



CLOTHING IX. IN THE MONGOL AND TIMURID PERIODS

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It is difficult to discuss clothing in Persia in the Il-khanid and Timurid periods with any certainty because very few garments, in fact, very few textiles, actually survive from these periods. Armor and military trappings will not be considered here.

Contemporary sources. Contemporary Arabic and Persian texts provide little information; most often textiles are named without description of garments made from them. The most frequent reference to clothing is to robes (*keḷ'a*) and belts (*kamar*) awarded as honors on various occasions (e.g., Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, ed. and tr. C. Defremery and B. Z. Sanguinetti: *Voyages d'Ibn Batouteh. Texte arabe accompagné d'une traduction . . .*, Paris, 1857, III, p. 19, tr. Gibb, III, p. 549; Šaraf-al-Dīn, II, p. 426, ll. 16-17; tr. Thackston, p. 93; see xxvii, below).

European sources expand the picture somewhat. According to [Ruy González de Clavijo](#), ambassador to Tīmūr from Henry III of Castile and Leon, in Rabī I 807/October, 1404, on the same occasion mentioned by Šaraf-al-Dīn (II, p. 426,



II. 16-17; tr. Thackston, p. 93; Clavijo, p. 236) he and a number of other ambassadors were presented by Tīmūr himself with robes, matching shirts, and hats of kincob (*camocas* among many other variants; better rendered as *kamkāb* and understood as “gold brocade,” Pelliot, I, pp. 145-50; Wardwell, esp. p. 96 and n. 6). Clavijo also mentioned silk, wool, and linen cloth and furs—ermine, marten, fox, and sable; clothing with pleats and embroidery; velvets and quilting; and a close-fitting jacket with a marten collar (p. 276). He described Tīmūr at their first meeting as wearing a “cloak of plain silk without any embroidery, and . . . a tall white hat on the crown of which was displayed a balas ruby” (p. 220). Several weeks later he saw Tīmūr’s grandson Pīr-Moḥammad dressed in the Tartar manner, in a blue silk robe with gold embroidery, “which back and front covered his chest and shoulders and passed down the material of the sleeves” (p. 254), recognizable as the “cloud collar” (Chin. *yün-chien/yun-jian*) derived from Chinese prototypes, which in Ilkhanid and Timurid Persia consisted of a large motif with four trefoils decorating the neck of a garment, extending front and back, as well as over the shoulders, either applied separately to the overgarment or embroidered directly onto it (see Cammann, 1951, and idem, 1972, p. 39). He also commented on the festive clothing of the Great Khanom on the same occasion: an outer robe of red silk embroidered with gold, high-necked but sleeveless, with a train so long it required the assistance of fifteen ladies, and a thin white veil attached to a towering headdress of gold-embroidered red stuff ornamented with gold, pearls, turquoises, balas rubies, and plumes of white feathers (pp. 258-59). Other European travelers, particularly the Venetian ambassadors to Uzun Ḥasan Āq Qoyunlū in the 870s/1470s, were far less informative about clothing than Clavijo, though they did note the places where certain textiles were manufactured (textile names derived from which are not necessarily considered definitive by modern textile historians; cf. Serjeant, p. 56; Bier, p. 5). An anonymous Venetian merchant described the dress of people he saw in Tabrīz during the reign of Uzun Ḥasan (Grey and Roy, p. 172): “Their dress is the same as has always been—the Persian costume—wearing it open at the breast, showing their bosoms All the Persian women, and particularly in Tauris . . . wear men’s robes, and put them on over their heads, covering them altogether. These are robes of silk, some of crimson cloth, woolen cloth, velvet, and cloth of gold. . . .”

Surviving textiles and clothing. The few Mongol and Timurid garments that survive almost all come from tombs; they reveal more about material and weaves, designs and colors, than about cut. For example, a silk-and-gold



lampas fabric, the “*ṭerāz* of Abū Saʿīd,” used for the burial of Rudolf IV (Dom- and Diözesanmuseum, Vienna, *Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 2049-50, 2056, pl. 1003; Wardwell, pp. 108-09, fig. 45), was not made up into a garment before its export to the West. The pattern (compound stripes of staggered medallions and diamonds and running animals, alternating with inscriptions in Arabic) suggests that it may well have been intended for clothing like that worn by the seated king in a painting from a dispersed *Šāh-nāma* manuscript of about 770/1370 (Topkapı Sarayı, Istanbul, H. 2153, fol. 55r; Grube, 1980, pl. 10).

Textiles found in the tomb of Cangrande I della Scala (d. 1329) in Verona have been attributed to locales from China to the Middle East (Sangiorgi, 1922; *Stoffe*). Five of them (A, D, E, G, H; *Stoffe*, pp. 45, 76-91, 100-23, 130-62) have recently been subjected to technical analysis that places them among a group woven in Central Asia (Wardwell, *passim* and Appendix I); those made into garments (D, the cap; E, the tunic; H, the overvest) were made up in the West, and, like the “*ṭerāz* of Abū Saʿīd,” they thus provide no information about clothing made from such sumptuous fabrics in Persia or Central Asia.

Of Persian clothing from the 9th/15th century, only fragments of the burial garments of Tīmūr, Šāhroḡ, Oloḡ Beg, and Mīrānšāh remain. Although Oloḡ Beg was buried in the clothing in which he had been murdered, his burial garments appear to have survived more completely than those of the others. The turban was a finely woven, “delicate” stuff; the shirt was woven of mixed silk and cotton, very long, and tucked into “Uzbek-cut” trousers at the back and sides, falling to the knees in front and held in at the waist by a “broad, silk band ornamented with a checker pattern of white and light blue squares” (Gerasimov, p. 143; said to be kept in the Navoi Literature Museum of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, Tashkent). Finally, a lavishly embroidered quatrefoil yoke, in the classical form of the cloud collar, with designs of winged peris against a floral background, has been reevaluated and published as Timurid (Lentz and Lowry, pp. 216-17 no. 116).

Manuscript illustration. The incomplete picture of what people wore in Persia in the Mongol and Timurid periods derived from documentary sources and surviving garments may be expanded by means of another visual source: contemporary manuscript illustrations and drawings by artists working in courtly ateliers (*ketāb-kānas*). Clothing, unlike rugs and carpets, is defined by cut, as well as by the composition of fabric, weaves, designs, and colors. Persian clothing surviving from the Safavid period and later (*Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 2069ff., pls. 1024, 1034, 1060, and 1088; Spuhler, pp. 163-64; Bier, pp.



41-45), as well as garments represented on Safavid figured textiles (*Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 2078-2108 passim), generally resembles clothing shown in paintings in the essential features of cut (cf. *Persian and Mughal Art*, nos. 55; 138; 142 iv, lii, v, or x), though not necessarily in colors or patterns (pace Scarce, p. 36). Furthermore, the actual designs, for clothing ornamentation were generated by artists of the *ketāb-kāna*, and some of their drawings have survived (Grube, 1974, fig. 127; Lentz and Lowry pp. 194-97 nos. 95-98, 216-18 nos. 114-16).

Nevertheless, as with carpets of the same periods (see [carpets vii](#)), the most stringent criteria of quality, purpose, and especially subject must be applied in using Mongol and Timurid paintings as a guide to clothing of a period in Persian history from which very few actual garments survive (*Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 2044-55, 2061-68, for example, should be read with great caution).

Mongol period. Illustrations: right half of a double-page composition, Tabrīz, ca. 700/1300, Topkapı Sarayı Library, Istanbul, H. 2153, fol. 148v, Grube et al., pl. 8 ([plate xcvi](#)); Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme‘al-tawārīk*, Tabrīz, 706/1306, Edinburgh University Library, Arab 20, fols. 122r, 139v, 117r, Rice and Gray, pp. 142, 170, 178; Bīrūnī, *al-Aṭār al-bāqīa*, Tabrīz, 707/1307-08, Edinburgh University Library, Arab 161, fol. 158v, Gray, p. 27; Ferdowsī, *Šāh-nāma* [“Demotte” *Šāh-nāma*, dispersed], Tabrīz, 730-40/1330-40, Sackler Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., nos. S86.0100, S86.0102, S86.0107, S86.0105, Lowry and Nemazee, pp. 78-85 nos. 8-11, and The Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., no. 38.3, Gray, p. 32 ([plate xcvi](#)); *Kalīla wa Demna*, Tabrīz (?), ca. 760/1360, Istanbul University Library, F. 1422, fols. 11v, 24r, Gray, pp. 38-39; fragment from a dispersed *Šāh-nāma*, Tabrīz (?), ca. 770/1370, Topkapı Sarayı Library, Istanbul, H. 2153, fol. 65v, Gray, p. 42; single painting, Baghdad, ca. 780-800/1380-1400, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 57.51.20, Grube, 1968, pl. 14.

It can be deduced from surviving garments, written sources, and contemporary painting that men in the Mongol period wore the *qabā*, a long sashed or belted coat either wrapped in front and fastened under the right armor closing in the center, with lapels (Schroeder, p. 124; figures represented in such coats are not, however, always Persian) and long or elbow-length sleeves. It was worn over a long-sleeved tunic or shirt, *qamīz* or *pīrāhan*, and trousers tucked into boots or low shoes. Overgarments included coats or cloaks, sometimes fur-lined and sometimes with slit sleeves. A square of ornament might appear on the chest of the overgarment of a man of rank, and



the upper arms and shoulders of the *qabā* might also be decorated. This convention is common in early Il-khanid painting (Rice and Gray, pp. 142, 168, 170, 172; Lowry and Nemazee, pp. 84-85 no. 11). The question of whether or not the ornamented square was intended to represent the cloud collar (Lowry and Nemazee, pp. 82-83 no. 10) is but one example of the difficulties of relying on painting styles to interpret changes in fashion. Headgear appears to have been varied (Schroeder, pp. 120-21). Mongol “bonnets” had many shapes and were often adorned with feathers; presumably they went out of fashion after the fall of the dynasty in 736/1336. Other distinct types were hats with large brims, slit at the sides for flexibility, crowns of varying heights and shapes, decorated finials, and occasionally what appear to be fur brims; low-crowned hats with flat, shallow brims; and either large turbans wrapped around colored *kolkās* (caps) or medium-sized turbans. To judge from paintings, garments could be patterned in contrasting colors or gold, and contrasts between *qabā* and *pīrāhan* were fashionable, though again it is unclear how closely these features reflect reality. Women also appear to have worn long garments closing down the front, with sleeves of variable length and cut, over at least one, perhaps more, additional layer of clothing; the garment closest to the body was also called a *pīrāhan*. Sometimes women’s coats are also shown decorated with cloud collars or with squares or other ornament on the breast and shoulders. Depending on background and social status, the head was covered by a stiff white or transparent veil falling down the back or fashioned like a cowl or a hood, or a softer, dark-colored shawl was wrapped around the head, neck, and shoulders. Mongol women of rank wore the headdress called *boḡtāq*, a tall construction of felt and willow (wood or bark), the cloth covered with ornaments (see Doerfer, I, pp. 210-12). It is curious (and symptomatic of the problems of using paintings to document no longer existent clothing) that this unmistakable headdress does not appear in the surviving paintings of the “Demotte” *Šāh-nāma*, despite Grabar and Blair’s recent interpretation of this manuscript as an Il-khanid court manuscript; Clavijo’s precise description leaves no doubt that it was still being worn in Timurid Central Asia early in the 9th/15th century.

Timurid period. Illustrations: single painting on silk, Samarqand or Herat, ca. 810/1410, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 57.51.24, Grube, 1968, pl. 16 (plate [xcviii](#)); anthology of Eskandar-Soltān, Shiraz, 813/1410-11, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, no. LA 161, p. 125, Gray, p. 75; *Kollīyāt-e tārikī*, Herat, 818-19/1415-16, Topkapı Sarayı Library, Istanbul, no. B. 282, fol. 16r, Grube et al., p. 72; anthology of Bāysonḡor, Herat, 830/1427, Berenson



Collection, I Tatti, Settignano (Florence), fol. 26v, Gray, p. 86; *Kalīla wa Demna*, Herat, 833/1429, Topkapı Sarayı Library, Istanbul, no. 8.1022, fol. 45r, Grube et al., p. 76; Neẓāmī Ganjavī, *Ḳamsa*, Herat, 849/1445-46, Topkapı Sarayı Library, Istanbul, no. H. 781, fols. 48v, 62r, Grube et al., p. 80, and Grube, 1980, pl. 31; *Zafar-nāma*, Herat, 872/1467-68 (miniatures up to twenty years later), Johns Hopkins University, Eisenhower Library, Baltimore, fols. 82v-83r, Lentz and Lowry, pp. 264-65; ‘Aṭṭār Nišāpūrī, *Manteq al-ṭayr*, Herat, 892/1487, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 63.210.28, fol. 28r, Lentz and Lowry, p. 279; Sa’dī, *Būstān*, Herat, 893/1488, Egyptian National Library, Cairo, Adab Fārsī 22, fols. 1v-2r, Lentz and Lowry, pp. 260-61; Neẓāmī Ganjavī, *Ḳamsa*, Herat, 900/1494-95, British Library, London, Or. 6810, fol. 39v, Lentz and Lowry, p. 277; portrait of Solṭān-Ḥosayn Mīrzā, Herat (?), ca. 900/1500, Harvard University Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Mass., no. 1958.59, Lentz and Lowry, p. 243 (plate xcvi).

To the extent that paintings provide evidence of changes in fashion in the Timurid century, men’s *qabās* appear to have been less extravagantly patterned; they were sometimes buttoned down the front and more often shown with belts of leather and metal elements, instead of with a sash. Occasionally jackets are shown, with fuller, baggy trousers, still tucked into boots or shoes. Headgear appears to have included the cap with high, sectioned crown and slit brim, the flatter low-crowned decorated hat, and the turban, most often shown as white but sometimes striped in bold colors; the colored *kolāh* is sometimes shown. Both men and women are frequently shown with a cloak thrown over the shoulders; it is sometimes fur-lined and often decorated at knee and shoulder and down the front. Women might also wear coats with sleeves. Such coats appear to have opened down the front and sometimes to have had short, flat lapels, and sleeves of varying lengths. They were worn over the *pīrāhan*, still apparently closest to the body, which had a high neck but was sometimes apparently cut to expose the chest between neck and bosom. Belts or sashes kept all but the outermost garment close to the waist and are often shown as extremely long, with ends fluttering in extravagant ripples. Transparent veils and hoods appear to have given way to less voluminous headcoverings, but sometimes an additional shawl is shown; white or colored scarves appear to be fastened at the back of the head and to fall to the feet behind, or they are secured under the chin by a string of what appear to be beads or jewels. Sometimes a fan-shaped headdress, apparently held in a knot at the front and then falling down the neck, is shown. The number of women portrayed with golden crowns can hardly be taken as evidence that they were actually worn



in such numbers; rather many of the stories illustrated in these paintings involve royal women.

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