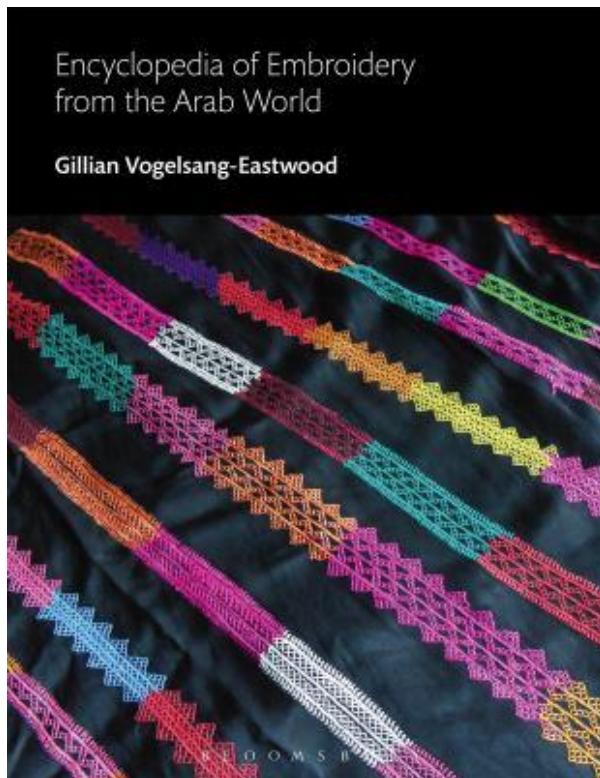


Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World

by Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, Bloomsbury, April 2016. 704 p. ill. ISBN 9780857853974 (cl.), \$240.00.

Reviewed September 2016

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This beautifully executed reference volume is not quite an encyclopedia, not quite a monograph. While traditional encyclopedias split subjects into myriad stand-alone mini-articles, this work excels in creating context. It achieves encyclopedic breadth and comprehensive coverage without fragmenting its subject.

Forty-five essays appear in three main sections - "Background Information," "Embroideries from Archaeological and Historical Sources," and "Regional Embroidery from North Africa and the Middle East" - followed by three appendices, a sixteen-page bibliography, and index. Editor and primary contributor Vogelsang-Eastwood (director of the Stichting Textile Research Centre and a specialist in Near Eastern textiles) worked with three main contributors, thirteen additional contributors, and four contributors of photos and drawings.

Essays cover archaeological and historical background, methods of working, tools, and modes of production, as well as embroidery styles. Some also discuss political and economic aspects of modern embroidery, such as the description of the roles of non-governmental organizations and commercial cooperatives in "Introduction to Palestinian Embroidery." Appendices provide details of embroidery stitches illustrated with a multitude of clear drawings, glossaries of national and regional dress terms and textile terms, and a listing of museums and other institutions with collections of embroidery from the Middle East and North Africa.

Overall, the writing is concise, direct, and clear. At the end of each article, a "see also" block directs the reader to related chapters and to digital resources. Some digital resources may shift and disappear with time, but the inclusion is helpful now. Nine "snapshot" articles contribute greater depth on selected

aspects of broader overview articles. For example, "Three Saudi Arabian Fashion Designers Using Embroidery" follows "Embroidery from Saudi Arabia." The detail from the snapshots enhances the comprehensive overviews provided by longer essays.

The book features very high-quality color illustrations, including object photographs (often with detail highlights); photographs of embroiderers working, showing tools and methods; pattern diagrams; drawings of stitches; schematic drawings of garments; maps, and more. This volume is well-made, can be held easily, and when laid flat will stay open to a selected page without text vanishing into the gutter. It is a pleasure to use.

A wide range of readers including textile specialists, textile conservators, those with an interest in dress, embroiderers, and other textile artists seeking instruction and inspiration will welcome this work. There is no comparable reference work covering the full breadth of the subject, making *Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World* essential for research and academic libraries with textile collections, and highly recommended for public libraries where textile interest is strong and where it will be a welcome addition to introductory "how-to" craft volumes.