

The Traditional Attire of the Chlefian Woman: Between Local Authenticity and Islamic-Andalusian and Ottoman Influences- A Decorative Artistic Study

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Abstract

This research addresses the study of traditional women's clothing in the Chlef region as an essential component of the local cultural identity, where a blend of the authenticity of deeply rooted social heritage and various civilizational influences, particularly Andalusian and Ottoman Islamic, is evident. The research seeks to elucidate the distinctive artistic and decorative characteristics of this attire by analyzing the elements of shape, color, and materials, as well as decoding its esthetic and symbolic meanings. The research also focuses on the role of cultural and historical exchange in shaping this material heritage, highlighting how external influences are employed in decorative details without losing the garment's local character. The research adopted a descriptive-analytical approach by studying selected models of Sbalji clothing in light of their historical and civilizational contexts. The results concluded that this garment constitutes a complex artistic expression reflecting rich civilizational interactions, necessitating its documentation and protection as part of collective memory and intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Traditional Dress of the Chlefian Woman, Andalusian Decorative Influences, Ottoman Influences.*

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Introduction

Traditional clothing is considered one of the most important symbolic pillars of cultural identity, reflecting the historical and social characteristics of the community, thereby demonstrating its interaction with its civilisational and geographical environment. Behind the cultural diversity in Algeria lies a multitude of fashion styles that vary from one region to another, whether in terms of materials, methods of sewing, or embellishments. Shelif region is a model that highlights the diversity and uniqueness of women's traditional attire, embodying a tableau where the environment and the civilisational influences it has undergone intertwine due to its strategic location, serving as a link between the Mediterranean coast and the inland areas, as well as between the east and the west. Women's attire in this region serves as a cultural mirror is a cultural mirror that reflects the depth of society and expresses its individual and collective identity alongside its function. The traditional attire of women in Shelif is distinguished from other regions by its materials, weaving, decoration, and embroidery. Additionally, the jewellery gives it a special splendour, thus highlighting the features of a local civilisation that is included among the archaeological material evidence, which carries cultural indicators related to the region. From here, we wonder how the traditional attire of women in Shelif can reveal the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of the local cultural identity in the region? And how was he able to reconcile the local identity with the Islamic influences (Andalusian and Ottoman) ?

The Geographical and Environmental Location of Shelif Region:

Shelif region is considered a model of cultural diversity in Algeria, where geography interacted with historical movements to create a distinctive social mosaic. Its strategic location in the northwestern part of Algeria serves as a vital link between the eastern and western parts of the country, making it a natural passage for trade caravans and waves of migration throughout the ages, the most recent being the Andalusian migration³, which left deep cultural imprints.

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The region can be geographically divided into three main natural-cultural units:

1. **The coastal region:** where cities like Ténès and Beni Haoua formed open gateways to the Mediterranean Sea, receiving influences and goods through their ports, creating an urban environment that interacted with the external surroundings.⁴
2. **The Central Shelif Basin (the plains):** It is the beating heart of the region, which served as a major transit and settlement area due to its fertile soil and central location, attracting diverse human groups and intensive economic and cultural activities. The Middle Shelif Basin (the plains): It is the beating heart of the region, which served as a major transit and settlement area due to its fertile soil and central location, attracting diverse human groups and intensive economic and cultural activities.
3. **The internal mountain ranges:** such as Zbujah. Al-Zahra and Barira, which, thanks to their ruggedness and relative isolation, have maintained a more traditional way of life and preserved an authentic cultural heritage away from rapid urban fluctuations.

The Shelif Valley, as a major water artery, has played a pivotal role in shaping patterns of human settlement and economic activities, including some crafts linked to local raw materials. The contrasting climate of the region, between the semi-arid interior and the Mediterranean coast⁵, imposed natural conditions that influenced the technological and lifestyle choices of its inhabitants throughout history.

The Historical Context and Cultural Interaction in the Region (Islamic Period):

The history of Shelif region spans successive historical periods, starting from the mediaeval era, which witnessed the establishment of important cities such as the coastal city of "Ténès," which flourished under the Andalusians in 875 AD⁶. Thanks to its strategic location as a link between Tahert and Tlemcen, the region transformed into a melting pot where the expertise of the Sanhaja blended with the skills of the Andalusian immigrants, resulting in the development of local weaving techniques.⁷

The Andalusian migrations between the 9th and 15th centuries represented a turning point, as the migrants brought with them the exquisite "art of beauty" - from Arabic embroidery to silk sewing - to cities like Ténès. And this cultural heritage was materially embodied in pieces like the "ghilaf," which combined the simplicity of local attire with the elegance of Andalusian decoration.

During the Ottoman era, the region joined the administrative fabric of the "Beylik of the West"⁸ Which provided stability that contributed to the organization of crafts and the introduction of new Eastern influences on clothing, such as the use of velvet and gold-thread embroidery. And the introduction of European fabrics such as lace and tulle.

The geography of the region reveals a cultural duality: while the coastal cities opened up to external influences, the internal mountainous areas preserved their original traditions. This historical interaction between the Arabs, Berbers, Andalusians, and Ottomans has shaped a complex identity for the Chelfi character, reflected in the traditional clothing of the region, especially the women's attire.

⁴ Saadallah, Abu al-Qasim. *Dirasat fi Tarikh al-Jaza'ir al-Hadith wa al-Mu'asir*. Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 2007, p. 87.

⁵ Bin Hamou, Abd al-Rahman. *Jughrafiyat al-Munakh fi al-Jaza'ir*. Diwan al-Matbu'at al-Jami'iyah, 2004, p. 59.

⁶ Abd al-Wahhab, Hassan Husni. *Waraqat 'an al-Hadarah al-Arabiyah al-Islamiyah bi-al-Maghrib*. Al-Dar al-Tunisiyah lil-Nashr, 1972, p. 117.

⁷ [1] G. Marçais. *L'Art Musulman d'Occident*. Albin Michel, 1954, p. 144.

⁸ M. Kaddache. *L'Algérie des Algériens*. Éditions SNED, 1979, p. 211.

1. Types Of Traditional Clothing for Women in Shelif Region:

A. outside clothing:

- *Al-Haik*

The haik is considered one of the most important traditional garments in the region and an inseparable part of its cultural heritage. It is a piece of fabric that covers the entire body⁹. Wearing it makes a woman more feminine, dignified, and modest. There are several types: white, white with gold, and yellow. (Look at figure 1.)

It is woven from silk or cotton. There is another type called "Hayek al-Marma," woven from silk and adorned with golden and silver lines, and this type is limited to affluent families. It reflects the skill of local artisans in weaving and design.¹⁰ The elderly women used to wear it tightly around their waists with a waistcoat or tuck it into their pants, whether the pants were open on the sides or (Sarwal Al-Shuqah) or open (Sarwal Al-Madour). The upper sides were secured with a pin (Masak) to free their hands.¹¹

The Shalfian woman has consistently worn the haik, making it an integral part of their appearance. (Look at figure 1-2-3) She does not leave the house without wearing it, and even the bride wears it on her wedding day when she leaves her family's house. Thus, the woman becomes completely covered.

⁹ [1] Al-Ibrahimi, Muhammad al-Bashir. *Uyun al-Basa'ir*. Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1997, p. 112.

¹⁰ Drici Thani, Soulaf. "Al-Libas al-Taqlidi, al-Haik Namudhajan." vol. 4, no. 2, 2018, p. 201.

¹¹ [1] Drici Thani, Soulaf. *Op. cit.*, p. 201.



• *Figure 1 The colors of the haik in the Chlef region by the Directorate of Culture - Chlef Province*



• *Figure 2 The Haik from the Directorate of Culture - Chlef Province*

El 'ajjar

The ajjar is a piece of thin fabric, often made of gauze, silk, or lace, rectangular in shape, designated to cover the lower part of the face (the nose and mouth), and secured behind the head with two threads. In archaeological studies of textiles, the ajjar is considered part of the "concealment tools" that developed in the Islamic cities of Central Morocco to accompany the "haik."¹² (Look at figure 3)



Figure 3 L 'Ajjar from the Directorate of Culture - Wilaya of Chlef

¹² [1] G. Marçais. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Celebration clothes

El-Ghlaf:

It is the essential piece in the traditional Shalfi attire. It is woven from fine cotton fabrics, muslin, or fine silk, and is characterised by long sleeves that sometimes end with "renda" or lace. The cover adds extra volume to the outfit, suggesting dignity and respect. (Look at figure 4-5.)

It is a long dress characterised by a straight or semi-circular cut. It is usually woven from fine cotton fabrics, muslin, lace, or fine silk, and is worn over a simple inner dress called "tahteya" or "kamja." "It is distinguished from the Wahrani blouse by:

The top: It is the most important part archaeologically, usually square or rectangular in shape, adorned with hand embroidery.

Sleeves: They are often long and wide (bell sleeves), known as bell sleeves, and end with embroidered edges that match the decorations.

Underlay: A fabric made of satin or silk placed under the lace to highlight the details of the holes and decorations in the upper fabric. (Look at figure 5)

What makes the Shalfi cover a unique artefact is its decoration and embroidery with sesame and agate, stitched bead by bead, forming geometric and plant decorative units. Its decorative patterns rely on foliage (arabesque style) and interlocking diamonds, symbols that trace back to the Andalusian art that settled in the city of Ténès.¹³

As for the threads of silk and gold: they are sometimes used to define the edges of the chest piece, giving the garment an Ottoman touch.

The cover represents the attire for special occasions, where it is coordinated with silver or gold jewellery.¹⁴

The white colour of the cover symbolises "good omen" and purity, and it is essential to highlight the sparkle of the embroidery on the upper pieces through colour contrast.



Figure 4 El-Ghlaf of shlef (underlay) from the Directorate of Culture - Chlef Province

¹³ [1] Bahnasi, Afif. *Al-Fann al-Islami: Tarikhuhu wa Khasa'isuhu*. Dar al-Fikr, 1993, p. 189.

¹⁴ [1] Bin Abd Allah, Zahia. "San'at al-Majbud: Fann al-Nafa'is al-Hirfiyah fi Tazyin al-Malabis wa al-Azya' al-Turathiyah." vol. 11, no. 2, 2022, p. 719.



Figure 5 El-Ghlaf from the Directorate of Culture - Chlef Province

Kazaka

The "Kazaka" is the central piece and the backbone of the traditional clothes in Shlef region. It is worn over "El-Ghlaf" and is distinguished by an intricate geometric design that combines modesty and beauty (similar to "Frimla")¹⁵. It is a velvet jacket (made of fine velvet fabric) characterised by a fitted "waisted" cut at the waist for the bride, while its long sleeves flow gracefully, giving her a royal appearance filled with dignity. The fabric is chosen carefully, and its colours are often deep and royal (such as royal burgundy, emerald green, or midnight blue), because velvet can withstand the weight of dense embroidery with "fatlah" (prominent golden threads) or "majbood." Its decorations are inspired by nature and Andalusian motifs that connect local heritage with cultural influences brought by incoming migrations¹⁶ and the density. (Look at feigure 6.)

¹⁵ [1] Saadallah, Fawzi. *Al-Shatat al-Andalusi fi al-Jaza'ir*. Dar Qurtubah, 2016, p. 210.

¹⁶ [1] Bin Abd Allah, Zahia. *Op. cit.*, p. 722.



Figure 6 The Kazaka from the Directorate of Culture - Chlef Province

The embroidery and the complexity of the "majbood" and "fittla" stitches in the "kazaaka" reflected the family's social status, and each piece was considered a cultural and social investment passed down through generations. The similarity between the frameela and the kazaka is both "evolutionary" and "functional" at the same time. The frame is the direct root or the piece that paved the way for the emergence of the kazaka.

1. The Evolutionary Relationship (From The Vest To The Jacket)

El fremla: It is a very short, sleeveless bodice that was traditionally worn over the "qamja" to tighten the chest and provide a harmonious figure. It is characterised by a very wide neckline and light embroidery with thread.¹⁷

El kazaka: It is the "developed" and modernised version that took the form of a short-sleeved jacket. In Shelif region, fashion has transitioned from the simplicity of the "frimla" (which was an inner piece that showcased the beauty of the shirt) to the "kazaka," which has become a complete outer piece worn over "El-mdour" or Shelif dress.

The pants: (Zanqa pants and Madour pants)

The trousers in Shelif region are an embodiment of Andalusian-Maghreb

elegance, and they often come in two types:

- The shalqa pants: These are long pants characterised by a side opening at the leg surrounded by light embroidery, and they are usually worn with long garments.¹⁸
- srwal mdowar: They are the most common in weddings, characterised by their abundant fabric, which creates pleats or beautiful folds.¹⁹ It consists of three to five meters and the embroidery designs vary. If it is for daily use, it does not have much embroidery and may even be devoid of it, unlike when it is for

¹⁷ [1] Tayan, Sharifa. "Al-Funun al-Nasijiyah al-Jaza'iriyah fi al-Ahd al-Uthmani." *Dirasat Turathiyah*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2009, pp. 301–330, p. 323.

¹⁸ [1] J. Besancenot. *Costumes d'Algérie*. Horizons de France, 1957, p. 118.

¹⁹ [1] Bouayad, Aicha. *Le Costume Traditionnel Algérien*. ANEP, 2000, p. 92.

weddings and occasions. In such cases, an elastic thread is used at the waist and the leg openings, so it is completely sewn at the lower part except for the two openings, which, as mentioned, are done with an elastic thread or a fabric strip that follows the edges of the openings to gather the strip along the width of the leg. (Look at figure 7)



Figure 7srwal Mdowar From The Directorate Of Culture - Chlef Province

The colour of the pants is chosen to harmonise with the colour of the "kazaqa," and it is often in light colours such as cream or soft gold to soften the intensity of the dark velvet colour.

The traditional pants in Shelif region, whether the shalqa or medwar, represent a blend of Andalusian and Maghreb elegance, reflecting artistic harmony with the other components of the bride's attire.²⁰

1. *El maberna: (the silk crown and the veil)*

It is a head covering and a symbol of femininity made from the finest pure natural silk. It is shaped like a large square or half-circle in vibrant colours such as golden yellow or ivory white. (Look at figure 8)



²⁰ [1] Bouchribcha, Hayat. "Al-Hudur al-Andalusi fi al-Hayah al-Ijtima'iyah fi Madinat Tenes fi al-Ahd al-Uthmani." vol. 15, no. 2, 2023, p. 261.

Figure 7 El maherma from the Directorate of Culture - Chlef Province

Its true value is revealed in the "fatool"; long silk threads that are manually tied at the bottom to form dense clusters that hang regularly from the edges. The bride wears it on her shoulders and lets it hang down her back.

4. *El assaba*

It is the band that encircles the forehead to secure the headscarf in place, and it is a symbol of nobility and authority. Historically, the headband is made from a sturdy and embroidered silk fabric, and it is often adorned with gold coins locally known as "the wiz" or topped with a "jabeen" (a gold ornament that hangs on the forehead)²¹. Head wrapping in Shelif region signifies the woman's transition from the stage of singlehood to that of a lady or housewife, which imposes upon her a new status and special dignity. (Look at figure 9)



Figure 8 chantouf Hanafi (Aicha): Algerian Jewelry in the City of Algiers during the Ottoman Era — A Historical and Archaeological Study.

The abaya:

It is a long outer garment resembling a jubba, characterised by its lightness and wide sleeves. Women wear it over the cover or when going out to receive guests. It is made from fine wool in mountainous areas like Zabouja, Barira, and Bani Hawa, and from linen and silk in urban areas: Tins and Shalf. With the Ottoman era, the use of luxurious fabrics such as velvet and winter abayas began. The difference between the abaya. And the haik is worn inside the large house or during women's gatherings, while the haik is a complete outer garment that covers the abaya and the outer garment when going out.²²

The Clothing of the Women of Shnoua (Bani Hawa, Wadi Qusayn, Barira, And Zabuja) In Shelif

The "Shnoua Shelif" region (including the tribes of Beni Hawa, Ouadi Qousin, Brira, and Zboudja) represents a unique archaeological model in the study of the cultural evolution of clothing. Its rugged mountainous nature overlooking the sea made it relatively isolated, allowing it to preserve ancient clothing

²¹ [1] Bin Issa, Mustafa. *Al-Azya' wa al-Huli fi al-Turath al-Jaza'iri*. Dar al-Huda, 2005, p. 103.

²² [1] Drici Thani, Soulaf. "Al-Libas al-Taqlidi, al-Haik Namudhajan." *Anthropologia*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2018, p. 202.

styles. Its limited maritime connection served as a window to external influences, resulting in local attire that combines indigenous Amazigh elements with Andalusian touches.²³

The Shnawi cloak (melhafa): It differs from its counterpart in the interior as it is lighter and less dense, made from fine wool or cotton fabrics, embroidered at the edges with repetitive geometric patterns such as triangles and parallel lines²⁴. In red, yellow, and green.

- The Shenawi scarf: It is a rectangular piece of hand-woven fabric used as a head cover or on the shoulders, wrapped around the waist like a towel, or used to tie infants on the back, making it a multifunctional piece. It is woven from fine wool, differing from the handkerchief as it is more resistant to the elements and similar to rural fabric.

- "EL fouta": An essential garment for the woman of Shnawi, it wraps around the waist and acts as a wide belt that wraps around the waist over the traditional dress, helping to secure the clothes and protect the main garment. The towel was a protective and insulating garment that maintained the cleanliness of the embroidered main garment from friction, especially when performing household chores.

Clothing Accessories (Jewellery)

Women in Shelif region possess a very rich heritage of jewellery that reflects a blend of Amazigh, Andalusian, and Arab cultures. These ornaments were often made of silver, and sometimes plated with gold or inlaid with coral and coloured stones.

Among the most prominent types of traditional Shalfi jewellery:

1. El-djbin: It is a piece of silver placed on the forehead, consisting of connected plates, from which small "fringes" sometimes hang and shine with movement. The forehead: It is a piece of silver placed on the forehead, consisting of connected plates, from which small "tassels" sometimes dangle and shimmer with movement. (look at figure 10)



Figure 9 jbin Preserved at the National Museum of Antiquities, Algiers.

2. El-mnagesh (The earrings): Shalafiyat prefer large circular earrings that are adorned with intricate engravings or set with coral stones. The discussion (earrings): The Shalafiyat prefer large circular earrings that are adorned with intricate engravings or set with coral stones.

3. The khallalah: It is a piece shaped like a large silver brooch that secures the ends of the garment at the shoulders²⁵ and connects them with a chain. A silver pendant in the shape of a hand can be attached for

²³ [1] Bouchribcha, Hayat. *Op. cit.*, p. 259.

²⁴[1] Muradi, Masika. "Dalalat al-Ashkal al-Handasiyah wa al-Rumuz al-Nabatiyah fi al-Fann al-Amazighi." *Dirasat wa Abhath*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2023, pp. 53–54.

²⁵ [1] Mehtari, Faiza. *Le patrimoine algérien à travers son artisanat: Bijoux et habits traditionnels. Quartas for Civilizational and Intellectual Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2013, p. 65.

protection against the evil eye, and it can also be worn independently. Or as part of a necklace made of coral, which can also be adorned with a large silver piece in the center. (look at figure 11)



Figure 10 khallalah Preserved at the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions

4. El- maqayis: They are thick and wide silver bracelets. The woman wears two pairs of them on each hand.

El-mnafekh: They resemble bracelets but are hollow on the inside and inflated on the outside.

Rings: She wore several rings on her hand, adorned with a large piece of red coral.

4. Foot Jewellery

El khelkhal (The anklet): One of the most famous pieces of jewellery in the region, it takes the form of thick bracelets worn on the ankle, made of silver, and produces a ringing sound when walking. It is worn by married women.²⁶ (Look at figure 12)



Figure 11 el khelkhal Teskourt, B. & Achour, Ch. (2020). *Heritage Industries in Algeria and Their Relationship to the Pillars of Identity and Authenticity: Jewelry as a Model*. *Abhath Journal*, (02), 360.

²⁶ [1] Delmi. "Waqi' Hirfat Tarkib al-Huli al-Taqlidi fi al-Jaza'ir al-Asimah." *Scientific Journal*, 2023, p. 276.

El-Rdeef: It consists of two thick bracelets attached to each other, worn on the ankle of an unmarried woman. (look at figure 13)



Figure 12 el rdeef Bakouri, F. (1990). *Algerian Jewelry and Saharan Atlas Jewelry*. Exhibition at the Palace of Culture, Algiers. pp. 170, 2.

Civilisational Influences and The Impact of Islamic Cities on Shaping the Identity of the Shalfi Dress:

The traditional dress of women in Shelif region is considered a living material artefact that records the history of the area and its cultural accumulations, shaped by local character and external influences. The result of this composition has led to a unique traditional dress specific to the region. Where these influences are reflected in the details of these fabrics, cuts, and decorations.²⁷

1. The Andalusian Influence and Its Technological Impact Through the City of Ténès:

The coastal city of Ténès, with its intermediary location between Andalusia and Central Morocco, was a center of cultural interaction between waves of Andalusian migration, especially after the fall of Granada in 1492²⁸. Craft techniques such as "silk twisting," the production of "chash" fabrics, and their decoration with net embroidery in the aajar were transferred, marking a qualitative shift in needle skills. Additionally, the embroidery of the kazaka with silver or gold threads is a continuation of the luxurious Andalusian jubbah tradition, reflecting the taste of Granada that settled on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.²⁹

2. The Zayani River (Tlemcen) and the Semiotics of Central Adornment:

Due to the geographical location of Shelif as the eastern border of the Kingdom of Bani Zayan in Tlemcen, the region received an influence from that capital³⁰. This influence is evident in the focus on the chest area as the main center in the "ghilaf," derived from the importance of the Tlemcen "blouza." Where the artisans in Shelif region replaced the dense embroidery and jewels on the Tlemcen dress with hidden geometric patterns and motifs made of sesame (glass beads).

²⁷ [1] Hamdani, Qaddour. "Malamih al-Huwiyyah al-Wataniyah fi al-Libas al-Taqlidi al-Jaza'iri." *Majallat al-Nass*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2025, pp. 364–370.

²⁸ [1] Taha, Abd al-Wahid Dhannun. *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Arabiyyah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Andalus ba'da Suqut Gharnatah*. Dar al-Madar al-Islami, 2004, p. 8.

²⁹ [1] Bouchribcha, Hayat. *Op. cit.*, p. 259.

³⁰ [1] Chami, Abdelkarim. "The Socio-Cultural Symbols and Concepts of the 'Tlemcenian Chedda' Between Appropriation and Preservation." *Al-Nasiriyah*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2025, p. 324.

3. *The Ottoman Influence and The Transformation of Raw Materials:*

The Ottoman period is a phase of qualitative transformation in the "economics" of the Shalfi dress, through the introduction of new manufactured fabrics. Fabrics such as transparent "tulle," twisted "lace," and velvety "velvet" were introduced, allowing for the emergence of the distinctive structural composition of the current garment, based on the contrast between transparency (the outer layer) and density (the inner lining). New embroidery techniques were also introduced, and the "ka zaka" was influenced by the "maboud" technique (raised embroidery) and Ottoman floral motifs, using golden threads that reflect the local taste for the opulence of Ottoman "kaftans."³¹

4. *The Local Amazigh Influence and The Continuity of The "Melhfa":*

The Rif and Shelif countryside have preserved the basic framework of traditional Maghreb clothing, represented by the "melhfa." Which represents a continuity of the ancient Amazigh garment.

Which is characterised by an austere beauty that reflects the local environment and culture: reliance on silver in jewellery (like "khalal") instead of urban gold, the use of natural dyes, and simple hand embroidery carrying geometric symbols (like diamonds and triangles)³² with protective and fertility connotations that trace back to Berber roots, reinterpreted within the local Islamic symbolic heritage.

The Connection (Between Cultural Influences And Material Study):

This analysis shows that the multiplicity of influences (Andalusian, Zayani, Ottoman) produced a mosaic that shaped the local Amazigh-Arab identity, where these extensive civilisational influences transformed into archaeological evidence that revealed the features of the Shalfi dress, including the fabric structure, thread composition, colours, and stitching technique through the details of its production.

The Conclusion

The traditional dress of the Shalfia woman is not merely a physical covering or a fleeting ornament, but a living historical witness and a visual record that embodies an unbroken artistic extension. It documents a creative journey that connects contemporary craftsmanship with the roots of Islamic arts in its flourishing mediaeval periods, making it a faithful guardian of collective memory and a repository of inherited aesthetic values. Through the analysis of its decorative structure, a complex creative process of "artistic settlement" is revealed, where intricate geometric and botanical elements have migrated from the walls of mosques and the pages of manuscripts to adorn the fabric of the garment. This profound semantic transformation encapsulates centuries of authenticity and turns the piece into a material document embodying the philosophy of Islamic beauty. From this solid historical root, the uniqueness of the place emerges, shaping the visual identity of this heritage.

The strategic location of the Shelif Basin and the Dahra region made it a crossroads of civilisations and an open workshop for creating a "unique visual identity." The refined Andalusian influences brought by cities like Ténès blended with Ottoman elegance and the robustness of the local Bedouin heritage, resulting in a unique cultural formation. This distinction is clearly manifested in pieces such as the "kasaka" and "ghilaf" intricately embroidered with the "sesame" technique, which differ fundamentally in their materials and design from any piece in other Algerian regions. This difference is not arbitrary; it is a testament to a profound artisanal awareness that has managed to transform raw materials into a visual language expressing identity distinction, pushing us from merely observing the form to a deep understanding of the "engineering of identity" hidden in the intricate artisanal details.

³¹ [1] Tayan, Sharifa. "Al-Funun al-Nasijiyah al-Jaza'iriyah fi al-Ahd al-Uthmani." *Dirasat Turathiyah*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2009, pp. 301–330, p. 322.

³² [1] Muradi, Masika. *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

Techniques such as the "Hesab" and "Shabika" stitches in the Shalfi heritage are more than just skilled manual craftsmanship; they embody a comprehensive mathematical philosophy and a accumulation of technical wisdom that reflect the mindset of the artistic Muslim in combining practical utility with profound symbolism. The "Chalfi chest" represents the pinnacle of this mastery, appearing as a precise "geometric plan" based on balance and repetition, becoming akin to a "soft architecture" that can be worn. Here, decoration transforms from a superficial element into a structural component that connects applied arts with the larger civilisational entity. The strict adherence to these mathematical rules not only embodies beauty but also integrates clothing into the core of Algeria's cultural identity, necessitating the protection of this heritage and its study within its historical and archaeological dimensions as a human heritage worthy of preservation and continuity.

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