motifs appeared alongside maps, slogans and other explicitly political images. [3]

> **Write a responsible caption**
>
> "A repeated branched shape appears in the side panel. The source calls it sarw; this maker associates it with resilience." This says who named and interpreted the design rather than presenting an anonymous universal meaning.

Build a small, useful kit



AI-generated editorial still life: a visual guide to the kit, not a documentary photograph or a product recommendation.

Item	A good beginner choice
Fabric	Ivory or white 14-count Aida; its clear holes simplify counting.
Thread	Six-strand cotton floss: burgundy, olive and ochre for the project.
Needle	Blunt tapestry needle, size 24 as a starting point for 14-count Aida.
Scissors	Small sharp scissors for thread; larger scissors for fabric.
Hoop / frame	Optional; a small hoop can steady the fabric without stretching it.
Chart and notes	Print or view page 21; keep a pencil or a row marker nearby.

Good light, clean hands and a comfortable seat matter more than a large collection of tools. Keep needles in a needle case or pad and away from children and pets.

These are practical choices for the new cotton sample in this guide. Historic garments may use silk and different ground fabrics; do not treat the starter kit as a description of all traditional materials. [1] [11]

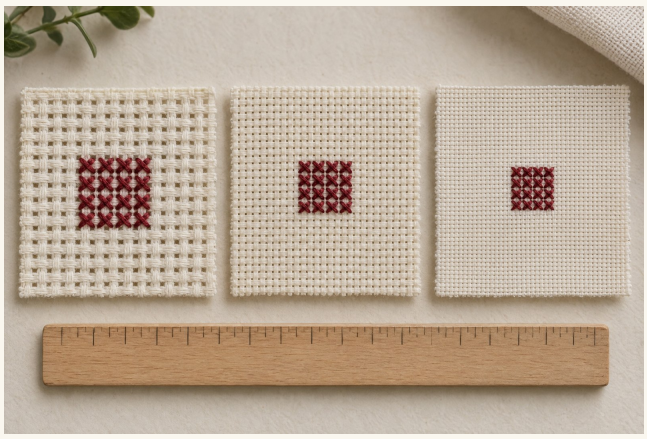
Count determines size

Aida count is the number of stitch blocks per inch. On 14-count Aida, one full cross over one block gives 14 crosses per inch. A higher count produces a smaller design from the same chart. Linen may be worked over two fabric threads; do not apply the Aida count directly without checking.

Chart stitches ÷ stitches per inch = size in inches

Size in inches × 2.54 = size in centimetres

Aida count	21-square chart field
11-count	1.91 in / 4.85 cm square
14-count	1.50 in / 3.81 cm square
16-count	1.31 in / 3.33 cm square
18-count	1.17 in / 2.96 cm square



AI-generated qualitative comparison of coarser and finer Aida. Use the table, not image proportions, for exact sizes.

These figures describe the project's entire 21 × 21-square chart field, including its blank squares. The actual stitched motif occupies 11 × 18 squares: about 2.00 × 3.27 cm on 14-count Aida. Leave the blank chart spaces unstitched.

Cut for the finish, not just the motif

Add a margin on every side. A 3-inch margin around a 1.5-inch chart field needs 7.5 × 7.5 inches of cloth. DMC recommends at least 3 inches around a design for mounting or framing. For this project, a 20 × 20 cm square leaves a generous working border. [12]

> **Before cutting**
>
> Measure the actual cloth and decide whether the piece will be framed, sewn into something or kept as a sampler. Allow extra material for seams and finishing. You cannot recover a missing margin later.

Make the cloth easy to work

Choose two strands to begin

Six-strand floss is divisible. Separate one strand at a time, then recombine the number you need. On 14-count Aida, two strands are a useful starting point. Test a few crosses: three strands give heavier coverage but may crowd the holes; one gives a lighter effect.



AI-generated strand-separation study. The written two-strand instructions remain the authority.

Prepare the fabric

Secure fraying raw edges with a loose overcast stitch or machine zigzag outside the intended design area. Find the centre by folding the cloth gently in half both ways, then mark the intersection with a removable basting thread. Do not mark through the stitch area with a permanent pen.

Fit the hoop without distortion

Place the inner ring under the fabric and the outer ring above it. Tighten gradually until the cloth is evenly supported, not drum-stretched or skewed. Release the hoop between sessions, especially if it leaves an impression. A hoop is helpful, not compulsory.

Use a manageable working length

About 40–50 cm is a comfortable starting length. Longer thread tends to tangle and abrade. Replace it if it becomes fuzzy; let the needle hang freely for a moment when the working thread twists.

> **Needle check**
>
> A blunt tapestry point should enter the existing hole without piercing the fabric block or splitting an earlier stitch. Try size 24 on 14-count Aida, then adjust if the eye or shaft drags. Needle sizes run in reverse: a higher number generally means a finer needle.

Prewashing new fabric is optional, not a universal rule. Follow the actual fabric and thread labels, and test the complete material combination. Heritage textiles need different care. [11] [12]

A tidy start without a bulky knot

A flat start is especially useful if you will mount the embroidery. The loop start below works with an even number of strands. For two working strands, fold **one** strand in half; do not fold two unless you intend to stitch with four.



Schematic: the loop remains on the back of the fabric. The needle passes through it after the first half-stitch.

1. Cut one strand roughly twice your desired working length. Fold it in half and put the **two cut ends** through the needle eye.
2. Bring the needle up through the first hole from the back, leaving the folded loop underneath.
3. Make the first diagonal half-stitch and take the needle to the back. Pass it through the waiting loop.
4. Draw the thread gently snug. Complete the cross, keeping the loop on the reverse.

End under existing stitches

On the reverse, slide the tail under the backs of three to five nearby stitches, without piercing the front or pulling the fabric. Check that it is secure, then trim. For wearable or frequently handled work, test that the finish holds.



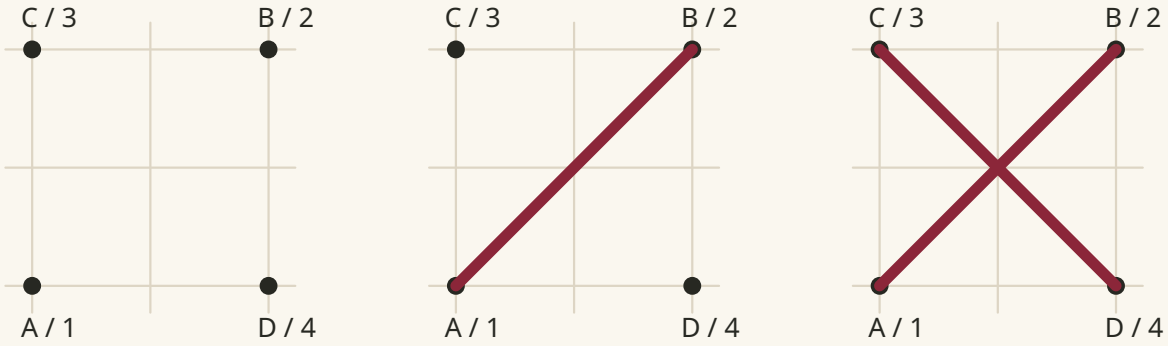
Reverse: run the tail under 3–5 nearby stitch backs

Reverse-view schematic. Green bars represent existing stitch backs; burgundy shows the tail passing beneath them.

With an odd number of strands, hold a short tail on the reverse and trap it under several first stitches. Check that the tail is caught before letting go. There are other valid starts; learn them from an experienced teacher.

Four holes. Two diagonals.

Each coloured chart square represents one complete cross over one Aida block —not a hole and not a single diagonal.



1 Identify four holes 2 A up → B down 3 C up → D down

Front view • each square is one fabric block

Front view, enlarged for clarity. The four labelled points are the corners of one stitch block.

1. **A / 1:** bring the needle up at the bottom-left corner.
2. **B / 2:** take it down at the top-right corner. This makes the lower diagonal: /.
3. **C / 3:** bring it up at the top-left corner.
4. **D / 4:** take it down at the bottom-right corner. This makes the top diagonal: \.

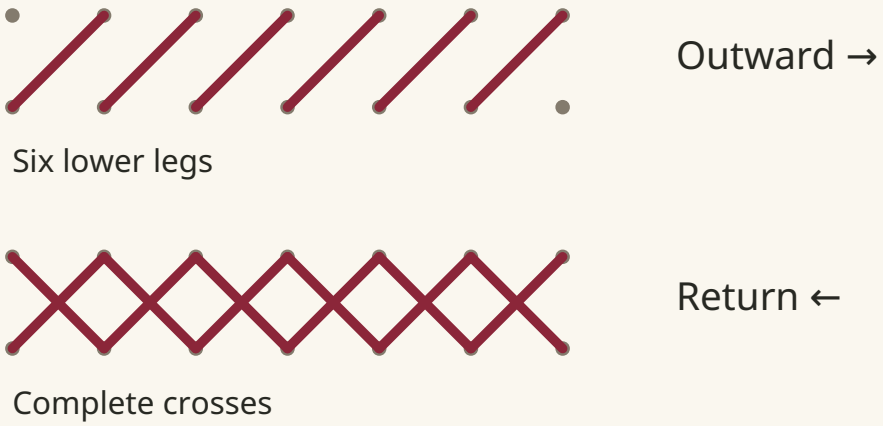
The working thread moves across the back between steps 2 and 3. Keep the front diagonals flat and gentle: they should cover the block without shrinking it. Do not pull hard to “close” a visible hole.

> **Consistency, not one compulsory direction**
>
> You can reverse this order if you prefer. The important visual rule is to keep every cross’s **top leg** facing the same way throughout the piece. This guide uses / first and \ on top. [13]

The X diagrams are instructional, not magnified photographs. Real Aida has bundles of woven threads between holes; stitches go through the holes rather than splitting the bundles.

Travel out. Cross on the way back.

For adjacent crosses in one colour, a row method can be efficient. Work the lower / legs along a row, then return across them with the top \ legs. The reverse should remain reasonably flat, but it need not be decorative.



Six adjacent stitch blocks, shown before and after the return pass. Direction words describe movement across the row.

Count before you extend

Check the first row's length before building a second row on it. A one-square shift can spread through the entire pattern. Count from a confirmed stitch, not from the edge of the paper image.

Do not carry across a large blank area

Long floats can snag and may show through pale cloth. Finish and restart when a gap is large or when the travelling thread would be visible. For a short move, pass beneath existing backs without pulling the front out of shape.

Practise a small block

On spare cloth, make a rectangle six crosses wide and three rows high. Check that all 18 crosses have the same top-leg direction. Then leave a two-square gap and begin a second block with a new start.

> **A useful checkpoint**
>
> Before changing colour, compare the row length, the nearest corner and the blank spaces with the chart. Blank spaces are part of the pattern: count them deliberately.

A grid is a set of coordinates

In this guide's chart, columns run left to right and rows run top to bottom. The first square is row 1, column 1. Grid lines locate squares; they are not instructions to embroider outlines.

Mark	Read it this way
R / pale burgundy cell	One full cross in burgundy.
G / pale olive cell	One full cross in olive.
Y / pale ochre cell	One full cross in ochre.
Blank cell	No stitch. Keep the fabric visible.
Heavier line after five squares	A counting aid only.
Dark box at row 11, column 11	The centre square. It still receives its charted colour.

Keep two centres in mind

The chart field is 21 × 21 squares, so its centre is row 11, column 11. The flower's ochre centre is row 8, column 11: three squares above the chart centre. Confusing them would shift the motif on the cloth.

Match the chart to the cloth

Use the fabric's marked centre block for row 11, column 11. Count three blocks upward in the same column to locate row 8, column 11. Recheck before making your first ochre stitch.

> **Mark progress, not guesses**
>
> Use a separate chart copy or a removable digital marker to track completed crosses. If interrupted, note the row, column and colour. Never colour in a chart square until its full cross is finished.

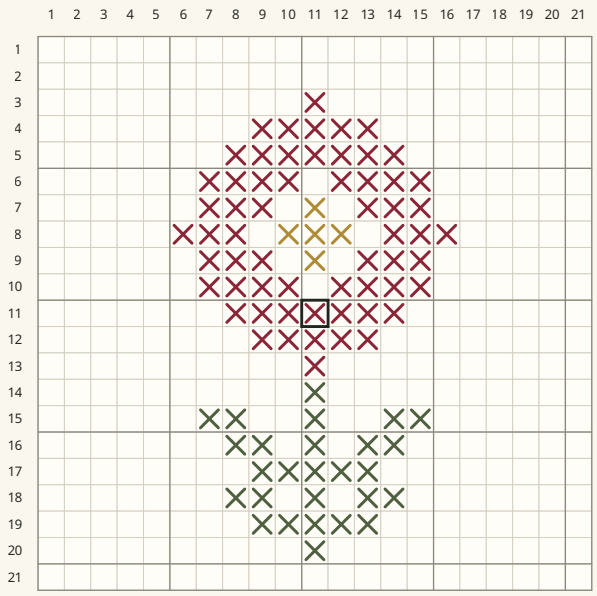
Symbols duplicate colour information so the chart remains usable in grayscale. Use the letters, not only the background shade, when printing in black and white.



AI-generated texture study: crossed thread and unstitched cloth. Follow the exact diagrams and chart for stitch placement.

Make a small floral study

A stepped flower and branching stem provide a manageable way to practise counting, colour changes and tidy finishing.



Exact stitch-position preview, generated from the same grid as the chart. Not a photograph.

Project at a glance

Chart: 21 × 21 squares.
Stitches: 92 full crosses.
Colours: 3.
Fabric: 14-count Aida.
Thread: 2 strands cotton.
Needle: blunt tapestry, try size 24.
Extra stitches: none—no backstitch or fractional crosses.

Cut a 20 × 20 cm square of Aida, or larger if your chosen finish needs it. Gather burgundy, olive and ochre floss. No particular brand numbers are required; record your own choices before you begin.

Colour	Symbol	Full crosses
Burgundy	R	60
Olive	G	27
Ochre	Y	5

An original learning chart

This design was created for this guide. It is inspired by the possibilities of counted geometric stitching, not copied from a historic thobe and not attributed to a Palestinian village. Learning its mechanics does not establish expertise in regional tatreez.

One square = one full cross

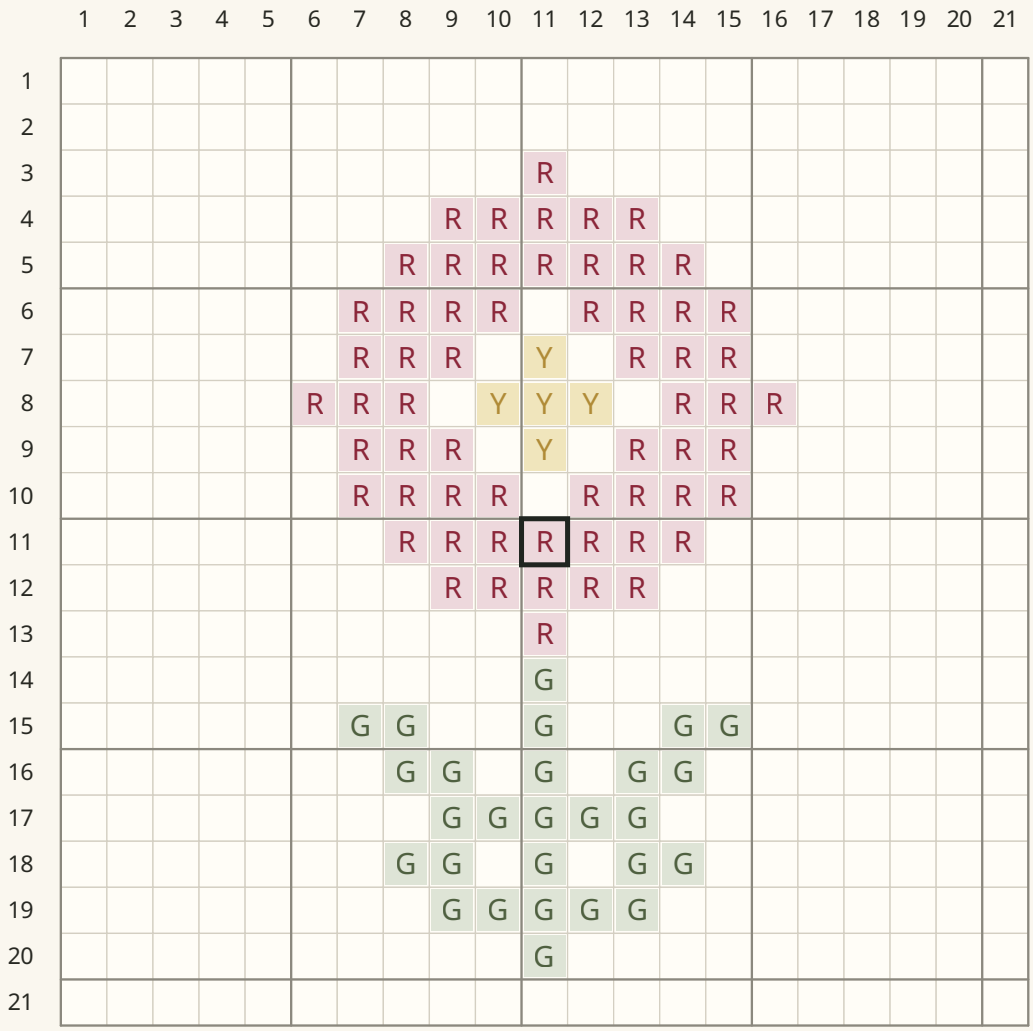


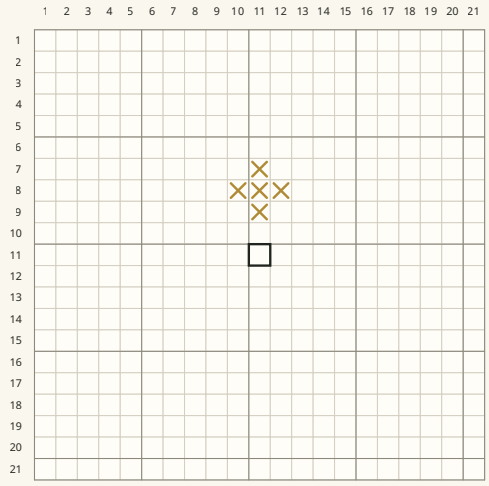
Chart field: 21 columns × 21 rows. The dark outlined centre cell is row 11, column 11.

R	Burgundy · 60	G	Olive · 27	Y	Ochre · 5

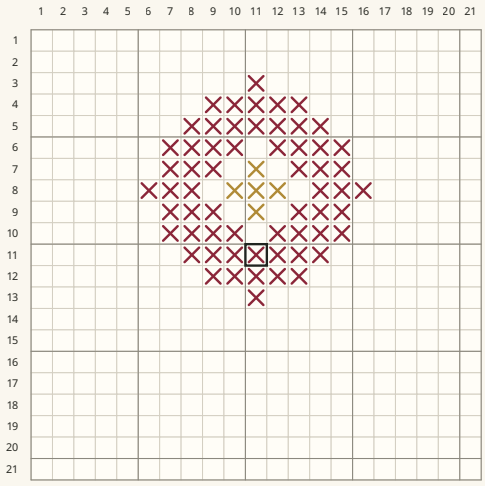
Blank = unstitched cloth. Start the ochre centre at row 8, column 11, three squares above the chart centre. Keep the top leg of every cross in one direction. The paper grid is not a fabric cutting template.

On 14-count Aida: the full chart field is 3.81 cm square; the occupied motif is approximately 2.00 cm wide × 3.27 cm high. Print this page at a comfortable reading scale. Changing print scale does not change stitch count.

Build from a reliable anchor



Stage 1: five ochre crosses.



Stage 2: complete all burgundy petals.

1 / Anchor the ochre centre

Locate row 8, column 11. Stitch that square, then the other ochre cells: row 7 column 11; row 8 columns 10 and 12; row 9 column 11. Check the small plus shape before continuing.

2 / Work the burgundy flower

Start a fresh thread. Use the ochre centre as a counting anchor, and work small groups of adjacent crosses. The topmost burgundy cross is row 3, column 11; the lowest is row 13, column 11. The flower is left–right symmetrical.

3 / Add the olive stem and leaves

Stitch the central olive column from row 14 through row 20 at column 11. Add the side branches by counting from the stem. Compare each left branch with its right partner, keeping the chart orientation fixed.

> **Finish each colour securely**
>
> End under nearby stitch backs before changing colour. Do not stretch a thread across a large blank area to avoid restarting. Check the reverse for loose tails and the front for pulled or missed crosses.

The stages show positions, not a compulsory needle path. It is fine to complete nearby individual crosses rather than use the row method everywhere.

Turn a sample into a keepsake



AI-generated finishing examples: sampler, frame and patch. These are generic ideas, not exact reproductions of the page-21 flower.

Check before you mount

Compare your work with the chart. Count the five ochre crosses and confirm that the stem ends at row 20. Look for a missed petal, an unintended extra cross or a thread carried visibly behind a blank area. Fix the count before trimming any fabric.

Choose a simple finish

Keep it as a sampler: neaten the raw edges and attach a separate paper label. **Frame it:** use a mount that supports the cloth evenly and keeps it away from glazing; do not glue across the embroidery. **Make a patch:** leave a generous seam allowance and attach the Aida sample to a stable backing rather than cutting immediately beside the stitches.

For a first bookmark or pouch, plan a fresh cloth layout around the measured stitched area and the seam allowance. Do not assume that the small chart alone gives enough fabric for a finished object. Use lining if the back will be handled or rubbed.

> **Keep a maker's record**
>
> Write: your name; date; cloth and count; thread brand/colour numbers if used; strand count; chart source; any changes; care labels. Label this as "Original learning study from the GazaGifts guide," not "historic village pattern."

Build your next skill

Repeat the flower on a separate sample in one colour, or practise a row of the small diamond units on page 12. These are counting exercises. For a documented Palestinian pattern, learn from a Palestinian teacher or a credited publication and respect the source's permissions.

Do not wash or press the finished sample until you have checked every material's care instructions. Page 26 applies to a confirmed washable modern sample; page 27 covers historic or uncertain pieces.

Fix the cause, not just the symptom



Consistent legs



Mixed top legs



Crowded holes

Enlarged schematic comparisons. Texture varies naturally; these examples isolate common technical issues.

What you notice	Likely cause / useful correction
One branch is a square too far out	Counting error. Undo to a confirmed anchor; recount both stitches and blank spaces. Do not bend the next row to hide it.
Cloth puckers or the block shrinks	Tension too tight. Ease the recent stitches; hold the cloth flat and draw the thread only until it rests on the surface.
Patchy shine or uneven texture	Mixed top-leg directions or twisted strands. Keep the top direction consistent and let the needle untwist.
Thread frays or tangles repeatedly	Working length too long, rough needle or crowded holes. Shorten the thread, check the needle and test fewer strands.
Dark line shows through blank cloth	A long carried thread on the back. Finish and restart near the next stitched area.
Loose tails snag on the reverse	Start or finish not secured. Weave under nearby stitch backs and trim only after checking.

> **Undo gently**
>
> Use the needle to lift recent stitches in reverse order. If necessary, snip only the embroidery thread—not the ground cloth—and lift fragments with care. Repeated pulling through one hole can wear both cloth and floss.

Take a break when the count becomes hard to follow. A tidy, consistent front is a good beginner goal; an immaculate reverse is not a test of cultural authenticity.

Continuity can take a new form



AI-generated concept still life: possible contemporary applications. These are not photographed products, historical objects or claims about GazaGifts inventory.

Tatreez continues in clothing, accessories, household textiles, teaching, design and art. New forms do not automatically weaken a tradition: Palestinian makers have long exchanged ideas, altered materials and invented arrangements. The Palestinian Museum describes the craft as living and evolving in the hands that make it. [3]

Adapt with honesty

A modern tote with a geometric border is not a historic thobe. Describe the object, designer, production method and source accurately. If a design adapts a documented pattern, say what was changed and credit the source; permission may still be needed for a contemporary chart or photograph.

> **Keep people in the picture**
>
> A heritage story should not replace the maker's name or conceal production conditions. "Inspired by Palestinian embroidery" describes a relationship of influence; it does not establish who stitched the item or where it was made.

Cross-stitch is practised in many cultures. What makes a piece part of Palestinian tatreez involves context, knowledge, practice and attribution—not simply the presence of X-shaped stitches.

First ask: is the whole item washable?

This page is for a new, stable sample made with materials whose care labels permit washing—not an old thobe or an unknown textile.

Check the fabric, thread, backing, trim, metal and any adhesive or interfacing. The least washable component controls the item. A cotton ground does not make silk embroidery, hand-dyed floss or a composite object safe to immerse.

1 / Test before treating

Keep spare fabric and thread. Test the proposed care method on a sample first. A successful test reduces risk; it cannot guarantee that every part of an item is colourfast.

2 / Clean only as the labels allow

For a confirmed washable new cotton sample, use gentle handling and the recommended mild detergent and temperature. Avoid bleach, aggressive rubbing and wringing. If colour transfers or runs, stop and seek advice.

3 / Support while drying

After gentle rinsing, blot without twisting and dry flat, supported, away from direct sun and heat. Do not hang a heavy wet textile by an edge.

4 / Press only if permitted

Use the lowest suitable setting and a pressing cloth. Work from the reverse on a clean soft support without crushing stitches. Do not assume steam is safe for every fibre, dye or trim.

> **Daily habits matter**
>
> Handle with clean, dry hands; keep food and oils away; store completely dry; protect from dust, damp and sunlight. Remove a stitching hoop before long-term storage.

General material guidance: DMC preparation advice; conservation cautions: Canadian Conservation Institute. [12] [14] [15]

When in doubt, do less



AI-generated dry-storage example: tissue supports a gentle fold. Not a treatment recommendation for a specific historic textile.

Historic silk, weakened cloth, metallic decoration, unknown dyes, old repairs or a significant family history call for a different standard of care. A textile may look strong while its fibres are brittle. Do not wash or dry-clean a heritage piece at home without a qualified textile conservator's assessment. [14]

Safer starting action	Avoid
Support the entire object when moving it; clear a clean space first.	Lifting by shoulders, fringe, sleeve ends or a weak seam.
Store flat when feasible, using suitable conservation materials and padding folds.	Sharp creases, compressed stacks and routine hanging of heavy or fragile garments.
Limit display time and keep away from direct light.	Sunny windows; light damage is cumulative and irreversible.
Keep conditions stable, dry and well ventilated; check for pests.	Damp storage, attics or basements with large fluctuations.
Document stains, damage and changes with notes and photos.	Bleach, adhesive tape, glue, stain-removal experiments and casual restitching.

Use conservation-quality, acid-free storage materials suited to the fibres. Material choice and folding arrangements can vary, especially for silk, wool and mixed objects; a conservator can advise. If folds are unavoidable, pad them rather than making hard creases.

> **Preserve information as well as cloth**
>
> Keep the owner's and maker's accounts, place names, photographs, purchase documents and known repairs with the object's record. Do not remove a patch simply to make a garment look "original": repair may be part of its history.

CCI's washing note is deliberately about non-coloured textiles. It should not be read as permission to wash a richly dyed Palestinian garment. Environmental guidance explains the risks of light and unstable conditions. [14] [15]

Ask who benefits from the work

Buying embroidery can support makers, but a purchase does not automatically deliver fair pay or economic independence. The Palestinian Museum's "Labour of Love" examines both the income embroidery can provide and inequalities within its production and sale. [3]



AI-generated illustration of manual work; no named maker, location or product is depicted.

Five questions before buying

1. **Who made it?** Ask for the embroiderer, designer, workshop or cooperative when they wish to be identified.
2. **Where was the work done?** Distinguish the place of embroidery from assembly, retail and shipping.
3. **How was it produced?** Request a clear description of hand stitching, machine embroidery, printing or mixed methods.
4. **How is labour recognised?** Ask how pricing reflects skilled time and materials, rather than accepting a broad "empowerment" claim.
5. **What may be shared?** Obtain permission to reproduce a maker's image, story or contemporary pattern; follow the agreed credit.

Close photographs of front and reverse can help explain production methods, but an image alone does not prove every claim. Fair terms, traceability and an honest relationship with makers matter more than romantic product language.

> **For GazaGifts product storytelling**
>
> Record the actual maker or supplier, origin, technique, materials and care for each item. Do not let this guide imply that every product is handmade, region-specific, Palestinian-made or ethically verified unless those facts are substantiated.

Respect is practical: name the work, credit the knowledge, and value the labour.

GLOSSARY

Words worth knowing

Term	Plain-language meaning
Tatreez	Embroidery; commonly used for Palestinian embroidery and its associated knowledge and practice.
Thobe / thob / thawb	A long dress; spellings and local garment terminology vary.
Tahriri / couching	A laid surface thread secured with smaller anchoring stitches.
Appliqué	Pieces of fabric attached to a ground cloth to create areas of shape or colour.
Cross-stitch	Two diagonal stitches crossing to form an X.
Motif / repeat	A design unit / the way that unit returns in a pattern.
Aida / count	A counted embroidery fabric / the number of stitch blocks per inch.
Evenweave	Fabric with a regular thread structure suitable for counted work. Check whether stitches go over one or two threads.
Strand / floss	One separable thread / the multi-strand embroidery thread from which it is taken.
Tension / float	How tightly the thread is pulled / a carried length of thread on the back.
Provenance	An object's documented history, including origin, ownership and acquisition where known.
Attribution	A reasoned identification, often qualified, of an object's place, maker or period.
Conservation	Professional care that stabilises an object while respecting its materials and history.
Intangible heritage	Living practices, skills and knowledge communities recognise as part of their cultural heritage.

Names for garment parts and motifs can vary between localities, families and publications. This glossary is a reading aid, not a standardisation of Palestinian makers' language.

Follow the evidence

Numbers in the text link directly to these sources. Museum records can change as research progresses. A precise object number is the best way to locate the example again.

[1] UNESCO — The art of embroidery in Palestine
Primary overview of the 2021 inscription, social practice, garments and transmission.

[2] The Met — Tatreez in Time
Wafa Ghnaim, “Tatreez in Time” (2024). Object-based discussion of dress, collecting, Ramallah, al-Khalil and changing materials.

[3] Palestinian Museum — Labour of Love
Exhibition essay on everyday work, displacement, gender, national symbolism, markets and contemporary innovation.

[4] Palestinian Museum — Bethlehem thobe
An adult Bethlehem Malak thobe: couching, fabrics, panel arrangement and repairs.

[5] Palestinian Museum — Gaza and al-Majdal textile industry
Seminar account of textile-industry transformations in Gaza and al-Majdal; a textile-history source, not a universal motif catalogue.

[6] Brooklyn Museum — Traditional Dress (Thobe), 1992.79.1
Pre-1920s thobe with majdal fabric and al-Khalil- and Gaza-associated designs; accession 1992.79.1.

[7] British Museum — Beit Dajan dress, As1969,08.19
Early-1930s Beit Dajan / Jaffa-area dress with mixed embroidery techniques; As1969,08.19.

[8] The Met — Ensemble, C.I.39.91.18a–c
Nineteenth-century Palestinian ensemble, linen, cotton and metal; the source of the ensemble photograph and its detail.

[9] The Met — Palestinian Doll’s Thob al-Malek, C.I.X.52.8
Nineteenth-century miniature attributed to the Bethlehem region; C.I.X.52.8. Not an adult-size garment.

[10] The Met — Dress, C.I.41.86.20
Nineteenth-century Palestinian dress in linen and silk; C.I.41.86.20. Current record does not specify a village.

The book deliberately avoids unsupported age claims for the craft and one-to-one translations of every motif. Where a museum or author offers an interpretation, it is attributed rather than recast as a universal fact.

Learn, credit and preserve

[11] DMC — What fabric should you use for cross stitch?
Beginner fabric choice and Aida count.

[12] DMC — How to prepare fabric for cross stitch
Preparation, optional prewashing and margins for mounting.

[13] Royal School of Needlework — Cross stitch
Cross-stitch mechanics and consistent top-leg direction.

[14] Canadian Conservation Institute — Washing Non-coloured Textiles, Note 13/7
Limits and hazards of washing; not blanket permission for coloured or decorated historic textiles.

[15] Canadian Conservation Institute — Textiles and the Environment, Note 13/1
Light, environmental conditions and risks to textile fibres and dyes.

Historical photographs

All three original object photographs are public-domain Open Access images from The Metropolitan Museum of Art; their API records were marked public domain. Crops are identified as details.

C.I.41.86.20: Dress, Gift of George R. Dyer, 1941 (page 4 detail, page 6, page 9 detail and page 32). **C.I. 39.91.18a–c:** Ensemble, Gift of Irene Lewisohn and Alice Lewisohn Crowley, 1939 (pages 7 and 12 detail). **C.I.X. 52.8:** Palestinian Doll's Thob al-Malek Royal Dress, Gift of Laila Costan-Conner, 1952 (page 8). Collection links appear on page 30.

New explanatory images

The designed cover (page 1) and educational images on pages 2, 8, 11, 13–15, 19, 23, 25, 27 and 28 are AI-generated. They illustrate making, surface texture, motifs, materials, couching, finishing, contemporary uses and storage. They are not documentary photographs, authenticated historical or regional designs, named makers' work, actual products or proof of production conditions. The cover is a contemporary editorial textile illustration inspired by the supplied visual reference. All exact stitch diagrams, schematic motifs and the original 21 × 21 chart remain unchanged; preview and chart use the same stitch-position data.

Developed from the supplied GazaGifts guide and its illustrated reference layout. This educational publication is not a complete regional catalogue, a substitute for Palestinian practitioners' knowledge or an individual textile-conservation assessment.

Preserve the past.
Support the present.
Share the future.



Detail of The Met's nineteenth-century Palestinian dress, C.I.41.86.20. Public domain.

Look at the cloth.
Listen to the maker.
Carry the knowledge forward.

A small cross can teach patience and precision. The larger story asks something more: attention to the people, places and histories that give the work its life.

GazaGifts

Palestinian heritage, thoughtfully told.