

Persian Pattern Layouts

Part 1: Theory and Analysis

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Summary: What makes the construction of Eastern garments different than other clothing?

Eastern garments (those found south and east of Constantinople/Istanbul) must be approached from a completely different mindset than European garments. This is for several reasons. Firstly, due to the dry climate and types of raw materials available, textiles were quite different than Europe. This radically changed the drape and fit of garments. Secondly, due to the extremely mathematical and logical nature of the culture, pattern cutting was different. It was approached from geometric methods, producing pattern pieces that were mostly triangles and rectangles, and wasted practically no fabric at all while lying out and cutting the garment.

In these notes, I will be discussing extent garments from 9th to 16th century. I will also present a theory on tunic/coat side-gore placement that allows the hems to be straight instead of curved on the bottom. This will not have the very tip of the gore hang lower than the rest of the hem, just as the extent garments we will examine do.

Since this is a two part class, you find some information the same in both sets of notes. This ensures that the basic construction information is present for us to build our theories on.

I. Extent Garments

a. Sassanid Shirt

b. Pirahan – 9th & 14th Century

These tunics (pictures #2, #3 & #4) follow the basic square body layout with the reversed wedge side gore. It is a very geometric, conservative pattern. Many tunics, including some in Europe, seem to follow the Reversed Side Gore theory. Ever wonder how a period tunic or coat has a straight hem, yet the tips of the gore don't hang lower than the rest of the hem when worn - as one can clearly see in miniatures and paintings? This theory appears to solve this problem.

Just a side note, there appears to be several differences between Persian and Egyptian clothing.

Egyptian use square gussets for underarm piecing have straighter side gores (about 10 degree slant) and use cotton for the garments (hotter weather climate).

Persian use long triangles for piecing under the sleeves against the body, the side gores are set at 20 degree slant and use silk (access to the material and cooler climates).

c. “Dragon Coat” - 17th Century Persian Qaba (Coat)

This is the only complete 17th century Persian garment of this type that is left. The coat is now located in Russia, which up until recently, made it almost impossible for Westerners to study. As there are only a few pictures of it in books, and some of the seams on the coat are a little difficult to see, making patterns people have drafted from it vary slightly in design. It will remain this way until someone is lucky enough to take a trip to the Kremlin Armory to see it. The pattern in this handout is based mostly on this coat, with help from fragments of other garments, the look of miniatures, written accounts, and slightly out of period garments that have been studied face to face.

This garment also follows the basic layout with the reversed wedge side gore. It is a very geometric, conservative pattern. (See Layouts) Upon experimentation, I discovered that the Reverse Gore Theory works on this coat. This Theory gives you a straight hem on the bottom. The tips of the gores do not hang below the rest of the hem, just as the garment appears in the photo (where the hem is not cut on a curve, but straight) and as the hems seem to appear in the miniatures. (See pictures #8 & #9)

II. Fabrics

Types of Fabrics Used

(What was used in period, and suggestions for reproductions)

Persian Qaba-ha (plural for the word "coat") is a Persian garment. It was made of silk, and we have many fragments of Persian silk, some of which probably from garments, as well. The Persians were well known for their silk manufacturing & importing of Chinese silks. We have written accounts that describe Qaba-ha being lined in qalamkar, a highly detailed block-printed cotton fabric made in both Persia and India, that still being produced today. Written accounts also discuss linen manufacturing, and wool. Persian garments appear to have been lined, not only with fabric, but also with fur sometimes.

Persian silk was very, very thin and as light as tissue. Scholars have no idea how they were able to weave such intricate patterns on such a lightweight fabric. Contrary to popular belief, upholstery fabrics with Persian-esque patterns are not a good choice. The fabric is too stiff and heavy. 100% Silk fabrics are always a good option, but avoid Noil; it is not a period weave. Dupioni (with as little slubs as possible) or Habatoi are good choices. Persian garments were lightweight on the outside, and heavier on the inside, so if the silk is thin, choose slightly heavier 100% cotton to line it with to give it body. Cotton and linen garments are also fine choices, as well as lightweight wool. Silk/rayon blend Chinese brocades are also excellent choices, while not 100% silk; they look similar to the brocades seen in the miniatures. There is a myth that Turkish coats are striped, and Persian coats are floral, which is not true. The lower classes of both cultures wore stripes are this is a fabric that is much easier to weave, so if you choose stripes, you will be making a coat for a lower class Persian (non-nobility,) or a religious person demonstrating humility.

The Importance of Fabric Width

- Keeping period fabric widths in mind is of the utmost importance to achieve a truly correct reproduction of a period garment!
- Width- the width of fabric we will be using for these garments is 24-25 inches.
- Rationale- Most Persian fragments available are between 22 - 27 inches in width on average.
- Effect on the Garments- using the correct width of fabric, and cutting the pattern pieces accordingly, can radically change the hang and over-all look of the garment. Respecting the way the garment was actually cut in period is the only way to achieve the correct look.

III. Fitting

- It is important to look at the miniatures when making Persian garb; they are the only "photos" we have for the time period. A Persian Qaba should be a more tailored, however, it should have a "relaxed," clean looking fit, and it should not be tight.
- (See Picture #12) Soft A-line drape, not an extreme bell-shape from the waist.
- Sleeves are fitted nicely at the shoulders, not "droopy" and baggy looking.
- Coat is fitted through the torso, yet comfortable and relaxed enough to move freely in.
- Coat is tailored to softly accentuate the body, skimming the hips, etc, without looking stiff.
- Sleeves are over-long and fitted at the wrist so that the extra fabric may be pushed up.

IV. Finishing

Lining Techniques

- Neckline- Most Eastern extent garments that do not have a collar and are lined have a neckline that is finished with a bias-cut piece of fabric stitched over to cover the edges. (See Picture 7) Using narrow silk ribbon is most desirable but can be a little challenging. You can use matching fabric bias by cutting a strip of fabric on a 45-degree angle to create a bias. I also use Gutterman silk to hand finish my garments. ALWAYS hand stitch at least everything that will show on the outside...it is well worth the effort!
- Bag-lining versus Suit-lining- The extents that have been viewed in the DC Textile Museum were suit lined, meaning all of the outer edges have a facing, are turned to the inside, and then the lining meets the facing on the inside and is stitched neatly underneath it. This was often accomplished with embroidered trim, being sewn along all the edges, and even mitered beautifully at the corners. Since these garments were slightly out of period, they are probably more in line with the stiffer, tighter, tailored look of the 17th century. Garments in period may have possibly been bag lined - that is, the lining and the garment being stitched to each other and then turned. The "Dragon Coat." garment appears to have partially suit lined, and partially bag lined. Experiment with both to see which method you prefer the look of. (See Picture 8)

Closures for Persian Qaba- (See Picture #12)

- "Band leader" style closures - These can be made from trim, embroidered bands, or different types of narrow work (inkle weaving, fingerloop, etc.) 2% gold torsade (ecclesiastical embroidery thread) is good for special garments. Hand-made frogs are also suitable.
- Gemstone, pearl, glass beads or buttons- 6 to 8mm are the perfect size for these buttons. Use a "nailhead" (jewelry finding) and make a drop that can be sewn onto the garment.
- Loops - Tatting threads or crochet threads is perfect for making loops. Plied loops or finger-braided loops are excellent. The loops should be sewn in between the lining and the shell of the garment. Stitch over the loop several times to keep it from coming loose.

Credits

These notes are a combination of Duchess Roxane Farabi Shahzadeh (Melinda C. Haren), Mistress Safia al-Khansaa (Heather H. Stiles) and myself, Baroness Rozalynd of Thornabee on Tees (Shelley L. Featherstone). I would at this time like to thank them for their assistance. For further information about Persian research please see:

<http://www.roxanefarabi.com/> - for more extent garments and patterns

<http://www.willofyre.com/> - for pottery, artwork and scrolls - NB this site is currently under renovations

<http://www.rozie.ca/> - for pictures of complete garments and more research on Egyptian and Persian textiles. - NB this site too is currently under construction - please stay tuned!!

Please DO NOT print, copy, or otherwise duplicate in any way the information from these notes, without obtaining express permission from above researchers. Thank you

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Picture #1: Sassanid Shirt in Egypt. Found in Antinoé Egypt, located in Museum für Byzantinische Kunst Berlin



Picture #2: Male Pirahan 14th century



Picture#3: Egyptian pirahan 9th century



Picture #4: Male Pirahan 14th century



Picture#5: Persian Quba – 17th century



Picture #6: Female Pirahan 14th century



Picture #7: Close up detail of the pirahan



Picture #8 & 9: Two views of the front of 16th Century Persian Qaba, "Dragon Coat" Notice how the hem of the coat hangs straight across and is not cut on a curve.



Picture #10: With drawn lines to show seams; dotted lines, show possible variations.



Picture #11: Close up detail of the hem

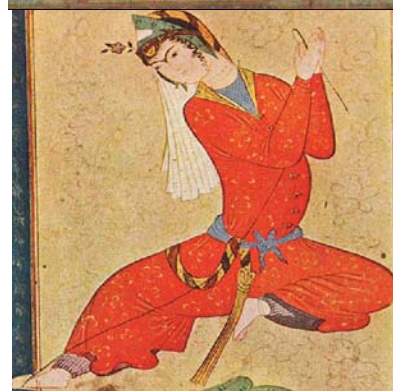
Picture #12: Persian Miniature Montage



Qaba has soft A-line drape, not extreme bell skirting.



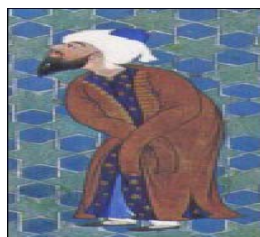
Nicely fitted through the shoulders, sleeves are not overly baggy or droopy. Short and long sleeves are worn.



Qaba is nicely fitted through the torso, yet relaxed enough to move comfortably and freely



Qaba is tailored to nicely accentuate the body, skimming the hips, gently showing curves, etc. without looking tight and stiff.



Sleeves are overlong and are worn down or pushed up on the wrist.