

## GALILEE Costume

Northern Palestine was one of the richest regions in costume, as traditional styles varied among the differing social classes and religious sects that inhabited upper and lower Galilee. A wider selection of stitches appears to have been used in Galilee than anywhere else in Palestine – satin stitch, diagonal satin stitch, cross stitch, stem stitch were popular.

Examples of coats from the 19th century show stunning mixtures of technique. The garments were often made of handwoven cotton with front sections decorated in a rich patchwork of silk or taffeta appliqué (a technique known as heremezy) and ikat-dyed silk weaves, and with back panels embroidered with silk thread in carpet-like designs of geometric motifs.

(from *“Portraits without Names: Palestinian Costume”* by Jeni Allenby)



## JAFFA – BEIT DAJAN Costume

Jaffa, nestled on the Mediterranean Sea about thirty-five miles north west of Jerusalem, has always been surrounded by orange groves, which produced fruit for export resulting in an internationally famous orange trade.

According to historians several factors account for the importance and prosperity of Jaffa. As a port city, it has been a gateway to Palestine from antiquity; the cedars of Lebanon for construction arrived here; pilgrims to the Holy Land disembarked at its shore, and the previous soaps manufactured in different cities of Palestine were exported from Jaffa to the coastal cities of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Europe.

In the 19th and early 20th century cultural life flourished in Jaffa, encouraging the establishment of literary clubs and printing presses. With the development of transport, Jaffa's cultural influence spread throughout Palestine.

The embroidery in this area is known for its accuracy and fineness; the stitches are small, the patterns intricate, and the garments elegant. The most outstanding costume of this area is the “Beit Dajan Dress”. Its fame caused the town of Beit Dajan to be known as a prominent fashion centre. Other villages in the Jaffa area are also known for their special embroidery.

(from *“Palestinian Embroidery”* by Widad Kamel Kawar and Tania Tamari Nasir)



## RAMALLAH Costume

Ramallah, located ten miles north of Jerusalem, acquired the title ‘The Bride of the Summer Resorts’ from its pleasant climate and the outstanding views from its hilltops, even a view of the Jaffa coast on the Mediterranean Sea.

The name Ramallah means ‘Hill of God’. The village was so named because the people felt that God had led them there and given them a good fertile land. The land was fruitful, abundant with olive groves, fruit orchards, and rich farmland. Money was available for linen and silk fabrics and the women enjoyed and utilised their limited leisure time for artistic expression.

Ramallah's famous fabric ‘roumi’ is a handloomed linen. The women embroidered on the natural white fabric for their summer dress and on that same fabric dyed black for the winter dress.

The women used primarily the traditional geometric designs in their embroidery patterns, but also, as a result of Western influence at the beginning of the 20th century, floral adaptations.

The Ramallah women maintained their cultural heritage and wore the traditional dress well into the 20th century.

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## INTIFADA Costume

The 1980s saw embroidered costume revived as a statement of national and social consciousness. In the Occupied Territories, the wearing of ‘traditional’ costume began to assume a more overt political function in that by wearing it one declared a social and political affiliation. This was taken one step further with the creation of a new style of shawl dress specifically designed to promote the Intifada. Made for a limited period in the 1980s, examples of these Intifada style dresses feature embroidery purely in the colours of the banned Palestinian flag, or with embroidered nationalist motifs such as the flag, or the Dome of the Rock, or the patterns of the keffiyeh. Costume again assumed the role of communication – in this case an expression of nationalism and rebellion without violence. At the same time, nationalism played a part in the embroidery industry, with cushions incorporating the words ‘Palestine’ and ‘Abu Amar’ in English and Arabic. The inclusion of the word ‘Palestine’ on embroidered items was originally a protest reaction against the use of refugee products being sold in Israel as Israeli handicraft.

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