

Textile Embodiments of Persian Negotiations-Women's Craft Work as Authentic Transnational Feminist Work

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Persian culture has a longstanding textile tradition with documented evidence as early as 550 BC (Harris, 1993). This rich textile history includes intricately woven textiles in addition to the numerous types of elaborate needlework (Department of Textiles, 1937). One such needlework that has a long history in Iran, particularly the Kerman province is Pateh embroidery (Kamali & Sa'di, 2016). The purpose of this textile design was to continue traditional needlework techniques while considering the craft as a form of authentic feminist work (Withers, 2020), embodiment (Entwistle, 2000), and contemporary Persian negotiations. That is, I created this fiber art textile to continue and complicate the Iranian tradition of Pateh embroidery as an Iranian woman with a transnational feminist viewpoint.

Much past creative scholarship has considered traditional embroidery as a form of expression. For example, Baaqil (2021) created *Healing Emotions Through Design and Handiwork* by designing a dress and adorning it with basic sashiko, a form of traditional Japanese embroidery. Sun (2013), too, created a dress with the purpose of sustaining traditional arts. In their design, *Naturally Refined Series: Rippled*, the designer studied and used traditional Chinese embroidery stitches referred to as Su Xiu. White (2020) created *El Cucuy*, a pant suit ensemble, where they used a traditional Latin American ghost story for inspiration. As part of their design process, they embroidered traditional Latin American motifs on the ensemble. Last, Alotaibi (2020) sought to incorporate the tradition of embroidery in their design titled *Retaining Ethnic Identity in the Apparel Design of Modern Saudi Dress*. They used traditional embroidery techniques and styles from the hijaz region of western Saudi Arabia to create a contemporary dress for the modern woman. My design work continues this line of design inquiry with the intention of studying traditional design and evolving them into contemporary practices.

In *Textile Embodiments of Persian Negotiations*, I drew upon multiple and mixed theoretical ideas of continuing traditions in nuanced and varied ways. That is, I wanted to transform the notion of the situated bodily practice through stitches where textile and textile making is a form of embodiment (Entwistle, 2000). I embodied my Iranian woman identity through studying traditional Persian embroidery techniques. I worked to challenge the notion of what is authentic (See Erickson, 1995), particularly for ethnic identities and claim the *making as crafting* Iranian identities is entangled with transnational feminist ideologies (Mohanty, 1988). Here I draw on transnational feminism to locate Iranian women and their embroidery work as seeking agency over their bodies, bodily functions, and ethnic identities. In the same way, for example, Czech women in the United States sought to find authentic expressions of the self through their folk dress in varied and nuanced ways, I sought to create this textile as both a process and a product rooted in redefining authentic Persian embroidery and identity (French & Reddy-Best, 2023).

Through the overall textile shape, I sought to convey notions of transnational feminism. That is, the circular shape, and bright beaming colors with fringed edge is reminiscent of the sun. The sun, as a universal symbol of light and warmth, can reflect transnational feminism in various ways. Just as the sun's rays reach across borders, transcending geographical boundaries, transnational feminism seeks to promote gender equality and women's rights on a global scale (Mohanty, 2003). The sun's energy and radiance can

symbolize the collective power and resilience of women across different cultures, shining a light on shared struggles, inspiring solidarity, and illuminating the path towards a more inclusive and equitable world.

To create the design, I first studied the traditional Pateh designs, which often feature floral motifs, animals, birds, or geometric patterns. I was particularly inspired by the traditional geometric and flower motifs and layouts and considered those in relation to transnational feminist ideologies (e.g., Fernandes, 2013; Levine, 2004). That is, my use of rings symbolizes unity and solidarity within transnational feminism. They represent the interconnectedness of individuals, communities, and movements across borders, emphasizing the importance of collective action. I used the concept of layers to embody the complexity and depth of transnational feminist issues. I layered some embroidery stitches on top of others to represent different aspects or dimension of feminism, such as gender, race, class, or sexuality. By incorporating layers, my design acknowledges the multiple layers of privilege, oppression, and identity that intersect within the movement, highlighting the need for an inclusive and intersectional approach. I incorporated geometric motifs to convey the universality and transcultural aspects of transnational feminism. Geometric patterns often transcend cultural boundaries and can be found in various traditional art forms from different regions. By incorporating geometric motifs, the design can symbolize the shared experiences, struggles, and aspirations of women across cultures, emphasizing the global nature of feminist movements. The flower motifs represent growth, resilience, and transformation within transnational feminism. Flowers are often associated with beauty and vitality, symbolizing the potential for change and progress. By including flower motifs, the design signifies for me the blossoming of feminist movements, the resilience of women in the face of adversity, and the continuous growth and evolution of feminist ideologies and practices. When these elements are combined in the design, they create a visual representation of transnational feminism that conveys the interconnectedness, complexity, universality, and transformative nature of the movements. It serves as a powerful reminder of the shared struggles, diverse perspectives, and collective strength of feminists across borders, fostering dialogue, solidarity, and activism towards gender equity and social justice.

To create the embroidery, I drew multiple designs and traced my final pattern onto the fabric to guide my embroidery work. I chose a wool, tight, and plain-weave fabric base, which is in line with traditional Pateh so that the fabric is sturdy enough to hold the embroidery stitches and provide a stable base for the intricate needlework. I chose wool embroidery threads in various colors to bring the design to life and reflect the traditional aesthetics. I used a range of Pateh embroidery stitching techniques to create the desired patterns and textures including chain stitch, satin stitch, running stitch, and couching to create the desired design and effect. I meticulously placed and secured each stitch to the fabric. The process required patience, precision, and attention to detail. Once the main embroidery work was complete, I trimmed any loose threads and then I unwove the edges of the base fabric to create a fringed circumference.

The process of creating Pateh embroidery requires a combination of artistic skill, technical expertise, and a deep appreciation for traditional craftsmanship. It is a labor-intensive process that reflects the rich cultural heritage of Iran and the mastery of needlework passed down through generations. Overall, creating a traditional Persian embroidery with a transnational feminist lens holds significant implications and future applications in terms of cultural preservation, gender empowerment, cross-cultural dialogue, global feminist solidarity, and inspiring new forms of art and activism. By intertwining the threads of tradition and feminism, this work has the potential to reshape narratives, amplify marginalized voices, and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

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