IRANIAN TRADITIONAL HAND-WOVEN ART AS AN EFFECTIVE FACTOR IN TRANSFERRING NATIVE CULTURE (CASE STUDY: TRADITIONAL HOSIERY)

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ABSTRACT
Different kinds of artifacts that are made by means of needle, crochet hook and similar tools or natural fiber are considered among woven products, for example gloves, socks, ascot, scarf and etc. Hosiery is one of the hand woven products of handicrafts which is found in Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Khorasan, Gilan, Mazandaran and other area that enjoy a proper geographical distribution, in particular mountainous regions. Iranian hosiery’s visual diversity in terms of patterns, color, and motifs, and the extent of geographical location’s effect on traditional hand woven production is an effective factor in development and export of this traditional hand woven, due to its usability as effective field of cultural, social, and economical activities. The originality of Iranian hosiery has been approved since September 2011 and it has been enlisted in the handicrafts works of Cultural Heritage Organization. The way of weaving and applying pattern and color in designing traditional hand woven hosiery, as an effective and impressive branches of handicrafts on transferring native culture and art from past to present. The research was conducted by using a descriptive analytical method and gathering library field information and interviews.

Keywords: Traditional hand woven, hosiery, ethnic beliefs, development of Iranian handicrafts

INTRODUCTION
Traditional arts are the collection of each country’s original and native art which is deeply and strongly rooted in its beliefs, habits, customs, and traditions and includes spiritual culture of society. In Iranian handicrafts, traditional weaving has been classified as a sub branch of hand woven products. In research about Iranian textile, when we come across a skillful weaving technology, regardless of our little information about other aspects of a civilization, we can conclude that the intended society is very busy and has an advanced level of life, and when technical methods of this industry is transformed from one place to the other, we can conclude that other technical and artistic works, and probably the economical, political, and spiritual beliefs have also move in the same direction.

The history of Iranian textile goes back to the beginning of Neolithic era. In excavations that have been made near Caspian sea in 1950, some pieces of cloths that had been woven from sheep and goat fleece have been found, and C14 dating method revealed that it belongs to 6500 B.C (with 200 years difference). Some whorls and styles were found in early houses of Iranian plateau going back to 5000 B.C., showing that this industry has performed from the beginning of Neolithic era. The pattern of cover cloths of two copper axes found in excavations near Shoush which date back to 3500 to 3000 B.C reveals that knitting, spinning, and snipping wool were common in the time. Fabrics found in Egyptian Pyramid and other areas of the world indicate that human was familiar with spinning technology from the past.

Iran has won the best benefit from its central geographical location in terms of textile and weaving industries. Weaving silk in Far East, employing fleece to weave a rug by shepherds in central Asia, weaving wool and linen by Assyrian people and using cotton in textile by Indian people, are among experiences that have been used in Iranian civilization to increase their knowledge of textile.

The characteristics of traditional hand woven products
The following characteristics are mentioned for traditional hand-woven products:
- Preparing natural wool, cotton, and silk raw materials
- The geographical climatic condition of the region, in particular mountainous and muggy
- Simple weaving without the need to heavy machineries
- Usability of product for all age groups and for men, women and children
- Simple way of weaving designs as geometrically and simplified symbolic abstract
- Beautiful motifs inspired by surrounding nature and proper composition of colors according to context area
- Necessity to production due to fiber outwear because of continuous use
- Having proper value added and sale in cities, allows for a simple creation and development in different areas (city, village, and even in Nomadic societies), and should be transferred to next generations. Transfer method in our era can alter the continuity of this native art.

Tools and raw materials and production method
Five short wooden or metal needles are used for knitting. In addition, in the past socks were solely woven by wool, but nowadays they are woven by yarn too. (www.qehito.ir)

![Figure 1. A woman while weaving in Masuleh](image)

The raw material of this art is fleece, which is among livestock production of the region and is produced by farmers of the area through following steps: sniping, washing, and carding wool, spinning, weaving, and hank, dye and clew the yarn.

Attributes of woolen fiber and hand woven products
1- The fiber can have various names depending on the beast it is made from such as Merino
2- Woolen hand woven products are insulator due to the air stored between fibers,
3- Due to the property of humidity and the existence of pores, it can absorb body’s (foot) perspiration and evaporates it gradually. Hence, people feel less cold in winter.
4- It should not be hung after washing, and it is better to spread it on a flat surface on the cotton fabric (Majmaa, 2012: 22).

Woolen socks and its different kinds: it is a kind of socks that is mostly used in cold seasons by shepherds and farmers who live in cold mountainous areas. They are colorful socks that have traditional patterns and are woven by mountainous village women, in addition to gloves, shawl, belts, pants and decorative handicrafts such as knob and various small animals as baby toys. The delicate and beautiful designs of these hand woven products are similar to ancient designs. Different socks are woven in two sizes of short leg and long leg slippers and in plain (mono color) and colorful (Guradeh) patterns by means of five or two needles (gilyar.ir). Five short needles (15 cm maximally) are used to knit socks, and two or five
needles are used in accordance to the part that is knitted. Socks knitted by this method are uniform and seamless (Rostami, 2008: 49).

Hand woven products made of natural fibers attracted by physicians in various diseases including recommendations to diabetic patients: 1 - wear proper cotton or linen socks and change them every day (avoid wearying darn or torn socks). 2 - When buying shoes, make sure they fit your feet. Do not rely on following enlargement. Shoes must be made of leather and purchased at the end of the day (when feet are in their maximum size). Shoes that are allotted to walking and running should be wearing after consulting with physician. 3 - be more cautious in winter and wear woolen socks. Make sure that shoes are big enough to be worn with thick socks (Marefat, Brochure of Research Center for Infectious Diseases of Medical Science, Imam Reza hospital).

**Socks variety in different climates in Iran**

In some areas, socks have a completely plain pattern, and in other areas like “Orkan-e Kord”, “Gazorkhan” and “Colenjin”, some designs are weaved depending on the weaver’s taste. Woolen socks are also called “Jorav” and “Joraf” in local dialects. Local socks are also called fluffy socks which are also known as “Kurdish Socks” as well. The socks are usually in dark red, navy blue and yellow with geometrical pattern designs. Traditional socks are made of fleece. Designs used in woolen socks include floral spiral, Kharaf Khak with arabesque margin, Kharaf Khal with Karchang margin, Kimiya Gol, Kilim rug design with leeche margin, colorful arabesque, heckle and Chap va Chul, rug design with leeche margin, Pute rug, Maryami, rug design with Changal Pocho design, double design, rooster eye, quadru design, goat horn with hen margin, goat horn with flower carpet margin, cloudy, poio, saws, wavy fine-spun, grape bunch, cherry bush, and hashtpar. Jalae Guri, Shakure Guri, Simavare Guri, Varne Guri, and etc…

*Terme socks*: a kind of designed woolen socks which are woven by using seven colors and due to using colorful yarn it is very thick and is worn in cold winters. Armenian weaving is a kind of plain socks (Cultural Heritage Organization News agency).

Hosiery is one of the products of handicrafts hand woven production which is properly widespread in cold regions such as Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Khorasan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Zanjan, Ghazvin, etc, and enjoys a proper geographical dispersion particularly in mountainous regions of Masuleh, Amarlu, Hashtpar, Asale, etc.

![Figure 2: Hand woven hosiery](image)

Woolen socks are one of the oldest hand woven products and traditional arts of Qazvin province which are found in almost all areas of province like Abyek, Alamut, Avirak, Vashteh, Ali abad, etc. Its variants include long leg socks which are mostly used by men and short leg socks which are mostly used by women (Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism organization of Qazvin province News agency). The
old village of Alasht which is now considered as one of the towns of Savadkuh County, Mazandaran, is an important center for producing different kinds of native woven products especially socks. Socks are mostly knitted and used by nomad people. Hosiery is one the common handicrafts of region which is considered among basic handicrafts particularly in “Salehan” village. Based on production and usage, this native industry can be divided as boot socks or high leg socks and low leg socks. Plain socks are presently woven in region’s villages, and undyed fleece is presented without any design and does not have artistic aspect (Tebyan website).

One of the hobbies of women who live in cold heights of Rahim Abad region, one of the environs of Gilan province, is to weave socks and gloves in warm seasons of the year. To generate more warmth, these products are knitted by pure wool, and have generally geometric, branch, pectinate, and cruciate designs. And they are sold in Rahim Abad Daily Market during cold seasons of the year (Cultural Heritage Organization News Agency).

Abstract Representation of surrounding nature by weaver artist

The more simple is the symbol or code, the more it is necessary to teach it to people (Tajvidi, 1994). Percept and effect from nature does not mean that everything that the artist takes come in handy for him or her, but s/he chooses the best from among the existing ones or designs that s/he creates. Shapes become valuable based on the perception, feeling, and goal. Hence, shape finds meaning. This meaning becomes a transferable collection first for the artist and then for the produced work, and becomes meaningful for the viewer too. In dynamic expressions of human life, rug and clay design and other hand-made products indicate his attitude and behavioral characteristics. These characteristics can be studied via psychological method (Shakeri Rad, 2005:116).

The artist’s thought is shaped by perception. In addition, it underpins his images and mental ideas, and flourishes his visual and imagination power. Through observation, hearing, touching, and other senses, artist can create an irrefrangible relationship with his surrounding world and obtain numerous sensory receptions (Morn, 1996: 36).

A handicrafts artist should develop his mentality through detailed observation in two ways: first, by visualizing rich mental facilities from inside, rhythm and color. Second, extending the proper functionality of objects to an idealistic border, by a detailed observation of surrounding environment (Shakeri Rad, 2005: 147).

Color: socks woven by dyed wool were a collection of intertwined fine and balanced designs and warm and brilliant colors. A variety of colors from the lightest colors such as white, milky, and blazing yellow, to the darkest rich colors like black, gray, blue navy, and dark brown were used in producing them. Although using these colors and wearing a piece of clothing with such dark colors were unfavorable and asymmetric especially for older people, it was exception for socks. Even the oldest or the most distinguished men who were sensitive regarding the light color of their cloths, their socks composed of a collection of spicy and happy colors like yellow, orange and red, and they shined more obviously among the matt brown, black, or gray color of other pieces of clothing (Rahman Ahmadi Maleki, 2010, 206). All available colors are used in hosiery industry, especially that nowadays different colors of yarns are available and they are also used by weaving artists (Rostami, 2008, 49). Unlike shoes and other men covers, previous decades socks which were woven hand woven products produced by housewives included a wide range of form, design and color. In terms of color, these socks composed of two types of woolen (from cotton wools of carpet) and undyed. In socks that were woven by undyed wool, the variety of color comprised of color functions, dark and blue, milky, white, dark and light gray, and black (Rahman Ahmadi Maleki, 2010, 205).
Pattern and color usage is proportionate to foot anatomy in hosiery: some socks were woven with a plain pattern but with two colors. Parts of the tip, heel, and a strip in the leg were knitted of a usually light color, and the rest which were considered as the base were woven with dark variety of colors. Woolen socks were woven usually with a plain pattern, and red and navy blue, red and blue, and pink and white colors were used for children and teenagers, and particularly grooms. These colors were created by natural colors like pomegranate and onion skin, madder and indigo (Cultural Heritage Organization News Agency).

Coordinate design form and body (foot) anatomy
The weaver artist transforms complex forms into simple and unpretentious forms, while adding to design value. The necessary coordination with foot is created in from, and the strip like repetition of simplified forms with cylindrical from of foot mass have created a proper visual aesthetic relation, in accordance to cloth designing principles. As for the designs special to the upper part of socks and cotton summer shoes, and designs for upper parts of teenager and children socks, a congress or “chirp” design is used in the leg part, and abstract simplified designs of linear view of animals such as goat is used for the upper part. The chirp design is special to socks leg.

Designs used in woolen socks: according to descriptive analytical studies conducted on hosiery motifs, design is the succinct and summarized appearance of natural objects and elements in the hand woven product, and indicates the creative and watchful viewpoint of the weaver. Hand woven designs included simplified and miniaturized from of real or imaginary plants or animals, and was similar to a large extent to forms used in rugs woven in rural areas the motifs of which were composed of straight and broken lines and angled surfaces, and lines of curved designed were not used frequently in them (Rahman Ahmadi Maleki, 2010, 208).

Animal designs: by influences from surrounding nature, weaver women leave behind an interesting inspiration from the region’s surrounding nature in hand woven works. One of the designs named Ghaz Goli mean Goose neck. “ there are two kinds of domestic and wild geese in Mazandaran which are used in preparing local foods. From ancient times, the house lady had to kill a hen, rooter, goose or duck to prepare “Tahchin polo” for new year Eve dinner” (Yousefi, 2002, 48). Geese are among birds that are
famous for their long neck. In Mazanderai language, Goose neck is metaphor that refers to a person who has a long neck (Nasri and Ashrafi, 2003, 1518).

The hen tree is a combined motif. An abstract design which is a combination of tree and hen design, and is called Kutari in Mazandarani language. Both bird and tree in figure 4 have coded and symbolic concepts. A similar design named “Ram Head” or hen tree is found in hand woven products of ethnic groups in parts of Iran and even neighboring countries. In figure 5, bird has been the symbol of rain and cloud or rain messenger throughout prehistory myths and during the history of Iran and Mesopotamia regions. The connection between bird and rain has shown to the best way possible in prehistory pottery images of Shush, Fars, and Nahavand as a medium to use rain heckle or heckle bird image (Parham, 1993, 6). The sleeping impress refers to sleeping snake. Snake is an animal that belongs to reptiles’ class which is called “Hiat” in Arabic language, and Cedar is sometimes called “Hiat shajarat” in Arabic language. Since there was a belief that when there is a cedar tree in one place there is certainly snake too (Mohammad Moin, 1998, 653). The Zigzag prohibitions motif which is created in the form of number seven by repeating a broken line, is used frequently by Mazandarani weaver women and is called double crooked and deer hoof. In common culture, there are some superstitious beliefs about deer hoof, hence it is put with children to avoid the evil eye (Hedayat, 1934, 80). Deer hoof design was woven on the socks to avoid the evil eye and was named “Mahilati” meaning “fish bin” in Chalus and Kandolus areas. It is worth mentioning that some artists still remember these designs and can display their art in case of any demand, so that the above mentioned designs were rebuilt based on their explanation (Sources: interview with Mohammad Kazemi and Habibeh Kazemi). The design of these hand woven products is similar to ancient designs and are sewed finely and beautifully.
Human designs are rarely found in hand woven products, but animal, bird, tree, and plant designs were used more frequently.

*Plant designs in socks of the region:* plant designs with *Dar be dari* names meaning tree to tree, Dar (tree), Barg Dar (leaf of tree), flower name and other kinds of flowers, in fact link the myth of human life formation to existence creation, human birth from ground is a universal belief, this deep feeling of coming out and being born from the ground is like imminent fertility and vitalizing life elements such as tree, flower, grass and river (Eliade, 1984, 63). Tree related motifs were woven in the form of a symmetrical combination of plain and rhythmic design. With a succinct statement, these designs represent the concept of trees as plant of God in human’s ancient beliefs. *Dari be Dar* design has been woven with a tree trunk axis and a repetition of continues symmetry of trifurcation. Many of ancient people worshiped trees as the position of God, tree has also been the source of fertility, and the symbol of knowledge and eternal life Figure (7).

This belief that there is a soul inside some trees that is useful for human, goes back to prehistory era (Hall, 2001, 285). *Dar be Dari* design might represent a garden full of trees, with rows of trees arranged consecutively. The colors used in these designs are not natural or even conventional colors. Rather the weaver chooses some colors (usually two colors) at the beginning and weaves all plant, animal, and natural designs in a sock with those colors. In different myths and religions, it triggers a fully symmetrical composition in all works that have encompassed this motif from the ancient times, and tree has been used as a symmetry axis for the whole composition (Shovalie & Graber, 2006, 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Rooster</th>
<th>Name: chain</th>
<th>Name: Halva Cutting</th>
<th>Name: Soleimani Flower</th>
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**Figure 6:** Design names homonymous by source of inspiration (Source: Author)

**Figure 7:** Herbal and animal designs (Source: author)
Natural motifs: A plain design named Ras (straight) is found in socks and is also employed in other works of handcrafts. Ras design meaning straight way, is woven in the form of colored fine stripes. Ras Ra (straight way) is in fact the famous design of Moharamat in Iranian traditional art that can be considered the most famous design used in Iranian textiles. Moharamat design is used both with and without decorations. By decreasing and increasing the width of stripes, weavers managed to add to this design’s diversity. One of the designs used in weaving socks is velveleh or cockscomb (Figure 9). This design has also been used in other hand woven product of Mazandaran like Klardasht Carpet and even on tombstones by Valzolfac name. In local dialect Valzolfac means intricate and full twisted hair (Jamali, 2009, 103).

Maybe, due to its similarity to braided hair, it has been referred to as cockscomb, too. This design has been used in Kilim rugs of Qashqai people of Fars as Chaplaghe design (Parham, 1991, 151). Vevelle motif can be similar to waves of water due to its appearance. Hence, some consider it as the symbol of water and life. The presence of this design at home is a symbol of requesting God for felicity and permanence of rain for farms (Samane Sadat Jamali, 2009, 14). Another motif used in weaving socks is Chakne that has three meanings in Mazandaran language: first, it usually refers to a herd of sheep including less than 5 sheep, second it means little, and third, it refers to a sheep that is entrusted to shepherd by its owner. Chakne is in the form of tiled diamond square which is knitted on the main theme.
of socks combining two colors. This design might be a reminiscent and an abstract symbol of a sheep image to the local weaver, or due to its appearance, it can be considered a cognate of primitive motifs used on early pottery. Chakne is a squared checked design. Ms. Filis Akrman, who has studied prehistory symbols, believes that alternate black and white and colored checked diamonds, are symbols of glitter and also water, this shapeless mass is indicative of unlimited facilities (Parham, 1992, 359).

Figure 9: Woolen hosiery for different ages

Water is one of the four elements that have been regarded as holy and divine by Iranians. From the oldest days, Iranian people, like the Sumerian ancient world view, believed in the role of water in the creation of the worlds system, therefore its importance and holiness have been mentioned in Avesta. Anahita or Nahid has been praised as the great Goddess of water and fertility. Everything has been created from water at the beginning. The sky and ground have been created from water, and heaven has also been placed on water (Mohamad Jafar Yahaghi, 2007, 654). Due to the important role of water in the life of rural people, and according to the opinion of ancient researchers, this old design which is still important in woven product can be regarded as a symbol of water.

Cultural, social and economic activities in different societies are effective factors in comprehensive development of hand woven product of hosiery

1- Motifs adopted from the beliefs, symbols, plant animal designs, the general concepts found in nature and villagers’ environment, has been placed simply in geometric forms. The simplest decorative shapes of hand woven products are geometric designs.

2- Qualitative needs analysis in using the products and the market of hosiery which is among handicrafts that is becoming decorative and symbolic.

3- The products were usable for all age groups of men- women- and children. These socks often fitted adult feet (with a slight difference for large and small feet), but the childish types were also knitted. Some were knitted with thick wool and high legs, for people who worked outside home and in closed areas. It was helpful for the outside snowy environment and for people who suffered from sore feet.

4- Given the material and the form of socks, clothing and accessories of mountaineering, the proper position of using woolen socks in this athletic field can set a proper context for producing and branding this product and even exporting to other countries.

5- Although the number of manufacturers of this field of handicrafts is less than those of the other fields and it has a limited number of consumers, it enjoys a good sales market. Organizing artists and setting up holding companies (strategic units of business) that will be in charge of providing raw materials and selling handicrafts, are among useful strategies in terms of instruction, promoting activities, and introducing traditional hand woven products (North Khorasan Newspaper, Monday January, 2011).

6- Registering cultural heritage of socks and footwear: the skill of weaving socks and footwear has finally been listed as spiritual works. Since Kurdistan is placed in a cold area, woolen socks are made in 10 various steps by women. And, it is a kind ethnic identity symbol (Cultural Heritage Organization New agency, chn.ir).

Conclusion

Natural thought in science and life will not be concerned due to daily problems of life. Ethnic beliefs and culture form the art of villagers during the years. Alongside the colors resulted from the sense of vivacity
and living in today’s world, these beliefs can reinvigorate the inspirations of weaver artists and cloth manufacturers in the form of beautiful abstract and simplified shapes. The study of motifs shows that after various periods of evolution, hand woven products could raise themselves as an evolved and native art. In considering socks’ motifs in different regions of the country in this research, it was found that native thoughts are rich foundations to form rural arts. Due to the primary tools of knitting and executive restrictions in weaving by means of needle, women weavers have achieved abstract designs. Designs were mostly woven in broken forms and geometric shapes, the point is that each design is formed based on the ethnic beliefs and faiths. Generally, design have had coded concept and meanings and refer to a point in daily and simple life of people. This requires an investigation regarding people’s needs, to see what quality and form of product presentation can lead to a growing trend in production. Since the hosiery is a field that has received few attention even in the country, pathology and special attention to various dimensions such as pattern, color and size, and attention to various tastes is needed to avoid it to be entirely extinct because , with a sight change, these simple designs can be put in proper use in modern clothing.

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