

The Structure of Color and Pattern in Gilan's Hand-woven Crafts

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Abstract:

Color and form are two aspects of visual world which can be studied in the nature and various parts of visual arts. Each of these two elements (color and form) is able to define, intensify or balance each other's effects. They are also able to make harmony and coordination. And of elements that give a rhythmic view to the handicrafts of Gilan province is repetition and harmony of color and form.

Native people who create these art works use their own taste, which is in close connection with nature for decorating their goods. This essay studies the structure of color and form of some native handicrafts' figures of Gilan province. Since handicrafts and handmade products are extended in this province, only those current age works which are more enriched in having figure than other samples are considered in these series. These handicrafts are collected from different regions of Gilan including: Ghasem Abad (east of Gilan), Masole (west of Gilan), Hasht Par and Asalem (west of Gilan).

Key words: color, pattern, figures, background, rhythm, contrast, handmade.

Introduction

We face symbolic and abstract characteristics in a visual collection when studying figures and colors of native handcraft of every region which is a reflection of lifestyle and close connection of native people with the nature and in a way natural geography of their region. Although these people did not aim to merely create an artistic work, these works have aesthetic aspects besides being consumable. In fact, native people depict their taste and beliefs in their works which is originated from their lifestyle and the nature they are living in.

In today's civil and industrial life, we find different manifestations of colors and figures in consumable goods, commercial ads and in different media like TV and etc. our today world is the world of subtle inventions which their usage shows their concept. They are a representative for industrial and consumable ideas. Using color and figure in this industry and its effect on civil atmosphere is considered more as a merely consumable conception than symbolic and emotional. In spite of great amount of consumable goods and their ads, there are many native handmade and handcraft products which have beautiful forms and colors beside their usage. These forms and colors are originated from the essence of nature and the intrinsic mind of native people who have a close relation with the nature.

Structure of color in handmade works:

The way native artists take advantage of color is more abstract than being nature-originated or they are merely for consuming or advertisement.

However, native artists did not learn color detection and understanding its positional in an organized/academic and reasonable way. Their understanding from the concept of color and figure is an insight they captured unconsciously from nature which is reflected on their figures and handcrafts and use it consciously and get aesthetic pleasure from them. They do not put themselves in the frame of nature for using the color, instead get an insight from nature by their mind and connect colors with forms based on their picture of mind. For example, somewhere an artist could use blue to show inactivity of square and quadrilateral, but take advantage of red spectrum to add activeness to the square. Or in another sample we see that flower's stem is pink instead of being green as they are in the nature. Or the background color of the figures is light blue, pink or white instead of being dark and heavy like the nature. (Like figure1 that shows verneh making in Talesh), figure 01. Integrating the colors with white added to the lightness and spirituality of ground cloth vision.



01. Verneh. Talesh



02. Gabbeh. Asalem



03. Kilim. Asalem

Generally in many handicrafts in different parts of Gilan there exists a colorful or black and white background (field) which colors and figures are shaped on it; background plays an important role in color expression of figures. The background color can intensify or balance the effect of other colors and has influence on the darkness, lightness and height of them.

Having vacant space leads to using background of work as defining element in some artistic works. In fact, appearance of background depends on vacant or negative space, more space leads to more understandable expression of visual element or sign of the figures. As figure 02 that shows a sample of Gabbeh from Asalem (west of Gilan).

The essence of figure and background of that is made based on contrastive powers of full and empty. Each figure is understandable based on regular connection with its background. If no background is considered for the work, so we are faced to figures that are put in each other's side accidentally. Indeed, the existence of background makes some regular relationships essential.

Among these handicrafts the background of most kilims and carpets is usually without figure and is solid colors or has the least color or figure. Like figure 03 in which considered background is red with the least color or figure.

A naïve colorful and without form complexity sample is the skirts of Ghasem Abad's women. Ghasem Abad's women dress includes: an embroider scarf, a long sleeve blouse with colorful, spangle-coin decorated strips in the waistline area, a long frilly skirt with horizontal colorful strips usually have wide or more extended colors in the down strips and darker than upper strips. This leads to visual weigh and heaviness in the lower part of the skirt. This also emphasizes visual elegance and stability.

Those strips that are in the white background have different shininess. For example, lighter colors such as yellow, green or colors with close source to them lose their shininess, instead colors like spectrum of red, blue or any color made from integrating these two shows off. Such as green (blue

and yellow), purple (blue and red), orange red (orange with less yellow). Also these colors are emotionally delightful and joyful.

In black skirts, yellow and its spectrum such as greens with less blue than yellow (yellow-green), oranges with more yellow and colors integrated with white show off. Black background makes an introvert state and absorbs and attracts dark colors, while it repels light colors which make a contrast with black. In other words, black makes symmetry with dark colors and white with light ones; so they present a different visual expression.

Generally speaking, Ghasem Abad's skirts colors balance each other (in the past skirts were white background. In recent years there is more black background). In these skirts darkness and lightness of colors are determined based on black and white. Colors usually used in native arts specially figures and colors in north of Iran, are colors with high shininess and color mass, i.e. these colors usually less integrate with black and white or their compliments.

In the less shininess state, they are seen as a colorful gray.

In colorful backgrounds that there is not black or white clearly, the darkness and lightness of color is determined according to available colors.



04. Ghasem Abad's women dress



05.



06. Color Of Ghasem Abad's women skirt

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In many samples of Masole socks dark-light contrast is used to make a different rhythm and to express figures particularly. For example in figure 07 and 08 black and white broken lines are on the black and white background. When white lines are placed on black ones, it indicates a state of purity and vacancy in black space which is the representative for weigh and substance. When black lines are placed on white ones, they are like a substance and object that is represented on vacancy and virginal white. The relocation of black and white and also relocation of darkness and lightness between zigzag lines, made a negative and positive space figuratively. In these two socks samples, black and white heels are effective in background detection. In those socks that heel and toe area are white, the white color is connected to the whiteness of whole pattern, thus we accept white color as a background visually. Where black in heel and toe area is connected with blackness of whole pattern, also we accept black color as the background. Black is the color of substance world and has weigh (mass). As it is shown socks with black field have visually more heaviness and weigh.



07. Woolen socks, Masole



08. Woolen socks, Masole

In some hand-knitted works black and white lines are used to make lines around forms and colors. These lines besides creating exact and concise figures hold color expression and its manifestation independently. “When individual colors are separated by black and white lines, they show their own characteristics more clearly and their contrastive effects on each other decrease slightly. Each color acquires an influence of reality and integration”¹. Most of the works have stability of form and colors, because colors are placed in a limited and particular form, while forms are mostly geometrics. This leads to stability, firmness and certainty of a picture that is presented graphically and minimal. Another kind of contrast that is notable in these products is cold-warm contrast. This contrast depends on innate factors which are popular among people in most of the cases and is originated from mind, spiritual and physical effect which we got from our immediate environment and nature. For example, blue recalls depth and coldness, while red as a warm color has less depth.



09. Woolen socks. Masole



10. Woolen Socks. Masole



11. Kilim. Asalem

Figure 09 is a woolen hand-knitted sock. They have warm-cold contrast by using red color align with blue. But using white color as the background increases the intensity of dark-light contrast and shows its priority to warm-cold contrast.

Figures 10 and 11 are samples of socks and kilims in which we find warm-cold contrast and completion colors contrast; warmth and coldness of colors has height. Cold colors have usually more depth than warm colors and are appeared farther. We see that how a native artist makes its work more beautiful innovatively.

In figure 11 more intensive color contrast is seen between completion colors- red and green have warm-cold contrast. Beside this color contrast, the existence of marginal white and yellow brings dark-light contrast. The most important contrast in figure 11 which is a kilim from Asalem(Gilan) is the contrast of red and green. These two colors are in the same darkness and lightness degree , while more intensive dark-light contrast is made between dark blue and white(diamond patterns in the middle), but quantity of the contrast between these two colors is less than quantity of the contrast between green and red. These two compliment colors make harmony with each other.



12. Kilim, Asalem



13. Pattern of sock

Structure of pattern in handmade works:

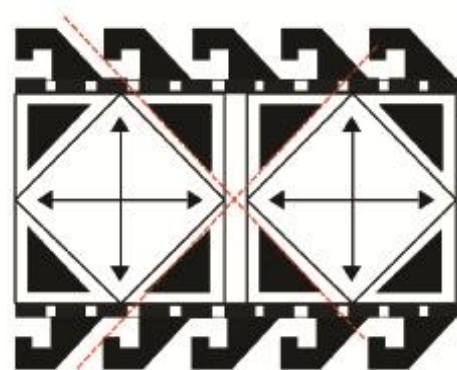
Another subject about studding hand-knitted and native products of Gilan province is the extensive subject of pattern. Pattern (form) can be defined by simplest visual elements like point and line or by more various ones such as texture. However, in handcraft figures we see patterns that their basis are two-dimensional geometric forms and surface. What is important in the pattern of all regions handcrafts especially figures of hand-knitted works like kilim, socks, cloth is being geometric. These figures whether plant or animal related have geometric form and order. Each pattern element is a result of thought and conception of its creator.

Another important subject in line with pattern study is how patterns connect to each other and the general rhythm of artistic works. Rhythm is regular and organized relations which are made between visual elements of a work. Indeed, rhythm is the general relations of forms and patterns with each other. Each relation according to its type has a particular rhythmic definition. For instance, some rhythms based on patterns definition, are dynamic and some are static.

What is mostly seen in Masole socks is active margins around figures which in a way fades total symmetry of artistic work or the symmetry of middle lines in many figures whether horizontally or vertically. Such as figure 13 in which socks (the sample of woolen -knitted in Masole) are active and effective presence in background and in some parts make visual errors as distinctive patterns and the viewer accepts a part of background as an active and effective form. For example in figure 14 we see a vacant space between triangles as a square. (This pattern has different and contrastive powers that are in close relation with each other in action, reaction and has a reasonable order.) This figure consists of a positive square in which a negative square (negative space) is placed. The cross shape in the middle of square which emphasis vertical and horizontal direction, is in the same direction to positive squares sides and white squares diameter. White square which its sides have two diagonal direction against the whole picture, is in the same direction with marginal parts of forms. Margins of Two up sides are along with two sides of White Square and margins of down row are with two other side. Figure 1 is reflected on the horizontal axis. As we can see by increasing visual element and extended special and visual experience is made.



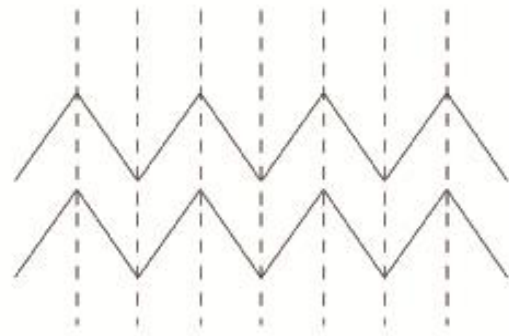
14. Pattern of sock



1.



15. Woolen sock. Masoleh

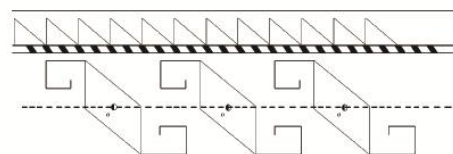


2

Figure 15 is another sample of woolen socks from Masole. Regarding color put and zigzag lines, a horizontal movement is considered. Only factor for vertical movement is the direction of diamond shapes which are placed on zigzag lines. Margins which are plain and have a solid color of red, in local language are pronounced Povar around which jagged patterns are added. The existence of different margins helps to rhythmic and visual activeness considerably.



16. Pattern of sock



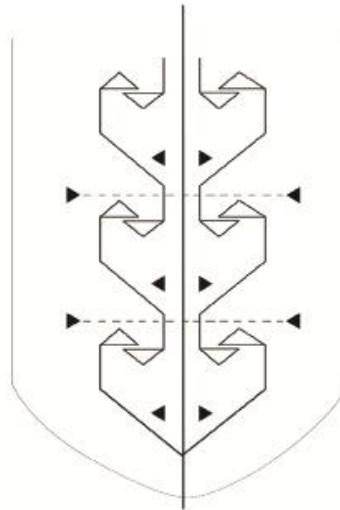
3

Figure 16 is a pattern named Pashtatak which is usually used as a margin in socks. This figure of Pashtatak has two rows in which upper and lower figures orbit against each other. It orbits 180 degree around point O which is regarded as a counter clock wise orbit (against clock hands orbit). Marginal

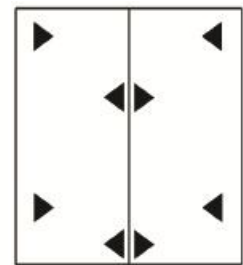
patterns all have diagonal direction and are in line with down margin lines which are a kind of diagonal jagged lines (diagonal lines have more movement comparison with other ones).



17. Pattern of Sock



4.

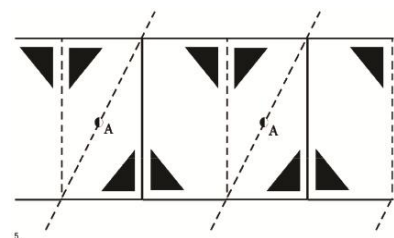


The rhythm of figure 4.

Figure 4 is the form analysis of picture 17 which is a sample of woolen socks from Masole. Two points near the middle axis made two extroverted powers. These two points are triangles which their peak is opposite to margin. And two points near the margin which their peak is opposite to main line of the pattern also make introverted power. It indicates a power that is in a direction from axis to the margin, beside a power that is in a direction from margin to the middle main line and its rhythm in figure 4. These powers are different in direction but have equal quantity.



18. Pattern of sock



5.

The pattern of woolen socks in picture 18 is triangular forms that help the balance between inactivity and movement in the pattern. Because triangle has movement in spite of its inactivity. Moreover, integration of two triangular patterns which its peak is to upper side and the one its peak is to lower side make balance between static and dynamic powers. These triangles orbit 180 degree around point A. whole figure has a vertical reflection around its middle axis. Figure 18 is a sample of patterns in which visual elements are less used. Forms and colors are noticeable expressional presence. Whole background is in white color. Triangular forms have vertical reflection. Vertical lines are an index for reflection and vertical symmetry and have orbital forms. Two factors of being reflective and orbital has doubled dynamic state of picture. The presence of zigzag line in all parts of the work emphasizes vertical and horizontal movement. In fact, whole rhythm of the picture is based on a continuous zigzag line and triangles that made a margin around two sides of the line. Figure 5 indicates picture's rhythm.



19. The bird Pattern sock



20. The cat's paw Pattern. Sock

In figure 19 some points in a line on birds' body and vacant space between them make a horizontal movement. These points in another row are placed in the middle and vacant space between them in figures known as cat's paw. Also in cat's paw pattern there are two red points in up and down side of inner margin that induce a vertical direction. In this pattern vertical points indicate vertical reflection axis while horizontal points indicate horizontal reflection axis (regardless the margin). The existence of jagged margin in different directions leads to a variety in making movement directions.

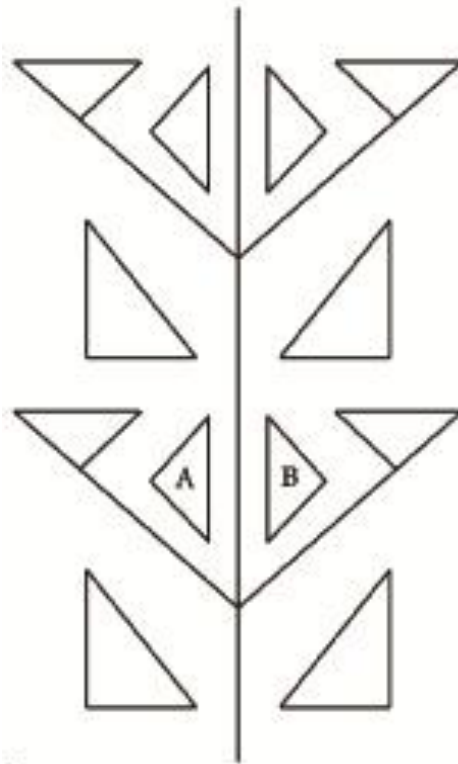


21. Woolen sock. Masoleh

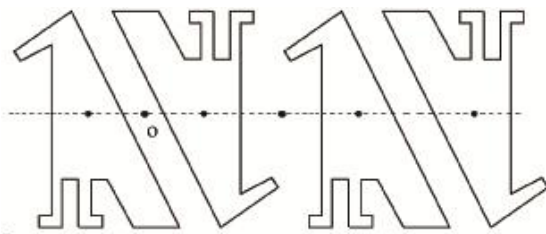


22. The cherry bush pattern. Sock

General rhythm of woolen socks (figure 21) is a uniformed one and is seen as a embroider strips which has variety in visual elements and inner powers. Figure 22 is another sample of socks from Masole which are known as cherry bush or bird. Figures around ankle and calf area of socks are popular mostly as Eslimy and jagged shapes. Figure 6: its rhythm is a continuous line and three repetitive elements which are in symmetric connection with each other. Those three repetitive elements include forms of birds, flowers and white triangles. Figure 22 is a combination of plant and animal related figures and has a vertical reflective axis. Triangles B and A orbit 90 degrees around O against each other.



6.



7.



The rhythm of figure. 7

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Footnotes:

1. Eaten, Yohanse, Color, translated by Mohammad Hossein Halimi, page 69.