

IRANIANS CLOTHING STYLE IN SAFAVID PERIOD AS REFLECTED IN FOREIGN TRAVEL BOOKS

Ali Zamani Alavijeh

Department of Literature and Humanities, Payame Noor University, Tehran,
IRAN.

zamanialavijeh@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to study foreign travelers reports regarding Iranians clothing style in the period of Safavid dynasty, Safavid monarchy as the first politically and economically dominating dynasty emerging after Islam in Iran, is regarded as of the most significant periods in the history of Iran. In this period, due to The great expansion of communications between Iran and other countries and transmission of ambassadors for political and business purposes, a great context was created for the presence of prominent foreign travelers such as Chardin, Shirley brothers, Tavernie, Oliarios and etc. in Iran.

Keywords: Itinerary, clothing, traveler, Safavi, Iran.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign travelers had made a close scrutiny of Iranian clothing style which demonstrate how scrupulously they consider the details of Iranians' lives. Many of such subject were deemed completely trivial for Iranians themselves but made the travelers to travel to different villages and ask many people in order to access valid data about such details. They critically and comparatively analyzed Iranians customs-their ceremonies, rituals, hobbies, sports and social interactions- their food and clothing. A great deal of information available now regarding these subjects is obtained thanks to such foreign reports. It should be noted that most of the famous travelers in Safavid period were either foreign state agent or ambassadors who took the trip to get familiar with Iranian culture and way of conduct and stablished ties with governors. Therefore, they spent most of their time in Safavid capital city, Isfahan. As a result, their accounts regarding clothing was mostly restricted to kings out fits and civilians' clothes. They seldom gave descriptions of villagers and peasants clothing style. Many of them are strongly impressed and intrigued by Iranian culture. Gobinio, for example, claims in his travel book that he always wore Iranian out fits when he took part in parties in Paris. The fact stands for his love for Iranian civilization. (Khalatbari 1387 AH, p.6)

Among all nations, a few of them spend their money for decorating their clothes, as much as Iranians. For purchasing a relatively stylish outfit you augh to spend as much as three or four hundred pounds. Although one could use a set numerous times, usually different sets are needed to be worn alternatively. Iranians never condemn luxury and luxurious life. On the contrary, they always respect the men of luxury. As an old Iranian saying goes: "one whose clothing in shabby will be ignored though he has a word of knowledge in his heart." (Chardin 1335 AH, p. 611)

Charden recounts eastern men never follow the fashion and it has been a long time that they had made not a slight change in their clothing style. This stability and immutability stands for Iranians prudence and flexibility. Iranians are the most cautious and assured people due to the

fact that they have made no effort to change the color and tailing of their clothes. I have seen Teimouri outfits many times in the kings store house but there has been no remarkable difference in their style thus far. (Chardin 1335AH, p.606)

They made their clothes out of cotton and silk. Their shirts and pants is often made of silk and their vest and turban has a thick lining. The space between the lining and the surface cloth is filled with cotton to keep it warm. Iranian do not wear black clothes and consider it ominous. They attack black color to satan. They move their clothes similar to us. Men never wore out fits which covered their toes because such an outfit resemble women chador. Their pants covered their legs up to their ankles. No opening (zip) is designed for the pants and to put off their pants they had to unfasten their belt. They pulled down their pants to empty their bowels, just as women did. (Chardin 1335AH, p.606)

Their clothes are always clean and chic. Men wear long coats reaching their legs and put on different turbans. Women wear chador (veils) and Niqab (a sort of disguise to cover their face) in a way that their face is never exposed to sun light. Just like men, they wear velvet pants and socks. (Shirley 1362 AH, p.34)

According to Adam Oliarius: “clothes hang loosely over their shoulders. Men wear cotton or silk turbans which are winded over and over and is called Mandil”. These turbans are often striped and colorful and a yellow cotton vein passes through it. They are sixteen to eighteen elbow long. Sometimes a decorative tail hangs behind the turban which is about one elbow long. Because their heads have been accustomed to hats and turbans, they are sensitive and vulnerable and can’t bear the cold. They also decorate their beasts of burden especially their camels with expensive knitting (called Gol Afsar). (Adam Oliarius 1369 AH, p.286)

In Norouz they all wear their new clothes. That also applies to their wedding parties. They never stop at one coat. The rich never wear their coats (Ghaba) for two successive days. In case their coats are stained they never wear it again until the stain is completely removed. According to Chardin men should spend a great deal of money to buy only a scarf. A fur costs a hand and a long but the fact does not diminish their voracity and this passion for luxury usually causes them misery. Expensive as the clothes are, their material is really enduring. (Chardin 1335 AH, p.611)

Military men fasten a sword or dagger around their waists. Other jobs though are newer allowed to do so. Royal men are an exception to this. (Chardin 1335 AH, p.611)

In Teres tingly, kings wear very plain clothes and this is a trick to accentuate the grandeur and glamour of the courtiers’ clothes. The king is recognized through the decoration hanging from the corner of his head wear. It is furnished with priceless jewelry. (Sansone 1346 AH, p.86)

Clothing is a great representative of kings’ mood. When the king wears black, it shows that day he is pondering and good-tempered. White, green, yellow, and the other shiny colors convey that he is lively and glad. However, when he wears red all the courtier would be trembling in fear because that day someone will be definitely sentenced to death. (Shirley 1362 AH, p.82)

Sherrifs wore light blue coats and turbans which were beautified with Ruby, Turquoise, emerald and other valuable stones. His clothes were embroidered. (Shirley 1362 AH, p.147)

Gizilbashes as the military forces of Safavid court put on red hats over their turbans which bore to golden hangings. Their name is Turkish and means (red hats). (Sansone 1346 AH, p.86)

Mullahs don't wear white turbans. They wear dark brown turbans made of camels' wool. They never travel on horses and ride donkeys instead as they intend to appear like common people. For the people they are respected and dear like the gods. (Tectander 1351 AH, p.59)

Though turbans are heavy, they sometimes wear a hat under them at night. Iranian believe they should always keep their head, chest and back warm. (Chardin 1330 AH, p.609)

There a numerous account's which explain kings had a special room for keeping clothes. They gave away the clothes on different occasions to those who deserved them as a reward. This is an illustration:

The other day I saw the king in front of whom four people were standing. He ordered them to give away the clothes to special people. After that they went for the people and ushered them to the clothing room and dressed them in clothes. The number of people who were awarded was two hundred fifty people. (Venizian 1349AH, p.46)

Ashura, the they the grandson of prophet Mohammad is martyred, marks one of the most important rituals for Shias. On that they, many men march on streets nakedly. They dye their bodies in red, to sympathize with the victims of that ruthless bloodshed in history. They believe a person who dies on that day will directly gain entry in to heavens. (Della Valle 1370AH, p.101)

Women wear a triangle-like band on their heads. There is also one other band which covers their foreheads. The mentioned band is a thin, delicate and valuable cloth which is covered with gems. The amounts decorations use depends on the financial status of her family. These headbands signify women's obedience to their husbands. Therefore, widows wear a small hat instead. Single girls are usually un cover their hair at home and scatter the plaids of their hair on their cheeks. Girl below seven years go out with their heads uncovered. Religion allow them to do so. (Chardin 1335AH, p.610)

Some girls wear wrist bands which are decorated with pearl. Their necklaces consist of a very thin chain which is decorated with pearl and reaches out to their breast. Among the chain there is a small box which is used as a container to keep their perfumes. The box is also decorative.

Moreover, Persian women outstandingly show disposition in wearing rings. Every women wears many rings. Women never wear socks and wear belts which are covered with golden chips.

They make-up of their hair is very simple and they usually plaid their hair and leave it behind the head. They all wish to have such long hairs to reach their feet. Some women whose hair is not that long, attach silk chains to make their hair appear longer. Wealthy women also attach pearl chains at the end of their hair. Interestingly, Iranian men and women never wear gloves which show they don't know about its benefits. (Chardin 1335 AH, p.610)

REFERENCES

- Adam, O. (1369AH). *Itinerary*. Tehran. Iran: Ebtekar No Pub. 286p.
- Chardin, J. (1330 AH). *Iran's Itinerary*. Tehran. Iran: Tous Pub. 609p.
- Chardin, J. (1335 AH). *Iran's culture and civilization in Chardins Itinerary*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Pub. 611p.
- Della Valle, Peter (1370AH). *Itinerary*. Tehran. Iran: Elmi Farhangi Pub. 101p.
- Khalatbari, M.(1387 AH). *The effects of Iranians culture in Itineraries*. Tehran. Iran: Aeltion. 6p.
- Shirley (1362 AH). *Shirleys' Itinerary*. Tehran. Iran: Negah Pub. 34p.
- Sansone, L. (1346 AH). *Imperial Iranian situation in period of Soleyman king*. Tehran. Iran: Ebn Sina Pub. 86p
- Tectander. B. (1351 AH). *Embassy report to Abbas king*. Ankara. Turkey: Bonyad Farhang Iran Pub. 59p.
- Venizian, Barbara. (1349 AH). *Itinerary*. P 46. Tehran. Iran: Kharazmi Pub. 46p.