

Clothing of People in Sistan during Parthian Period with Reference to the Frescos of Koh-E Khajeh

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Abstract

Covering the body against various natural factors (heat, coldness, and wind) as well as doctrine, cultural, and social factors has been prevalent since old ages and with the passage of time and changes of conditions it has undergone many alterations and transformations. Iranian clothing in Parthian period following the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Macedonian and due to the effects of Hellenistic beliefs and culture has been transformed in a way that in addition to protecting the body against the natural factors and observing ethical and cultural issues, aesthetical element, shape, and color of garment have been highly considered too.

With respect to the wide territory of the Parthian dynasty, this period are divided into two extensive groups of the eastern and western territories which are different to some extent from the artistic aspect. Sistan, in the east of Iran, by having abundant works remained from Parthian period, particularly Palace of Koh-e Khajeh, represents the special Iranians' culture of clothing in the eastern territory. Through investigating the frescos in the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh, one can realize the different types of common clothing in this region and the neighboring areas during the Parthian period; and also, we can specify the extent to which Greek clothing has affected the clothing during the Parthian period and then it helps to differentiate it from the local and native garments.

Investigating and study of frescos in the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh suggest that its inhabitants' clothing in addition to imitating the color and form of Greeks' clothing has been also influenced by natural and local factors of the region and religious beliefs.

Key Words: Clothing, Sistan, Parthian, Painting (Fresco), Koh-e Khajeh _____
IRAN, Zahedan, Sistan & Baluchistan province, Daneshgah Str, Asatid Complex, Laleh alley, No. 19.

Introduction

Overthrow of the Achaemenian dynasty which occurred by the invasion of Alexander the Macedonian to Iran and defeating Darush III in 333 B.C, resulted in the expansion and penetration of Greek art and civilization in Iran (Kokh, 2000:244). Alexander and his successors, Seleucids, in order to govern their extensive and wide Empire needed to Hellenize the Iranians, this could create a sense of cultural and doctrine unity among the Iranian and Greek tribes and as a result, prevent the Iranians' revolt against the Greeks. Marriage of Greek soldiers and generals with Iranian girls and women, training Iranian soldiers with Greek war methods and clothing them with garments of the Greek army, constructing police in the Iranian strategic areas and immigration of Greek families to these polices, accommodation of blue-bloods and feudal families of Iran in these polices, building Greek temples in various parts of Iran, and spreading the Greek belief and mythical culture were part of their policy to Hellenize the Iranians. This policy of the Greeks caused their culture and civilization to penetrate into most aspects of the Iranian life: so that, its effects can be clearly observed in the architecture and art of the ancient Iran.

Despite this, in 255 B.C, one of the Iranian tribes called Parthian in the northeast of Iran arose against the Greeks and in a short time they could get out an extensive part of the Iranian eastern regions from the Greeks' hands. Therefore, they created one of the pre-Islamic dynasties in Iran which lasted about 500 years (from 255 B.C to 224 A.D). This reign replaced many elements of the eastern Iranians' life with the previous period namely Achaemenians, particularly their clothing. Their remained traces can be observed and investigated in the Frescos, reliefs, figures, coins, stamps, and etc.

The Parthian people in addition to using the Iranian local tradition (Persian), at first were highly influenced by the Greek culture, but by passage of time, the Iranian and Greek culture were blended and a new culture with definitely Iranian properties was emerged. One of the highly important regions of Parthian Empire was Sistan which was located in the east of the country (map. 1). In early 2nd century B.C, Sistan state (Dernigiana) was conquered by the western Greeks and Seleucids lost their domination in that region. This event occurred during the reign of Demetrius I. He started some activities in order to expand his territory towards the south of Hindu and northwest of India and made the states of Arakhozia and Dernigiana (Sistan) as parts of his Empire. Dominance of Greeks on Sistan lasted till about 145 B.C. In this year, Mehrdad I, the Parthian king, conquered Sistan and demolished the remains of the western Greek reign in his borders in about 139 B.C (Mehrafarin,2012:128).

Palace of Koh-e Khajeh and its Frescos

In the centre of Sistan and at the heart of the Hamoon Lake, there is a small mountain with the width of 2 km and height of 120 m called Koh-e Khajeh whose distance from the city of Zabol, center of Sistan, is nearly 30 km. This mountain is considered as one of the important historical sites in this region whose specific location has resulted in the construction of many significant monuments on its flat surface and steep hillsidesince the ancient times (Fig. 1).

According to the archeological excavations performed on the surface and hillside of this mountain, some traces of Parthian, Sasanian, and Islamic periods have been identified in it (Mehrafarin et al.). One of the most important buildings of this black and basaltic mountain is the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh on the eastern hillside. This palace is also known as Kaferoon castle and GhahghaheyShahr.

The first serious step to identify this work was taken by a Hungarian archeologist called Orell Stein who visited this place in 1915; and he published a primary report in 1916, and then in 1928, published a thorough report along with some pictures of the paintings existed in the main citadel (Kaferoon castle) in his famous work called "Deep in Asia" (Stein,1928). Duringhis excavation on this building, Stein cut out some pieces of the frescosand sent them to the New Delhi museum (Faccenna,1981:87).Ernest Hartsfield, the German scholar and archeologist during the years 1925 and 1929 excavated and investigated this monument, but unfortunately the complete report of these excavations was never published and information which is available about his excavations in Koh-e Khajeh has been derived from his papers and books onvarious subjects related to the history of the Iranian culture and civilization (Hartsfield,2002:297-300). He has cut out some of the paintings from this building two pieces of which are now kept in the Metropolitan museum.

Palace of Koh-e Khajehinvolves a fence, two entrances, porch, veranda, and a long chamber which is believed to have some beautiful decorations according to the existing reports. In the northern parts of the yard, there is a stairway which make possible to access the structures in the northern part of the palace. In the northern section, there is a roofed long and narrow hall with dimensions of 2.5x50 m that according to Stein and Hartsfield's reports all of which had had frescosand so, due to this reason it has been called a painting gallery.

Unfortunately, many of these frescoshave been disappeared and the remains are maintained in foreign museums. In order to recognize the Parthian clothing and restructuring the garments of people of Sistan and their rulers during the B.C centuries, frescos obtained from Koh-e Khajeh and the designs which are now available will be used here. Few archeological excavations of Koh-e Khajeh indicated that this place in addition to its unique brick architecture has had wonderful decorations too. This issue adds to artistic significance of this place. Frescos, stucco-work, clay reliefs, vault and arch, treasure and pesto, half-round column and etc. are considered as the decoration elements of this palace. Among these decorations, the frescos collection has been noticed more than the other artistic subjects and till the present time, investigators with their special purposes have researched on this field.

Color and Design in the Parthian Period

In the Parthian period, coloring and painting was expanded a lot and colors were generally pure and bright and shiny. Illustration (visual) narrative in painting can be seen in the frescos of the Parthian period for the first time; so that works of this type have been discovered in Dora-Oropus in Syria and in the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh Complex in Sistan of Iran. In the Parthian frescos of Koh-e Khajeh, mostly, mineral pigments (Batter, 2010, 333) have been used. In the early periods of the Parthian dynasty, they had been integrated with Greek naturalism and in the late Parthian periods it has been replaced with frescos with level (flat) compositions, full-face and multi-piece (Yung et al, 2006:160).

Proportion and beauty of colors are impressive and paintings are without shade but the colors have harmony and coordination. Colors which are observed more than other colors on the frescos include: brown, orange, pink, red, purple, violet, green, turquoise, and white. Respecting the type of application of the building, the paintings are also varied. Ritual-religious designs, imperial Glory, vulgar scenes (ordinary people, musicians, tightrope walkers, soldiers, hunting, collective escape of animals and etc) constitute the most main subjects of frescos in this period.

Frescos of Koh-e Khajeh in Sistan

According to the objective of the present study which deals with the investigation of people's clothing in Sistan during the Parthian period, it is inevitable to study the paintings obtained from the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh in order to meet this aim; because till the present time no other artistic element like human statue, relief and etc has not been discovered in Sistan region that represents people's clothing in the intended region.

One of the features of the Parthian art is fresco. The significant example of this art which has been probably borrowed from Greeks has been realized on plaster (stucco). One of the most outstanding examples of this art related to the Parthian period can be seen in the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh in Sistan. In the long corridor of this palace, colorful remains that have been influenced by the western art observed (Sarfaraz and Firouzmani, 2007:218). The most important scenes obtained from this place are as follows:

1. Quadrangular Frames inside of which have decorated by beautiful lily flowers or acanthus.
2. Riding on horse (Fig.2)
3. Riding on panther; probably Auros, the god of love in Greek mythology (Fig.3)
4. Banquet scene (musician, dancer and tightrope walker)
5. Picture of king and queen (Fig. 4)
6. Effigy of three gods (Fig.5)
7. Collective picture of some people standing beside each other and some of which are holding flower or loop (Fig.6)
8. Single portrait of a young person without beard (Fig.7)
9. Single portrait of a man with beard and a branch of olive (Fig.8)
10. Portrait of a young female piper (Fig. 9)
11. Portrait of a man with a crescent on his head and light halo (Fig.10)

Fresco's motifs of the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh can be classified into three categories: a. human motifs b. vegetative motifs c. animal motifs. In order to recognize the clothing of the people in this period, human motifs should be mentioned. However, before this, one issue must be noticed that clothing of people attending these frescos does not indicate the clothing of people of Sistan during this period. Because based on the historical and artistic studies, many of the motifs, figurative (figures) of individuals and their clothing are not Iranian and they have been affected by the western-Greek culture.

Two riders that one of them is riding a horse and the other one is riding a panther, according to Hartsfield, narrate the Greek mythology. Hartsfield believes them to represent "Auros", the god of love in ancient Greek (Hartsfield, 1975:124).

Effigies of three gods that are beside each other and their faces have been displayed in a three-quarter side view and one of them is wearing a winged hat (Fig. 5); in Greek art, represents Hermes. This symbol here has three wings and it is the sign of war god (Hartsfield, 2002:302).

The collective painting of five people who are positioning parallel to each other and some of them are holding flower or loop (Fig. 6), reminds the motifs of Sasanian period. Picture of king and queen (Fig.4) by three gods (Fig.5) attract the attention more than other paintings in the collection of painting galleries. In the picture of king and queen, the natural and free posture of the individuals and beautiful curvature of the queen's body is considerable and inclination of the empress's figure is an excuse to express a sensational state. Subject of this design contradicts with Achaemenian designs. The eastern style in which the man's head has a side view and his body has a full side view has been more significantly observed in this picture; here, face pattern which is drawn by simple lines changes its natural make-up to a decorative design (Girshman, 2000:42).

Two portraits of the beard man with an olive branch in his headband and the young man without beard with almond eyes and arch-shaped long eyebrows (Figs. 7 & 8), reflects the combination of two eastern and Greek cultures and in the single designs it is observed that the spear has three heads (Fig. 11); this design for western people is the symbol of "Poseidon", the ruler of waters; but here, it is the symbol of "Shiva", the Indian god (Hartsfield 2002:302). The image of people who are attending a banquet and one of them is playing the music, another one is dancing while a tightrope walker is standing on his head (Fig.12) belongs to the typical Greek style (Hartsfield, 1975:124).

In the hall's ceiling (painting gallery), some paintings have been obtained which have been framed wholly and in every other frame, there is a vegetative decoration design and in the next frame, a human image has been placed; however, since they have been destructed, the clothing designs cannot be restructured and only their general shape is observed. In these paintings, individuals' heads have side views and their bodies are represented in a full view; i.e. the eastern style has been observed more (Ghadyani, 2005: 200).

Frescos of the Palace of Koh-e Khajeh had been more than what Stein and Hartsfield have introduced. Most of these paintings have been covered and destructed during constructions in subsequent periods. Remains of these designs (paintings) have been demolished to a much extent by the red bees in Sistan that make nests among the clayey walls and also climatic factors (wind and rain) and human factors. However, it is likely that by archeological excavations (investigations) in the future more designs can be obtained from there, mentioning that discovering other traces representing people and their clothing would not be cancelled.

Clothing of People in Sistan during the Parthian Period

There is not much information and data about the clothing of common people. Because the role of these people in artistic works had not been so important, perhaps it can be guessed that the clothing of peasants had been the same traditional garment which has been prevalent during the history till the contemporary era (Aghajani, 2009:58). The clothing of the Parthianis classified into four categories that each of which can be divided into smaller groups as follow:

1. Headgears

The Parthian people instead of a hat, used to fasten something like a headband around their heads that from two ends led to a long strip and they placed a deep crown which was special for Achaemenian kings on their heads (same: 58-59). Sikes also mentions that, the Parthian people used to bind something like strip around their heads instead of hat. (Mehrasa, 2008:168). Head cover in the Parthian period was itself divided into smaller groups including: crown, headband, hat, shawl and etc. Crown was special for blue-bloods and grandees and it had no status among the ordinary people, according to the paintings obtained from Koh-e Khajeh, headband and hat had been widely used in this region. In this part, only three types of head covers in the frescos of Koh-e Khajeh will be mentioned.

Picture of king and queen: the king's crown resembles the Medians' hat. Only differs in the way that it has lower height and is decorated by diamond-shape geometric shapes, this hat is very similar to the contemporary felt hats (Tab. 1, No. 1).

A cylinder-shape crown is seen on the queen's head and in front of the hat and on her hair, there is a headband which has a four-plume shape and a symbol of sun can be seen in the middle of it which represents majesty and greatness (Tab. 1, No. 2). Picture of three gods: in this painting, three individuals are observed; the person on the right side is wearing a winged-hat which in the Greek culture represents Hermes, this half-round hat has two white wings and probably it has had a blue color (Tab. 1, No. 3). The side view of a man which has been extremely destructed is one of the other paintings of this gallery who has a headband. Probably, the headband of this person had had a tail, but due to serious destruction, nothing can be observed; the headband has been simple and ordinary people could use it (Tab. 1, No.4). In some of the other paintings which have been extremely destructed, this type of headband can be seen.

2. *Shirt*

The Parthian people used to have a shirt that lower part of which had been very loose from waistline downward and occasionally armpits and it had not been suitable for formal works and used only for horse riding (Saeedian,1996:75). The material of the clothes varied depending on the region and climate; in the eastern parts of the empire, due to the hot weather thin cloths had been used for sewing the garments. However, these clothing had not been suitable for farmers and laborers at all (Kalej,2001:81) so, they used to wear short clothes while fighting (Mehrin,1964:80). In the picture of the king and queen, the king's garment has some beautiful ornamentation on the collar and sleeves(Tab. 2, No. 5). The reason for the garment to be loose was due to the heat existed in the region. Loose clothes could cause the movement of air flow on the body and prevent sweating.

Shirts can be divided into two groups of men's shirts and women's dress; men usually used to wear a long costumes that an open mantle was occasionally worn under it that was put on alone (Ghavami,2004:78). Men's shirts typically had bright colors as a remedy against the burning sun and hot weather, these loose shirts had long sleeves, straight upper part and plain collars (Tab. 2, No. 6) and the skirt of the shirt had plenty of folds.

In short, the Parthian women's clothing can be described as a long, bulky dress which was pleated to the ankles, sleeved and with straight collar that was constricted on the waistline and sometimes, a shorter low-necked shirt was worn on it (Matin,2007:25). The underside dress was pleated, looser and longer than the second dress and it was dragged on the ground, its very tight and loose sleeves were constricted by a strip under the bosom and as a result, the entire pleated clothes were concentrated on the body and they used to wear a vial on these two dresses (Ziapour,1999:11). This type of dress had not been probably used in this region and a special kind of dress can be observed in Koh-e Khajeh: a dress without sleeves having narrow shoulder-high that were connected to each other two by two by a button or buckle and its collar is completely open (Tab. 2, No. 7), it is likely that, this type of dress had been remained in Iran influenced by Hellenism, since its equivalent has not been observed in Iran before the arrival of Greeks.

3. *Pants*

The Parthian pants are well-known due to their looseness and having abundant pleats (Matin,2004:22) and some people believe that, these pants had been worn like leather leggings to protect the legs while horseback riding. Although in the frescos of Koh-e Khajeh the lower parts of the body have been rarely considered, according to the paintings obtained from the god of love (Aurous) who is seen riding (Figs. 2 & 3), pants of this region can be imagined as having many pleats. Ziapour, referring to the written documents and works of great scholars argues that: the Parthian people's pants are very similar to today's pants that are worn by people in the east of Iran (Khorasan and Sistan), these trousers are consisted of two stalks with a broad band girdle and the pants were become tight at the lower part of two stalks on the place of ankles (Ziapour,1999:11).

4. *Footgear*

Our information about footgear is very insufficient, because in the paintings of the Parthian period, more attention has been given to the upper parts of the body. This tradition is also seen in the frescos of Koh-e Khajeh and only in two cases the foot gear can be observed; one is Aurous riding a horse and another his riding a pantheon that these two paintings would not give much information about this clothing due to severe destruction in the feet part. Referring to the frescos of Dora-Uropostemple, it can be concluded that foot gears of people in Sistan have been probably simple. Women also used to wear simple shoes of the Parthian men (Shirkhani, 2001:34).

Conclusion

After investigating the history of Iran during the Parthian period, this era can be divided into three main parts. In the first period, which lasted about one hundred years, the Parthian people dealt with strengthening the foundations of their young government. The second period, in which the kings introduced themselves as adherents of Greece and were highly influenced by the Greek art the third period is the superiority of the Iranian art over the Greek ones and considered as a return to the traditional customs. The Parthian tribes entered to Iran from the east parts and after overcoming the Seleucid government, they established a big empire; and gradually, the Iranian culture and civilization dominated the Greek culture.

Frescos of Koh-e Khajeh related to the first century A.D, can apparently display the design and color of people's clothing and enough attention has been pertained to the details of clothing, artists' attention; this focus on demonstrating the details is mainly an eastern inclination. Parthian artists have had high tendency to show the details, appearance and clothing that their goal of displaying these details has been to represent the governmental or social authorities. With respect to the fact that Koh-e Khajeh belongs to the third period of the Parthian dynasty and it is located on the eastern borders, influence of the Greek art has been very insignificant, yet it cannot be ignored at all. Drawing lines with free and soft circulation, imaginativeness of some paintings as well as creating a box (frame) is specific to the Greek art and it can indicate the profound impact of the Hellenistic art and its mixing with the Iranian art.



Map 1: Parthian territory (Vishofer, 2006: 152)



Fig1.(Photo by authors)



Fig 2.(Mehrafarin,2012:231)



Fig 3.(Mosalla,2006:13)



Fig 4.(Mehrafarin,2012:232)



Fig 5.(Mehrafarin,2012:232)



Fig6.(Mosalla,2006:14)

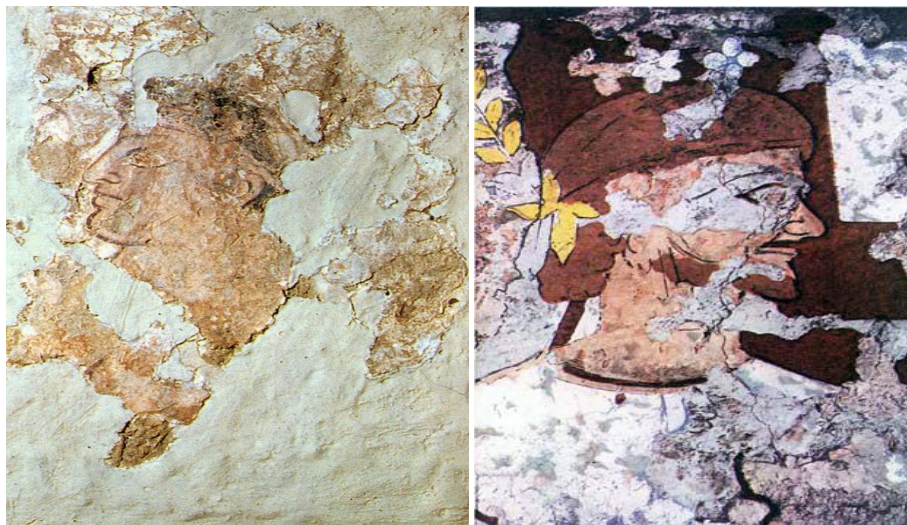


Fig 7.(Mosalla,2006:16)**Fig 8.** (Mosalla,2006:15)



Fig9.(Mosalla,2006:23)

Fig10 .(Mosalla,2006:21)

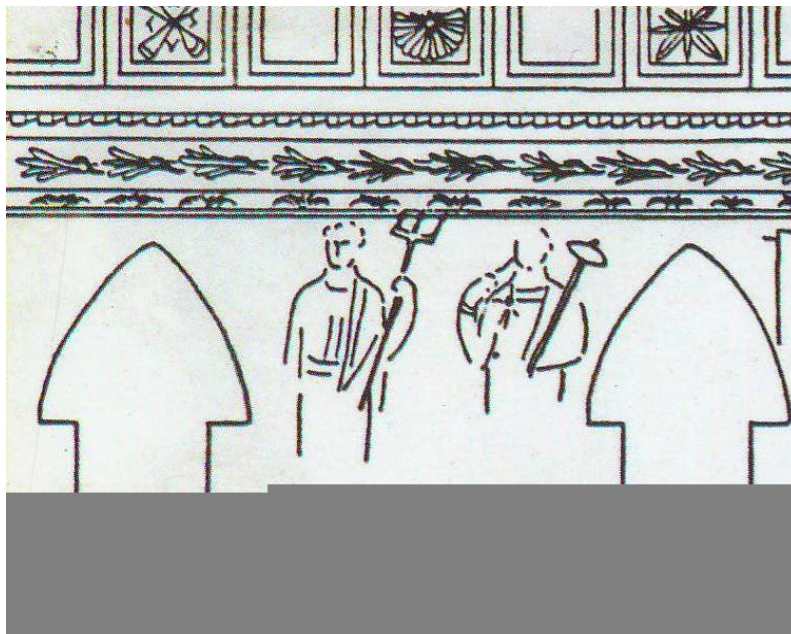


Fig10 .(Mosalla,2006:21)

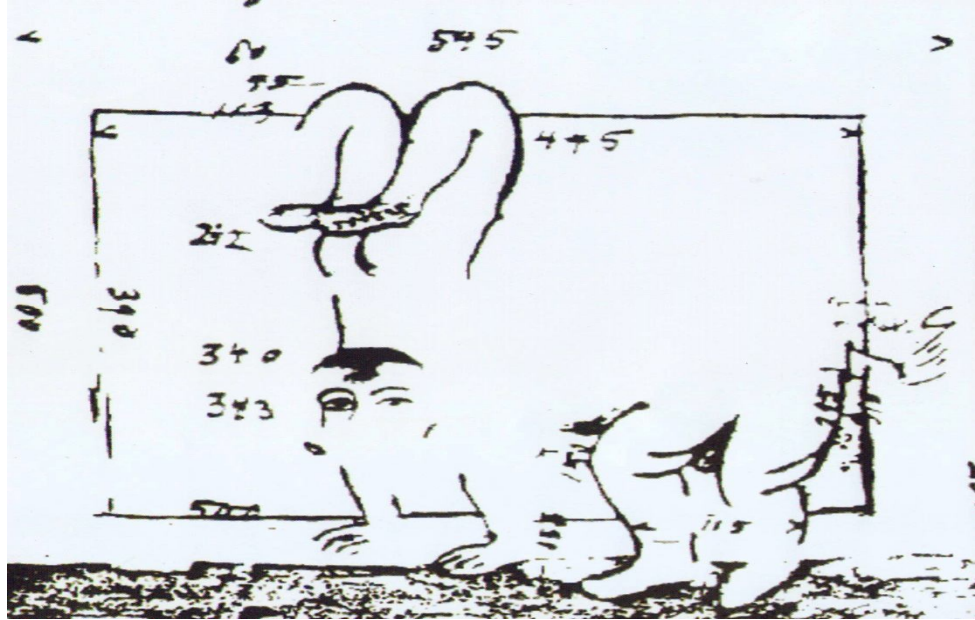
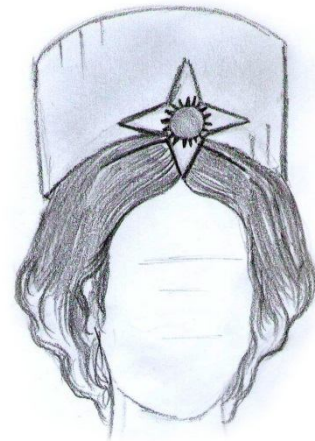


Fig 12. (Mosalla, 2006:20)



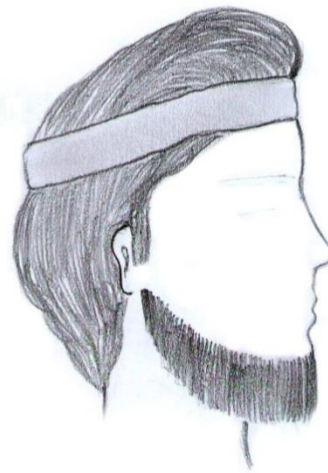
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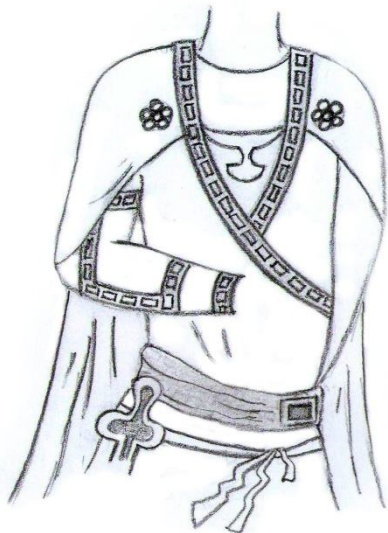


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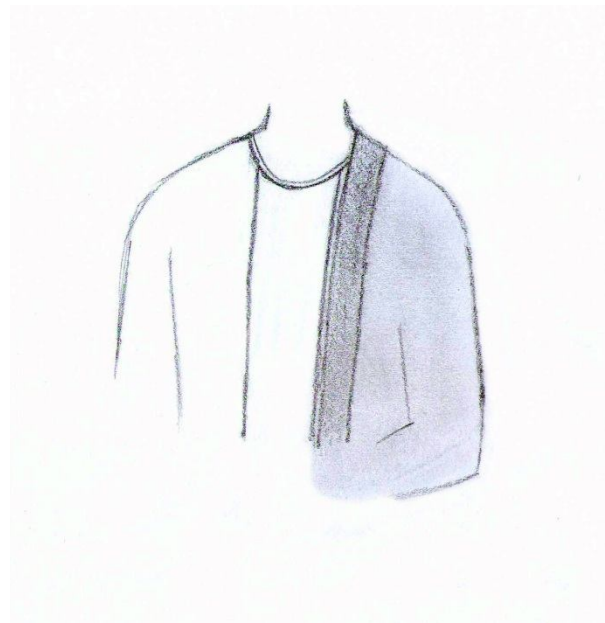


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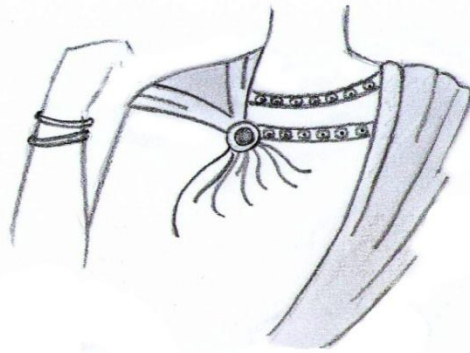
(Tablet I. Plan by authors)



NO. 5



NO. 6



NO. 7

(Tablet 2. Plan by authors)

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