

# Tatreez Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora



**TATREEZ & TEA**  
Embroidery & Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora  
BY WAFI GHNAIM

**Author:** Wafa Ghnaim  
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In "Tatreez Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora", Wafa Ghnaim brings traditional Palestinian embroidery to life by revealing the profound depths of meaning, inspiration and stories encapsulated in each motif. Ghnaim gently decodes the meaning of each embroidery design, by guiding us through each thread, stitch and technique, then evolving into a sacred journaling of the oral history narratives of her maternal ancestors that ultimately inspire her confidence to share stories of her identity formation as a Palestinian American in the diaspora. Ghnaim unravels the stories of each dress and design by illuminating the experiences of her mother, Feryal Abbasi-Ghnaim, in mid-century Syria who learned embroidery in diaspora. Palestinian women have gathered together for generations with their daughters to work collectively on embroidery projects, bonding with one another over a cup of tea. Ghnaim's mother learned these traditions from her mother, and found solace in continuing the tradition with her daughters. Through sharing her family's al-Nakba story, the experience of her mother becoming a refugee in Syria and then immigrating to the U.S., Ghnaim keenly exposes the necessity of continuing the endangered Palestinian craft of embroidery to reconnect new generations of Palestinians to their homeland and by resuscitating its roots as a powerful, provocative and profound storytelling tool in modern society. "Today, so much emphasis is placed on writing down the Palestinian experience; defining our identity and defending it, writing down our history and preserving it, and validating our existence in the mainstream. As a Palestinian in diaspora, I feel pressure to consistently and clearly articulate what my position is, who I am and what my people lay claim to. But for those of us who are at a loss of words, yet still have an expressive spirit that longs to practice an act of

nonviolent resistance to oppression -- we have an outlet that is not only indigenous, but therapeutic. When my writing doesn't feel like enough, when my words are easily distorted, debated, and criticized, I turn to my art. I turn to my tatreez." "Tatreez Tea" is far more than a book about traditional Palestinian costume, embroidery and meanings. It's about tatreez documenting Ghnaim's way into the world; being bullied, finding self acceptance, falling in love, becoming a woman of bicultural identity, and finding the meaning of "home". "Tatreez Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora" includes: - 27 design patterns, embellishment ideas and inspirations, as well as, care and preservation tips straight from old Palestine; - Seven family tea recipes passed on through generations of women in northern Palestine; - Detailed traditional Palestinian embroidery technique and rare northern Palestinian Arabic craft terminology; - Complete guide to the meanings and origins of each embroidery thread color; - Guidance and instructions detailed enough for inexperienced embroiderers, and inspiration ideas for those with needlework experience; - Design histories and meanings of rare traditional Palestinian embroidery designs, including The Missiles, The Gardens and The Wheat Harvest. This book was generously funded by the Regional Arts Culture Council, Brooklyn Arts Council and Clackamas County Cultural Coalition in 2016 and is Wafa Ghnaim's debut self-publication. [www.tatreezandtea.com](http://www.tatreezandtea.com)