



## ČĀDOR (GARMENT) II. AMONG ZOROASTRIANS

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### ii. Among Zoroastrians

There does not seem to be any evidence of veils, either covering the body or just the mouth or head from the Achaemenian period. Instead covering the mouth with the fingers, apparently as a gesture of deference to avoid offending the monarch with the smell of one's breath, is seen for example in a relief from Persepolis where a Median official, separated from Darius by two beehive-shaped incense-burners on chest-high stands, holds the tips of the fingers of his right hand over his lips (Hinz, pl. 19 opposite p. 64).

In Iranian painting of the Parthian and Sasanian periods, however, especially from Sīstān and Sogdia, servants are shown wearing the mouth-veil, Pahlavi *padān* or *padām* (Av. *paiti.dāna-*, borrowed in Armenian as *p'andam*; see Russell, pp. 482, 486), which Zoroastrian priests still employ ritually to prevent the breath from polluting the sacred fire (see Kawami, p. 48).

First-century women wearing veils completely covering their heads and faces are seen in a marble relief from Palmyra (Ghirshman, 1962, pl. 96); in 2nd-century Palmyrene sculpture veils covering the head but leaving the face exposed are common (*ibid.*; pls. 93-95). Women in Sasanian art, other than royal figures, appear most often in cheerful settings as musicians or dancers. In the latter case they often twirl long scarves or veils of a diaphanous



material (see, e.g., Harper, pp. 77-78, and cf. clothing), but their heads are rarely covered. Silk was also sometimes used for the ritual mouth veils (*Persian Rivayats*, p. 296), but Dhabhar points out that this usage should properly be condemned as the silk worm was traditionally regarded as an Ahrimanic creature (*ibid.*, n. 1).

Parsi women today do not cover their faces, but the sari is traditionally draped over the head, especially on solemn occasions. An imported Persian woolen cloth of the Achaemenian period found at Pazyryk in Siberia depicts women before an incense burner on a stand with veils draped over their crowned heads and unveiled serving-women standing behind them (Rudenko, pp. 296-97 and pl. 139). To this day, Parsi women carry an incense burner about the house at dusk, and this scene may represent an ancient form of the same domestic observance, since women have never taken a formal role in Zoroastrian public rituals.

Zoroastrian village women of the Yazd area wear a *čādor* wrapped around their necks and heads (Boyce, Stronghold, p. 12, and pls. VIa-b), but all the face and some hair is allowed to show, a tradition maintained in the face of Muslim opposition.

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