



CLOTHING X. IN THE SAFAVID AND QAJAR PERIODS

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In the late 15th century the poet Neẓām-al-Dīn Maḥmūd Qārī (Neẓām Qārī) of Yazd devoted an entire collection of poems to the subject of dress, the *Dīvān-e albesa* (for an index of contemporary clothing terminology, see pp. 195-206). The continuing and even increasing importance of dress in the following centuries is reflected in the richness of available documentation on this subject from the Safavid and Qajar periods, compared with earlier periods. In spite of the vagaries of fashion, the basic approach to dress and the components dictated by social custom and the performance of religious duties, for example, the *kaḷ'at* (Ar. *kel'a*; robe of honor; see xxvii, below), the turban, and the *čādor*, remained constant in Persia.

Sources. Contemporary textual and archival sources; illustrations and, in the later 19th century, photographic documentation; and surviving garments combine to illuminate the essential character of the dress of these periods. Persian sources, including literary and historical texts and court documents, provide information on robes of honor, turbans, terms for textiles and garments, centers of production, and the impact and range of European materials and styles. Especially for the Qajar period there is also considerable



information on the social and political background that is so important for an understanding of the practical purposes of clothing and changes in fashion. Reports of European observers provide specific descriptions of both male and female dress, enriched by details that supplement those given in the Persian sources. Furthermore, aside from Europeans' persistent emphasis on the Persian love of fashion and the expense involved in satisfying it, there are scattered references to class distinctions in dress, providing valuable insights into a little-documented aspect of Persian social history.

The limited range of surviving garments (compared to the numbers and variety of contemporary rugs and textiles), especially from the Safavid period, is owing in part to heavy wear (Du Mans, p. 191; Chardin, p. 2), the perishable nature of fine silks and cottons, the habit of burning court garments to recover the gold and silver used in them (Moḥammad-Hāšem, II, p. 212), and especially the destruction of the Safavid court wardrobes during the sack of Isfahan in 1135/1722. Introduction of European fashions and consequent disregard for traditional costume in court circles have also contributed to the scarcity. Furthermore, the dating of garments that have survived is often complicated by the fact that robes were sometimes recut and fine brocades reused after their initial use. Among the best represented survivals are men's robes from all periods but especially the 17th century; sashes of the same period; and women's jackets, as well as accessories and jewelry for both sexes, of the 19th century. Such garments were sent as royal gifts to European princes or collected by local agents and diplomats of the European powers in the 19th century and have thus been preserved primarily in European collections. Persian museum and family collections are another source that has so far been little used (see Ashmolean, pp. 28-30).

Pictorial sources for both the Safavid and Qajar periods provide a comprehensive survey of costume types and are thus an important tool, as long as it is remembered that Persian painting is often idealized and standardized (see ix, above). Nevertheless, in these periods it was usually correct in essentials, for great care was taken to render decorative details accurately. Paintings, beside being particularly important for documenting the dress of periods from which few garments survive, have a special usefulness in showing how various parts of the costume were worn together, for Persian dress consisted of an elaborate layering of different elements. Detailed and often quite frank rendering of women in their domestic costume is particularly useful in this respect, for, as women were usually veiled in public,



few observers (at least until the late 19th century) were able to describe their dress at first hand. Furthermore, the importance of photographs, which provide a totally accurate record of costumes from the mid-19th century, cannot be underestimated.

The Safavid period (907-1135/1502-1722). Safavid costume in the 16th century can be described generally as comprised of layered garments in luxurious materials, cut close to the torso and then spreading out in loose, flowing lines and worn with a variety of headgear, jewelry, ornaments, and accessories. As Jean Chardin (p. 50) remarked a century later, after viewing the robes of Tīmūr (771-807/1370-1405) preserved in the royal wardrobe, early Safavid dress still reflected Timurid styles (see ix, above). The basic garments of men and women were almost interchangeable, except for the headgear: turbans and caps for men, veils for women. With the exception of such categories as grooms and dervishes, most of the available information is related to the dress of the upper classes. It can nevertheless be suggested that the same basic type of dress was worn by all classes, with varying degrees of simplification.

Many reports in Safavid texts provide clues to the social significance and unequaled richness of court dress in this period: for instance, the gold-embroidered or brocaded *tāj* (twelve-gored cap, symbolizing the twelve Shīʿite imams) and robe of honor sent by [Shah Esmāʿīl](#) (907-30/1501-24) to the Turkman amir of Iraq Bārīk Beg and the brocaded robes and cloaks, as well as *ĉahār ḍarʿīs* (robes 4 cubits long), given by Moḥammad Ḳodābanda (985-96/1578-88) to Amīr Khan Torkamān, who married his daughter in 988/1580-81 (Eskandar Beg, tr. Savory, I, pp. 54, 384). Ottoman sources confirm the great luxury of Persian court costume, as observed in the dress of Shah Ṭahmāsb's ambassadors on the occasion of the coronation of Salīm II in 974/1566: There were 120 envoys clothed in silks, velvets, and gold weaves and others who wore polychrome state robes embroidered with birds, flowers, and animals; the turbans were of gold cloth. In 982/1574, for the coronation of Sultan Morād III, Ṭahmāsb's envoys wore silks with designs of lions, tigers, horses, and human figures (Martin, p. 12). Anthony Jenkinson, an English merchant traveling in Persia in 969/1562, described the sumptuous dress of the khan of Šamākī (Shemakha) in the Caucasus. It included robes of silk brocade embroidered with pearls and jewels, a brocaded silk *tāj* "tolipan" (Turk. *dūlbent* or *tūlbent* < Pers. *dūlband* "rope") a half-yard high, and a gold enameled aigrette set with plumes (pp. 367-68).

The reconstruction of 16th-century Safavid dress proposed here is based on



the few surviving garments and, most important, the numerous richly illuminated manuscripts of the period (plate xcix). A typical man's costume consisted of a collarless silk shirt, white or colored, fastened at the right shoulder, and loose trousers tapering to the ankles. Although little is known about the details of these undergarments, it is probable that in essentials they were identical with those worn in the next century (see below). *Eskandar Beg Monši* mentioned that Shah Esmā'īl donned a quilted *kaftān* (tunic) under his armor before the battle of Dīārbakr in 913/1507 (tr. Savory, I, p. 51). A shirt with painted talismanic inscriptions, now in a London private collection, has been attributed to Shah Esmā'īl (Karīmzāda, pp. 1455, 1559 pl. 73). Over the shirt and trousers a jacket or long robe was worn; it either opened down the front or was fastened under the armpit (for reconstructions of this and other garments, see Scarce, 1987a, p. 36). A narrow velvet or leather belt with jeweled rosettes or a similarly narrow sash encircled the waist. At times a second sash was looped through the first. Finally, another long robe, either open at the front or V-necked, was worn over the entire outfit. This outer robe was of two types; one with wide, elbow-length sleeves, the other worn as a mantle with long, tapering sleeves dangling loose and slits at the shoulders through which the arms passed. The legs were covered in long stockings, which rose above the knee, and were fastened with cord. Peasants wore strips of cloth wound around the lower legs. Footgear consisted of pointed, flat-soled shoes, clogs, or short boots or riding boots. These boots were probably made of shagreen dyed red or green, as in the 17th century (Le Bruyn, p. 214; Chardin, p. 51, cf. 81).

In courtly dress robes were primarily of plain or brocaded silk or cotton. They were in bright colors (black was rarely worn; Herbert, pp. 232-33), and gold embroidery was also used for scalloped collars and as decoration around the neck or front opening. By the 940s/1530s sophisticated patterns of animals and figures were in use for decorating textiles (plate c). Surviving men's garments include a magnificent silk robe (*jobba*) with long sleeves and a front opening, datable to the mid-16th century by the style of the repeat design of a young man throwing a rock at a dragon (State Armory Museum, Moscow, no. TK2845; Hayward Gallery, p. 107 no. 75; *Survey of Persian Art*, pls. 1024-25); similar, though not identical, motifs are known from manuscript paintings of that period (*Treasures*, p. 88 no. 56; for surviving fragments of velvets with comparable patterns, see Bier, pp. 198-99 no. 33, 250-52 no. 60, 252 no. 61). Another example of the same approximate date has a woven design of male and female figures wearing the contemporary layered robes; the women's



embroidered trousers (*šalvār*) are typical of the period (State Armory Museum, Moscow; for a detail, see *Survey of Persian Art*, pl. 1028). These garments reflect the high standards of design in the royal workshop, which provided the models used by the weavers for their figural textiles. Coats with gold braid across the chest and buttons covered in gold or silver thread were also worn. Robes and coats could be quilted or lined with contrasting materials for both warmth and beauty. Fur-lined outer robes and sheepskin mantles were worn in winter.

Aigrettes with gold chains and plumes were attached to turbans, and flowers could be tucked into their folds as well. Jeweled armbands and belts were worn, and penboxes, daggers, swords, kerchiefs, bags, seals, and rings were attached to the belts. The fine workmanship of these accessories is illustrated by an important belt of velvet with gilded openwork plaques made for Shah Esmā'īl and a single armband in the same style signed by the craftsman Nūr-Allāh (Topkapı Saray, Istanbul, nos. 1842, 1843; Rogers, p. 206 nos. 115-16).

The most distinctive item of men's costume was, of course, the headgear, which indicated not only gender but also religious and political allegiance (see, e.g., Schmitz, p. 110). The head was always shaved, though younger men retained a ponytail and light side-whiskers and older men sported well-trimmed moustaches and beards. The early Safavid turban (*mandīl*) was usually wrapped around a twelve-gored felt or brocade cap (*tāj*) with a tall, pointed finial (see Scarce, 1987a, p. 37, for construction of the turban), under which a flat skullcap (*araqčīn*) was worn. The cap was most often red, but other colors were sometimes worn to coordinate with the costume as a whole. It was sometimes decorated only by gold chains or plumes but usually covered with a turban, consisting of a long white sash wound in graceful folds and ending in a fan-shaped cockade. The material of this sash could be either silk or fine cotton, plain with patterned ends or covered all over with delicate embroidery. Sometimes striped brocade or colored fabrics were preferred. The most elegant shape was drawn up to a graceful point from which the finial emerged, but more globular versions were worn as well. Low, rounded turbans, pointed and rounded caps with fur linings, and caps with wide, slit brims were also worn in this period (see, e.g., *Treasures*, p. 110 no. 76).

Miniature painting reveals to the modern historian all the elegance of the Safavid lady in the privacy of the *andarūn*; in the 16th century her clothing was also composed of layers similar to those worn by men. Most distinctive was the long, loose shirt with an opening to the waist in front, edged with



contrasting fabric and fastened by a brooch; in some miniature paintings the deep décolletage of this garment, which was practical for nursing, is clearly visible under the long robe, which fastened down the front with two or three loops or had a V neck (see [plate ci](#)). Trousers were often of diagonally striped material, either embroidered or woven. A mid-16th-century portrait of a princess clearly shows the transparent sleeves of her undergarments, her jewels and tiara, her embroidered collar, and the complementary colors of the different garments ([plate cii](#)).

The main differences from men's costume, however, were to be observed in the headgear and in outdoor dress. The head was swathed in delicate veils, often folded and starched to flattering effect or looped under the chin. The veils might either be shoulder length or cover the chest completely. They were attached by means of brooches or pins to little caps tilted at an angle or held in place by a length of narrow fabric. Aigrettes, tiaras, plumes, necklaces of pearls or stones worn high under the chin, earrings, rings, and bangles completed the outfit. The hair was pulled back in long plaits with a few wisps around the face; the plaits were sometimes enhanced with decorative ropes, ribbons, and pearls, which hung down the back. [Cosmetics](#) included kohl for the eyes and henna for the hands and feet; the breast and hands were tattooed with small-scale designs (*kāl-kūbī*). The outdoor costume consisted of a floor-length, all-enveloping white *čādor* worn in conjunction with a white face veil or black horsehair visor, both of which ensured the required modesty and anonymity (Scarce, 1975a, p. 2).

The reign of Shah 'Abbās I (996-1038/1588-1629) ushered in one of the most splendid centuries in Persian history, which was reflected in luxurious dress. Information from text sources is more plentiful and detailed; for instance, eyewitness accounts supply descriptions of undergarments previously unavailable. Shifts of delicate checked or striped fabric were worn by both men and women. Men wore them to the knees, tucked into drawers, to which loose stockings (*čāqšūr*) were attached. They also wore a cotton waistcoat (*arkāloq*) under the robe (Du Mans, pp. 101-02). The women's shift, worn only with attractive plain or striped drawers, reached the floor, and the neckline was sometimes embroidered with pearls (Herbert, pp. 232-33; cf. Chardin, p. 50).

Persian manuscript illustrations from this period are complemented by albums of portraits and paintings of typical local figures, mural paintings (see, e.g., [Čehel Sotūn, Isfahan](#)), and engravings from foreign travel accounts as



corroborative sources for fashion innovations. A certain casualness and a perceived increase in sensuality of dress remarked by some scholars are owing rather to stylistic emphasis in miniature painting of this period, not to actual changes in fashion (pace Housego, p. 208 fig. 6; Stillman and Stillman, p. 749).

Men's court costume was as sumptuous as in the 16th century. In 1038/1659 Moḥammad-Maṣ'ūm b. K'ājagī Eṣfahānī described a set of royal *kaḷ'at* from the reign of 'Abbās's successor, Shah Ṣafī I (1038-52/1629-42), which consisted of an outer robe of gold-embroidered velvet, a coat of squirrel fur (*pūstīn-e samūr-abrah wa maḵmal-e zarbaft*), cloaks and other outer garments of gold and silver brocade and silk (*qabā wa bālāpūš-e zarbaft-e ṭelābāf wa noqrabāf wa dārāyī bāf*), gold-brocade turban material (*mandīl-e tamām zar*), and brocade and plain silk fabric for a *čahār-dar'ī* (pp. 46-47; reference owing to S. Babai). One surviving garment may have been included in the rich gifts sent by Shah Ṣafī to the Russian court in the 1630s. It is a short, fitted coat (*nīm-tana*) fastened at the side and ornamented with figural designs in velvet on a ground of gilded silver brocade; it was presented by Tsar

Michael to Queen Christina of Sweden in 1644 and is now in the Royal Armory, Stockholm (plate ciii). Equally fine is a long-sleeved silk court robe (*qabā*) of floral design (plate civ). Jean-Baptiste Tavernier recorded the components of a set of royal *kaḷ'at* given to him by Shah Solaymān (1077-1105/1666-94), which is realistically depicted in a portrait of him by Nicolas Largillière now in the Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig, Germany (Schuster-Walser, 1971, p. 131; cf. Herbert, pp. 232-33).

As the 17th century progressed, new variations in the basic dress were adopted (plate cv). Men's robes and coats became progressively shorter. The most striking change was in the cut of the robe, which was worn fitted over the torso, stiffened at the hips and cuffs with quilting, with a flaring, bell-shaped skirt. The sleeves had pointed cuffs (for the elegance of Persian cut and tailoring, see Chardin, p. 85). In describing the court costume current in 1035-36/1626-27 the English traveler Herbert noted that the "close coat nearly reaches to their calves and bears round" (pp. 232-33). Sayyed Ḥosayn b. Morteżā Ḥosaynī Astarābādī, who wrote in the early 18th century, attributed certain innovations to the reign of Shah 'Abbās II (1052-77/1642-66): the introduction of *čāqšūr* (trousers) in English broadcloth, robes with skirts (*qabā-ye dāmandār*), and round or band (*qalama* "straight") collars or lapels (p. 134). Further details of costume were provided by European travelers who



visited Persia during the reigns of Shah ‘Abbās II and Solaymān (plate cvi). Chardin described a three-quarter-length robe (*cabai* = *qabā*) and two types of outer robe: a short sleeveless jacket resembling a waistcoat (*courdy* = *kordī*) and a long-sleeved jacket (*cadebi* = *kātebī*, p. 50; cf. Du Mans, p. 101: *katteby*). A type of short jacket with sleeves came increasingly into fashion in the early 17th century, replacing the long *jobba*; it was worn wrapped across the chest and fastened at the sides (portrait of Sir Anthony Sherley; Wheelock et al., pp. 154-55 no. 28; cf. *Treasures*, no. 95). Although these changes seem to date from the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I, they are not commonly seen in miniature paintings and albums until after mid-century (Ivanov et al., 1962, pls. 98-100).

A number of sumptuous examples in gold- and silver-brocaded silk or taffeta survive in Western museum collections; some are also ornamented with gold and silver frogging. Fabrics were characterized by repeat floral or striped designs in rich pastel colors; the edges were trimmed in bands of stamped cotton (*galamkār*) and floral silk brocade. These examples include a silk robe with carnation design trimmed with contrasting material (Victoria & Albert Museum, London, no. 331-1920; Royal Academy, p. 82); another, also in the Victoria & Albert Museum, with a composite plant design and butterflies inwoven with the word *rasūl* (messenger; Los Angeles, no. 128); and a third in silver brocade with a repeat design of yellow carnations within a stamped lattice framework (Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyons, no. 31517; Musée du Louvre, p. 49 no. 25 and facing illustration; Philadelphia Museum, no. 67-30-48). Fur continued to be used for lining robes and jackets and as facing on the lapels. Marten and sable were imported from Russia; fox fur and sheepskin were also used (Chardin, p. 50).

A number of other fine garments survive from the latter half of the Safavid period; they have sometimes been dated well into the 18th century on the basis of the small scale of the repeat patterns in the design of the fabrics and linings, the increasingly stiff quality of the brocade, and other factors. In fact, linings may prove helpful in establishing more specific dating: Cotton was used throughout this period, but in the 16th and 17th centuries it was quite coarse and unpatterned. In the 18th and following centuries designs of floral *būtas* (lit. “bushes,” small pointed plant forms related to the familiar “paisley” motif) and stripes became increasingly common and were used to great effect in the sleeves and along the slits in the skirts of outer garments; it is not yet possible to say whether linings of this type were introduced earlier. A man’s sleeveless hip-length coat (*kordī*) of gold brocade patterned with *būtas* in the



style of the 18th century and with lapels probably intended to be lined with fur is the only extant example of its type (Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, no. I.8/69; Hauptmann von Gladiss and Kröger, pp. 277-78 no. 609; [plate cvii](#)). Also of the 18th century are two short jackets. One example is of wine-colored silk with a pattern of large lotuses on leafy stems in silver and gold and pastel-silk embroidery, a reflection of the bejeweled court dress of the period (Victoria & Albert Museum, no. 1935-1886; [plate cviii](#)). A velvet jacket cut in the later style but with a trefoil collar in a 17th-century floral silk brocade, in a private collection (*Islamic Textile Design*, p. 18 no. 39), exemplifies the rich materials and decorative silver frogging and buttons described in the sources. Hip-length or slightly longer jackets either fastening in front or with an additional front panel that wraps to a side closing (Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., nos. 1985.5.1, 1985.3.93, 1985.3.149, Bier, pp. 214 no. 41, 218-19 nos. 44-45; Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 1772, Zaki, p. 78) are also generally dated to the 17th-18th centuries. Longer coats were also worn (Hauptmann von Gladiss and Kröger, no. I.8/73, pp. 279-80 no. 428; Textile Museum, nos. 3.94, 3.112, Bier, pp. 214 no. 42, 217 no. 43; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, no. L2100.132.57-4, p. 65 no. 146; Fundação Gulbenkian, nos. 85-88).

Belts were worn wider and longer, up to 8 m, and knotted in front. They were of rich fabrics, like gold and silver brocade with stripes or floral patterns (for surviving examples, see *Survey of Persian Art*, pls. 1073-74). Sometimes a second belt was added (Du Mans, p. 102). Light cotton shoes (*gīva*), slippers, shoes in various colors with heels of nails or iron, and boots were worn by the urban elite (Herbert, pp. 232-33; Chardin, pp. 50-51). Turbans were wider and more loosely tied, and the finial of the *tāj* no longer protruded. Although white continued to predominate for some time, by mid-century it had largely been superseded by colored brocades with flowers woven into the ends, pleated and wrapped over a new type of *tāj* with a protrusion in front (Moḥammad-Ṭāher Waḥīd, cited in Keyvani, p. 293) or rolled in a thick tube and coiled (*Treasures*, p.127 no. 100). Sometimes the cap beneath was made of leather, rather than the traditional felt. A variety of other headgear was also worn, usually in larger and more pointed shapes than in the preceding century. One distinctive cap worn by both sexes had a wide brim and was set well back on the head (Housego, p. 209 fig. 7).

The subject of various turban types and their terminology still needs clarification. A number of travelers commented on the variety of both turban



types and belts, each associated with a different social group (Herbert, pp. 232-33; Du Mans, p. 101; Chardin, p. 51). Persian authors named some of the types of turban current at the courts. For example, Mīrzā Samī‘ā, author of *Taḍkerat al-molūk*, a manual of Safavid administration written for the Afghan conquerors in the early 18th century (Dānešpažūh, p. 476), described a special headgear presented by the shah to his amirs as “of gold brocade on a gold base” (*tāj-e wahhāj az zarbāft-e būm-e zar*; ed. Minorsky, p. 66; cf. p. 136). Moḥammad-Hāšem referred to the *kalīl-kānī* turbans worn by the court officials of Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn (1105-35/1694-1722; cited in Keyvani, p. 83). Contemporary research has suggested the introduction of a new turban style as early as the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I (Schmitz, p. 106), yet it seems premature to associate specific visual examples with those described in text sources.

Women’s court dress underwent changes similar to those in men’s dress ([plate cix](#)). The shorter robe was accompanied by short boots of brocade or embroidered velvet rising 8-10 cm above the ankle (Chardin, p. 6; Le Bruyn, p. 301; [plate cx](#)). Headdresses included a brocade pillbox cap and a triangular tiara in brocade fabric worn with a variety of veils. New styles of *čādor* also appeared. One version was tied at the top like a sack (Herbert, p. 48); another included a face veil of net (*rū-band*) attached at either side of the forehead (Chardin, p. 52).

The cosmopolitan atmosphere of Isfahan at mid-century was clearly reflected in dress. Some men’s robes were cut in the “Georgian” manner, opening in front with buttons and loops (Chardin, p. 50). New shoes (*kafš*) in the “Georgian” and European (*be-kār-e farang*) fashion were made in the *bāzār* (Keyvani, pp. 51, 267), and trousers, robes, and stockings were made of English broadcloth (Du Mans, p. 187; for a discussion of broadcloth, known as *landara*, see Keyvani, p. 57, n. 14). There was even a special guild of tailors and sellers of “London cloth” (Keyvani, pp. 220-21). Dandies dressed in European styles ([plate cxi](#)), and in the privacy of the harem ladies wore European tight bodices with décolletage and ruffled sleeves peeping from under long sleeves ([plate cxii](#)). Tight-fitting trousers under transparent gathered skirts in the Indian style were illustrated by miniature painters but are not otherwise attested (Titley, p. 120 pl. 20).

Textiles were used to make ecclesiastical robes for the European and Armenian communities, and sashes were made for export to India and to Poland, where local imitations were made (see, e.g., Textile Museum, no. 82.1; Bier, p. 233 no. 50). A woman’s robe of floral brocade in a lattice design is



evidence of European influence on the cut of late Safavid elite dress; it may have belonged to an Armenian or Georgian lady (Victoria & Albert Museum, no. 1060-1906, unpublished; for a similar dress, see the portrait of Lady Sherley, a Circassian, by Van Dyck; Wheelock et al., pp. 154-55 no. 29).

Raphaël Du Mans (p. 247) provided a detailed description of peasant costume in the mid-17th century; it consisted primarily of heavy cotton clothes cut in the urban fashion. In winter peasants added thick felt cloaks or lambskin coats. They went barelegged or bound their legs with linen strips and wore flat shoes or green leather soles attached with cords (*čāroq*).

Because of the economic importance of raw silk and textile manufacture in the Persian economy and society, the production of textiles and clothing at the court in Isfahan, in the *bāzārs* of that city, and in provincial centers is frequently mentioned in the sources. Mīrzā Samīʿā (pp. 65-66) provided a great deal of information about the production of clothing and costume usage at the Safavid court in Isfahan. He described the royal wardrobe and the royal and amirial tailoring departments. The latter were responsible for ordering fabrics, sometimes from provincial centers; cutting the textiles for court dress; and preparing the royal *kaḷʿat* for distribution to the amirs. There is evidence for textile manufacturing in other cities as well (Keyvani, p. 8; Della Valle, III, p. 163). Du Mans (p. 103) mentioned the importation by Dutch merchants of cotton from Golconda in India for use as turban material. Mīrzā Moḥammad-Ṭāher Waḥīd, a poet active during the same reign, left a collection of poems in the genre *šāhrāšūb* (poems about shop apprentices), *Dīvān-e Reżwān*, inspired by the activities he observed in the *bāzārs* of Isfahan. He mentioned such elements of clothing as *čāqšūr*, *časbān-qabā* (fitted robe), *pūstīn* (fur), and *kafš* and such trades as *soqorlāt-dūz* (maker of scarlet robes), *jūrāb-dūz* (stocking maker), and *tāj-dūz* (turban maker; cited in Keyvani, pp. 263-95). Other sources yield additional terms, for example, *šaʿr-bāf* (brocade weavers, including weavers of luxurious *čādors*; see Keyvani, p. 50). A scroll of Shah Solaymān preserved in the British Library contains a record of the different sections of the *bāzār*, including those where *landara*, lambskin cloaks (*pūstīn*) from Khorasan, silk fabrics for sashes (*šāl*) and turban cloths (*mandīls*) from Yazd, and cloth for women's veils from Ardestān were sold (Keyvani, pp. 236-38).

The early 18th century and the fall of the Safavid dynasty, with resulting interruption of commerce, were documented by only a few foreign travelers. Most important was the Dutch painter Cornelis Le Bruyn, who was in Persia in 1115/1704. He commented on the sharp class distinctions reflected in costume



and voiced particular disapproval of the extreme luxury of clothing for men of the elite. As for women, his detailed description of their cloth headgear, bedecked with jewels and pearls and varied according to rank, is of great value (pp. 299-301). In fact, clothing for both sexes had not changed substantially since the reign of Shah Solaymān, except to become even more decorated and studded with jewels. In the mid-18th century, during the reign of Karīm Khan Zand (1163-93/1750-79; see below), Moḥammad-Hāšem Āṣaf, known as Rostam-al-Ḥokamā', described the costumes of high-ranking courtiers on a ceremonial occasion in the time of the last reigning Safavid shah, Solṭān-Ḥosayn (cited in Keyvani, p. 83). Such luxury and refinement could be achieved only at great expense, an expense that would finally help to bankrupt the Safavid state.

The Afsharid (1148-1161/1736-48) and Zand periods (1163-1209/1750-94). The destruction of the Safavid empire by Afghan forces, the subsequent interruption of commerce, and the establishment of a modest regional government in Shiraz under the Zands in the latter part of the century are documented in only a few sources. Surviving garments are rare, and it is difficult to distinguish between Safavid styles and those of the ensuing decades (see above). The most important documentation is paintings, primarily album paintings and works in lacquer from the first half of the century and oil paintings produced at Shiraz in the latter half.

It can be suggested that dress under the Afsharids and Zands varied little in style from that under the late Safavids but was less luxurious. One sympathetic observer, the Englishman Jonas Hanway, who visited the country in 1157-58/1744-45, described it as practical, attractive, and of elegant yet simple taste (I, pp. 228-29). The French traveler Jean Otter, who was in Persia in 1148/1736, also commented on the elegant cut of men's costume, noting its similarity to that of Europeans and contrasting it with the long, loose robes of the Ottoman Turks (1, p. 39).

Men's headgear again provides a barometer of dynastic change. Nāder Shah (1148-60/1736-47), who was a Sunnite, introduced a new four-pointed cap (*kolāh-e nāderī*), usually in red, representing the first four Islamic caliphs; a silk *šāl* or scarf of delicate brocaded wool manufactured in Kermān was often wrapped around it (Otter, I, p. 39; Cook, I, p. 444; [plate cxiii](#)). According to Hanway (I, pp. 227-28), the *kolāh-e nāderī* reached as high as 10-12 inches and was quite effective against the cold. He also noted the use of expensive Kermān-wool *šāls* wound around it. It could also be worn without wrapping,



decorated with jewels or aigrettes. Karīm Khan Zand replaced the *kolāh-e nāderī* with a tall cylindrical cap, which could be wrapped with turban materials or not (British Library ms. no. 4938 no. 1, Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* IV, pl. V, facing, p. 142; [plate cxiv](#)).

Despite a general decline in the quality of textile manufacturing and silk production, men's court costume continued to be characterized by sumptuous display. Moḥammad-Kāẓem (II, p. 448) and Mīrzā Moḥammad-Mahdī Astarābādī (p. 167), historians of the period, recorded a rich variety of fabrics in the robes of honor distributed at the coronation of Nāder Shah; they supposedly numbered 100,000, doubtless an exaggeration. Abu'l-Ḥasan Ḡaffārī, an official and court scribe in the service of Karīm Khan Zand, provided an eloquent description of the robes distributed by the ruler to important amirs in Azarbaijan; he noted that they were as beautiful as when a garden takes a mantle of blooming flowers (fols. 110-16). Robes of brocaded silk, in less labor-intensive fabrics than previously, in plain weave or woven in smaller-scale floral and figural patterns, were still decorated with fur pelts and frogging with heavy almond-shaped buttons of precious-metal threads. The short fur-lined outer coat and the robe with long, pointed sleeves continued to be worn, and quilted silk and cotton materials were still in use for undergarments (Hanway, I, p. 228).

But there were innovations in style. By the late 18th century a triangular flap extended the entire length of the robe or jacket; the waistcoat had clearly defined front slits edged with patterned fabric. At home the silk robe or short jacket patterned with small flowers was the rule, worn over the traditional muslin shirt (for examples in bright red or blue, see Falk, pls. 5, 7). A change in production is indicated by the increasingly high value placed on Kermān and Kashmir (*terma*) brocaded-wool *šāls*, which came to replace patterned silks as the luxury materials for costume as well (see above). As for accessories, pencases and daggers were tucked into the sash at the waist; the pencase might also be worn in a pocket under the arm (Hanway, I, p. 228). Armlets, the finest made of jeweled and enameled gold, were commonly worn with plain or patterned robes.

Although the sumptuous court regalia of the Safavids had been destroyed during the Afghan invasion, Nāder Shah's conquest of India in 1151/1738-39 provided an unprecedented supply of pearls and precious stones for his courtly adornment and that of his successors. Two aigrettes of jade, diamonds, and enamel, made in India and sent by the shah as gifts to the Russian



empress Anna Yannova in 1154/1741, survive (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, nos. V3-443-44; Ivanov et al., 1984, p. 212 nos. 90, 92). In portraits Nāder Shah is shown heavily bedecked with jewels, and his successor, ‘Ādel Shah, who reigned for only a year (1160-61/1747-48), was depicted in the same way (Godard, pp. 239-40 no. 45, 241 fig. 94; Bier, p. 91 fig. 4). According to Hanway, the stones decorating court robes were often uncut or in settings that he considered not in the best of taste (I, p. 173). The decorative possibilities of jewels were to be refined under the Qajars in the following century (see below).

Women’s costume in the 18th century also continued the basic late Safavid styles with some variations in the essentials. The English physician John Cook (I, p. 444) provided a particularly useful account of women’s silk shifts: “[F]rom a point immediately below the navel, they are embroidered down to the bottom with gold or silver figures forming a large triangle whose upper angle is acute.” These details seem to correspond to the decoration of a group of surviving garments usually dated to the 17th century: loose waist-length or full-length silk and taffeta shifts with inwoven or embroidered floral designs (Victoria & Albert Museum, nos. T333-1920, T332-1920, unpublished; cf. examples in the Art Institute of Chicago and Musée des Arts Décoratifs, *Survey of Persian Art*, pl. 1086 and color pl. 1086 respectively).

The narrow-waisted jacket flared over the hips, popular in the previous century, was decorated with even more elaborate frogging and ribbons; the underarm slits were sometimes edged with gold lace or contrasting piping for decorative effect ([plate cxv](#)). By mid-century, the traditional long robe or three-quarter-length jacket worn over tapered trousers had been replaced by a more casual dress of wide trousers cut from stiff fabric embroidered or woven in diagonal floral designs worn over the transparent shirt (*pīrāhan*) open to the navel. It was accompanied by a short, loose, long-sleeved jacket in a complimentary striped or floral pattern (for illustrations from the early Qajar period see Falk, pls. 5, 7). Elegant ladies (as well as men) turned back their jacket cuffs to reveal linings chosen with great flair. *Šāls* of striped or plain fabric were draped across one shoulder or down the back. Complex headdresses or saucy caps with jeweled ornaments were worn, revealing to advantage hair styled in short lovelocks and bangs. Hanway (I, p. 230) provided details on the use of nose rings and gold amulets attached to the headdress with pearl and gold chains.

The Qajar period (1193-1342/1779-1924). The Qajar dynasty was established by



Āqā Moḥammad Khan (1193-1212/1779-97), but it was during the reign of his successor, Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah (1212-50/1797-1834), that the grandeur and formality of Safavid court dress prevailed once again. A revival of the silk industry provided sumptuous fabrics for the court, supplementing the delicate wools of Kermān that had been so popular in the previous century; Kermān wools were promoted in place of imports from Kashmir (Morier, 1812, p. 246). Foreign observers were particularly struck by the magnificence of men's court costume and provided detailed descriptions (Ker Porter, I, pp. 324-26; Morier, 1812, pp. 192, 214), which are richly corroborated by the murals and oil paintings commissioned by the ruler for his new palaces (e.g., "Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah with His Entourage," A. Soudavar collection; Bier, pp. 253-55; [plate cxvi](#)).

James Morier described Persian men's dress in 1222/1807, introducing some current terminology, for example, *zīr-jāma* (undergarments), *tekmeḥ* (*tokma*, button), *oymeḥ* (perhaps < Turk. *oyma*, a kind of embroidery), and *baroonee* (*bārānī*). He also explained variations in the way that the mandatory Qajar *kolāḥ*, a tall black astrakhan cap angled at the top and covered along the angle with striped fabric, was worn (1812, pp. 245-46). A decade or so later Robert Ker Porter described the luxurious layered effects of Qajar court dress, similar to that of the Safavid period. His report that the Qajars generally wore darker colors (p. 439; cf. Morier, 1812, p. 243) is, however, contradicted by the evidence of paintings and surviving garments. Aside from the *kolāḥ*, the most noteworthy features of men's clothing were the longer, ankle-length robe, worn over a short-sleeved waistcoat and under a three-quarter-length jacket, the continuing use of Kashmir brocades and locally woven imitations for waistbands and to wrap around the *kolāḥ*, and the jeweled armband (*bāzū-band*; Morier, 1812, p. 214). The shah and his grandees now cultivated luxuriant beards and moustaches painstakingly dyed black (Morier, 1812, p. 247).

Garments were cut from a variety of floral silks in large *būta* patterns or floral and trellis designs. Surviving examples are rare, but a dark-blue and gold silk-brocade robe with a large *būta* design is evidence for the evolution of this style, with a triangular flap from neck to hem (Victoria & Albert Museum, no. 962-1889, unpublished; cf. Textile Museum, 1972.24.3, Bier, p. 266 no. 69). Plain robes continued to be ornamented as before, with edging and frogging or lace. Complex piping in colorfully striped Kermān wool could be seen on every edge of the costume, especially cuffs, underarm vents, pockets, and side vents. A number of surviving men's shirts with painted talismanic inscription, though



not so far documented in literary or visual sources, have been dated generally to the 17th-19th centuries (see above) and warrant further research (Victoria & Albert Museum, nos. 943-1889, T59-1935, 281-1884, all unpublished; cf. *Islamic Textile Design*, p. 18 no. 39; *Calligraphy*, p. 29). Among men's accessories were delicate silk or wool stockings woven in floral or calligraphic patterns, which were tucked into the traditional slippers with high heels, of which a number survive (The Brooklyn Museum, no. 34.1030AB; Hanway, p. 228; [plate cxvii](#)).

Women's clothing was equally sumptuous in this period. When Lady Ouseley, wife of the British ambassador, visited Fath-ʿAlī Shah's consort she found the latter wearing a headdress and turban so heavily bejeweled that she had difficulty in moving (cf. Morier, 1818, p. 175). The women's ensemble consisted of the transparent *pīrāhan* bordered with pearls and jewels, now often with two slits in the front. It was usually visible to the navel, appearing seductive and sometimes scandalous to foreign visitors, but, as already noted, its primary function was to facilitate nursing. It was worn with full trousers (*šalvār*; e.g., National Museum of Scotland, no. 1890.407, described in Scarce, 1987a, p. 52; cf. idem, 1987b, p. 166 pl. 115) or a bouffant skirt, gathered at the dropped waist ([plate cxviii](#)). These garments were usually made of cloth with large floral and trellis patterns or embroidered cotton or velvet, but they could also be worn plain with a wide sash, sometimes knotted at the front to show the *būta* design on the ends, or with a jeweled belt. Straight trousers were worn under the skirts as well (see xxvii, below, s.v. *dāman*). The jacket was generally tight-fitting, with straight elbow-length or long sleeves ending in plain or pointed cuffs. The cuffs were still turned back to show the ruffled shirt cuffs and embroidered and jeweled cuffs of undergarments ([plate cxix](#)); the shorter-sleeved variety was particularly suited to this purpose. A varied range of such jackets has been preserved in Western collections (e.g., Victoria & Albert Museum, nos. 730-1-884, 286-7-1884, unpublished; Textile Museum, nos. 1964.26., 1975.3.2, 1983.68.5, Bier, pp. 260-61 nos. 64-65, 264 no. 67; The Brooklyn Museum, nos. x653.4, 18.11; [plate cxx](#)). One major innovation in women's clothing of this period was the embroidered brassiere (National Museum of Scotland, no. 1890.409; Scarce, 1975b), which could be worn either under or over the *pīrāhan*. For outdoor wear women continued to wear the white *čādor* with face veil, with or without wide trousers (*čāqšūr*); by mid-century, however, a darker *čādor* in black or dark blue, often with gold embroidery, had appeared (Falk, pl. 17; *Treasures*, p. 196 no. 185).

The wealth of Persia in the time of Fath-ʿAlī Shah was represented, both



literally and symbolically, in the elaborate pearled and jeweled decoration of men's and women's garments: ropes and tassels of pearls and armbands, collars, and hems encrusted with gems. Even cushions and carpets were decorated in this fashion, as illustrated in paintings of the period. Women's jewelry included necklaces (*'aqd-e rū*) worn just under the chin (Negārestān Museum, Tehran, no. 75.4.1; [plate cxxi](#)); gold, bejeweled, and enameled pendant earrings (*pīāla-zang*); hair ornaments; and rings (e.g., State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, nos. V3-976, V3-406, V3-731, V3-836, V3-422, V3-839, Ivanov et al., pp. 211-12 nos. 60, 80-82, 84, 86). A large collection of 18th-19th century imperial crown jewels survives almost intact in the central bank in Tehran. It includes the royal crown, armbands, aigrettes (*jeqqa*), and [belts](#) (Meen and Tushingham, nos. 72-73, 78-83, 117, 126-27, 130). Also in the collection are large numbers of pearls, both mounted and unmounted. Gold or gilt-metal plaques set with pearls in rosettes and pear shapes or along the curved edges are provided with loops through which they could be sewn onto fabric backing, a technique used in the so-called "jewel- and pearl-embroidered costumes" (Meen and Tushingham, pp. 76-77; [plate cxxii](#)). Amulet and Qur'ān cases of jeweled enamel or steel inlaid with gold and precious stones are to be found in other collections (e.g., The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin; Regemorter, pl. 40).

A more sober approach to dress, particularly for men, marked the second half of the 19th century, owing in part to a decline in economic conditions and in part to the influence of Western taste in the period of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah and his successors. The tradition of distributing *kaḷ'ats* for wear at court continued, as did the custom of treating as currency textiles and robes, primarily of Kermān and Kashmir brocaded wool, which had already increased in value in the preceding century (Polak, I, p. 153). Some court officials continued to wear the long-sleeved *jobba* in brocaded wool, with wide rolled-up sleeves, the functioning of which was described by C. J. Wills (pp. 318-19). In court dress generally, however, the brilliant and colorful garments of Fath-'Alī Shah's reign gave way to shirts, sometimes with cravats (Polak, I, p. 143); dark-colored coats of European civilian or military cut (*kolīja*; see xi, below); and wide, straight trousers, occasionally even with military stripes on the seams. By 1311/1893 the frock coat had become common, but the tight-fitting European style was deemed indecorous (Sykes, p. 65), and the Persian version was therefore based on Turkish models with pleats at the waist and wider sleeves (Wills, p. 318). J. E. Polak reported the role of European tailors in cutting European clothing for a Persian clientele (I, p. 155). An overcoat of wool



brocade, cut like a frock coat, could be worn with or without a fur lining (see, e.g., Anon., p. 16; Victoria & Albert Museum, no. TN1955-2, unpublished; [plate cxxiii](#)). Notables wore an astrakhan cap in the shape of a pillbox and cut their hair short in the European style, though the lower and religious classes continued to wear traditional robes and turbans. The shahs continued to wear expensive jewelry; a complete set, including a diamond-and-enamel *jeqqa*, a gilded metal belt with enameled plaques, and a diamond rosette is in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (nos. 57.882-84; [plate cxxiv](#)).

European visitors in the late 19th century showed greater understanding than their predecessors of the Persian life-style and a generally sympathetic recognition of the rationale for traditional Persian cut and fabrics. Polak, for example, devoted a long chapter to men's costume, including, beside the accessories already mentioned, jewel-studded leather belts, watches, rings, amulets, handkerchiefs, and *tasbīḥs* (prayer beads).

Women's costume of the late 19th century was described by Polak and Wills, both physicians with access to the *andarūn*. At home women continued to wear the transparent *pīrāhan* with a drop-waisted skirt (*jāma*), leaving even more of the torso visible. Tight jackets (*kolīja*; Polak, p. 160) were worn with or without underdrawers (*zīr-jāma*), or "pantalettes," as the Victorians quaintly referred to them. In mid-century there was a dramatic innovation: layered "miniskirts" (*šalīta*) with multiple petticoats worn with bare legs or white stockings. Skirts had become progressively shorter in the course of the 19th century, but this extreme version was apparently inspired by the tutus of ballerinas, which had attracted Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's attention during his European travels. This revealing costume was worn with a plain white headdress that covered the chest (for descriptions, see Wills, p. 324; Scarce, 1987a, pp. 55-56; idem, 1987b, pls. 119-20; Bishop, I, p. 215; Dōkā', p. 22; [plate cxxv](#)). The wonderful embroidered trousers that had gone out of fashion were cut up and sold to collectors (Benjamin, p. 332). English styles also were imitated in the *andarūn*. S. G. W. Benjamin, who was in Persia in the 1880s, described a *čādor* with a waistline (pp. 198-99), in contrast to the normal, flowing version worn with full trousers (*čāqšūr*). The *čādor* was little appreciated, even by otherwise sympathetic foreign observers; Wills compared the Persian woman clad in a *čādor* to a "living bolster" (p. 42; [plate cxxv](#)).

Aside from the European garments fashionable at court, traditional Persian dress continued to be worn into the 20th century; women might wear



European garments at home but had to cover them with the *čādor* when going out (Bogdanov, p. 292). Detailed descriptions of the clothing worn by different social classes at the end of the Qajar period can be found in contemporary Persian sources. Kalāntar Žarrābī (pp. 248-50) described the clothing worn by clerics, nobles, and members of the lower classes in Kāšān; his work is an important source of information on clothing and textile terminology in the late 19th century but gives few details of cut. In a text sprinkled with proverbs, humorous and historical anecdotes, and gems of popular wisdom, profusely illustrated with contemporary photographs, Ja‘far Šahrī described the principal items of men’s and women’s clothing current in the capital in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (pp. 16-18, 455-603). This rich source provides information on the manufacture, prices, and styles of a variety of headgear (felt caps, hats, turbans); robes both made to measure and ready-made; frock coats and suits for men; the *čādor*, *čāqšūr*, *pīča* (face veil), and wedding dress worn by women; and shoes and *gīva*. A statistical report of 1301 Š./1922 provides details on eight types of headgear and the limited use of the kepi hat, frock coat, and Western-style trousers (*Baladīya*, p. 88).

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