



BARAK

BARAK, a kind of firm and durable woven cloth used for coats, overcoats (*labbāda*), shawls (in Afghanistan), *čūkas* (surcoats for shepherds) and leggings (locally *peytowa*). It seems that in the past it was mainly used to make hats and gowns (*qabā*) for dervishes (see *Ānand Rāj* I, p. 678, quoting a poem of Sa'dī). According to the *Borhān-e qāte'* (ed. Mo'in, I, p. 260) *barak* designated a kind of short dress worn by the people of the marshes (*mardom-e dār al-marz*).

Barak is rare; the main center of fabrication is Bošrūya in Khorasan, a town situated about 107 km southwest of Šahr-e Ferdows (formerly Tūn). Good quality *barak* is made from the underhair of goats (*kork*, i.e., mohair), inferior quality from camel hair. The wool is gathered in late spring and must be separated from the top hair by means of special wooden combs (cf. Wulff, pp. 177, 180-82). The quality of *barak* is determined by the purity of the mohair. It may be beaten to make it fluffier and easy to spin. By means of a spindle (*tongol* or *dūk* in the local dialects) the pure soft wool is spun into long strands (locally *farat*). These strands must be very fine to produce high-quality *barak*. The weaver, usually a woman, sits with her feet in a pit; at one end the warps (*tūn*) are attached to a wall and at the other to a beam (called *navard* in Khorasan) in the pit. Using her left and right foot alternately, the weaver separates two warps and passes the soft wool weft (*tāb*) between them. The finished *barak* is a long, narrow piece of cloth, which is then kneaded in the bath to tighten the weave. Finally, it is ironed and readied for market. *Barak* has the natural colors white, milk white, brown, dark brown, and black; pieces of inferior quality may be dyed with madder (*rūnās*).



Well known kinds of *barak* are made by the Barbarī tribe of Hazāra (*barak-e hazārī*) and in Bošrūya and Kermān province. The sale of *barak* was an important and profitable business in the past. Numerous family names such as Barakčī, Barakčīān, Barakforūš, point to past or present engagement in the trade. Mašhad is now the center of *barak* sales. There are *barak* shops on all sides of the holy shrine of Imam Režā. The main trading center used to be in the great *bāzār*, but now it is located in the Bāzār-e Režā and small sarais (*tīmča*).

Barak is usually sold by the *čūb* (an ancient measure of length); one piece (*qawāra*) of *barak* measures eighteen *čūbs* (ca. 3.5 or 4.5 yards).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Moḥammad Pādšāh, *Farhang-e Ānand Rāj*, ed. M. Dabīrsiāqī, Tehran, 1335 Š./1956.

H. E. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966.

Search terms:

□□□ Barak