An Anthropological Study of Clothes Used by the Iranian Tribes

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Abstract

An attempt is made in the present paper to study the anthropological aspects of clothes among the Iranian tribes, with an emphasis of the clothes used by the Bakhtyari tribe, which is considered as one of the greatest and most ancient tribes in Iran. The Iranian people’s clothes have played important role in the Iranian culture; these clothes are endowed with religious characteristics, and today they are considered as the most fundamental and recognized elements and symbols. The form and color of the clothes are of importance in making them; these signs are associated with the beliefs of the Iranian people. As far as the importance of clothes in the Bakhtyari tribe is concerned, the making of the clothes in the tribe somehow depends upon the climatic conditions and religious beliefs. While making their clothes, the Bakhtyaris have presented their own beliefs in the society and the relationship between people; these people have made use of these clothes as important anthropological elements in bring people together.

Keywords: Clothes, Iranian people, anthropological elements, Bakhtyari.
INTRODUCTION

Clothing has been considered as one of the oldest signs of civilization, and one of the most important production ever made by men. Although it was endowed with a very primitive form in its initial stage of production, but as time proceeded, it was evolved into its present form.

The important issue here is that this so-called simple production that appeared due to necessity, has fulfilled many of our desires to recognize the kind of clothes the Iranian tribes were to recognize and reproduce. It is also important to add that the most ancient forms of clothes could be traced back to the clothes used by gods and goddesses, the men painted on the vessels, and finally the sculptures found on the stones. (Dadvar 2013)

METHODOLOGY
The author has made use of library data and documented theories of relevant and reliable critics. Beside, a field-based research is used by the author who has consequently raised questions and interviewed people.

Bakhtyari Geographical situation
The Bakhtyari land is located in the central plateau of Iran and surrounded by the high mountains. It covers such provinces like Khoozestan, Chahar Mahal-e-Bakhtyari, Lorestan and Isfahan. It is located at the foot of Zagros Mountains; it is also named after the people residing there. (Khosravi 2007)

There are mountains and rivers in this area the most important of which are the mountains of Asmari, Mangasht, Zardkooh, Koohrang, Ashtarankooh, Hafttanan, Sabzkooh and Koohefif which are of the height of eight to twelve thousand meters high and are the sources of long rivers like Zayandeh Rood which is originated from Chahar Mahal Bakhtyari. (Ahmadi Oorak Bakhtyari 1998)

The Clothing of the Iranian Tribes
There have been great material and spiritual achievements in Iran; these achievements that are related to the culture and civilization of one society have been important in Iran since the ancient historical times and the Mesopotamia era. Due to the presence of different tribes, clothes, and customs attributed to individual tribes in Iran, the cultures of those areas are associated with the climatic and geographical conditions. What is important here is that all of these tribes possess rich cultures, which are traced back to the religious affiliation, customs and conditions of life.

The first researchers and anthropologists have referred to the clothes of the tribes, in order to find ways of recognizing the culture and civilization of a society. By recognizing the clothings of one tribe, one can recognize the way of life, customs, religious and political affiliations, and also come to know about the talents and skills of those people; in this way it will be easier for the researcher to recognize the handicraft ino their dustries of the same.
The Iranian be were committed to the way they dressed and in this way they were committed to their beliefs; they use to choose their clothes based on the climatic conditions. These clothes were embroidered and designed by skilled women; these designs included spangling, needling, and many other styles, and each style was chosen for different individual tribes.

It is necessary to add that what is meant by clothes is not what they merely they wear, but other things like shoes, hats, fillets, gowns, waistcoat, gaud and jewels. The people living in different areas do not find it difficult to find clothes of their own choice. During the centuries, the Iranian folkloric clothes, like customized clothes, have undergone changes; some of these clothed have turned to be simple. These clothes were stitched using the tribe’s simple cloth making method; the materials used by every tribe for these clothes, were limited to that particular tribe, and used only by that tribe.

Clothing has been the most important cultural symbol, and one of the most significant and distinct symbol used by every tribe. It has been associated with culture to the extent that once it was changed, the way of living and cultural affiliations changed. There are many different groups of people who live in Iran, and each one of these people is endowed with certain tribal features; from what they wear, one can make out the identity of the tribe, the area where they lived, their language and other cultural features, and even religion and their other preoccupations with life. The most well known tribes in Iran include: **Azarbayjani, Baloochi, Lors and Bakhtyaries, Torkmen, Khorasanies, Ghashghayees, Kords, Mazandaranies and southerners**.

The clothes used in every area is affected by the culture of that particular area. For example, the clothes used by the women living in the southern part of Iran is called Bandari clothes, that is influenced by the clothes used by the people living in the neighboring Persian gulf countries; these clothes have close similarities with those used in India and Pakistan. Thus, clothing is considered as one of the most important cultural features of a people. There are few important factors influential in the formation of clothings in every tribe that are as follows:

1- Religion
2- Natural conditions
3- The kind of living and other activities concerned with production
4- Social status

**The Men’s Clothes in Bakhtyari Tribe**

The Bakhtyari men use a kind of wadded caps called **Kaleh**. Until 1880, the Khans used to wear white caps, and other people used to wear white caps. In the beginning of the 20th century, the only caps available, was the black ones. Nowadays, there are two types of caps differing in color and form:

*The first one is Kaleh Khosravi in black color, and in cylindrical in form. Its end is a little elevated and its is of short height (about 12 cm); this particular cap is used by the elders of the tribe. The second one is called Show Kaleh, which is worn during night; this cap is used by the young men who are bachelors, and those who are relatively poor.*
cap is thick and its color is usually brown. It is in hemispheric form and fits head. The shepherds who happen to sleep at nights in the open, wear this kind of cap. That is why is named night cap. (Salehpoor 2000)

The most important clothe used by Bakhtyaries is the one that is loose; it is made of cotton and men wear it under their routine clothes. They cover this dress with Chogha that is a kind of sleeveless gown as long as the knees. It is made of natural white wool and designed in dark vertical lines. The Bakhtyari men also use another kind of dress named Aba Namad. It is usually used by shepherds and men who are awake throughout the nights. These are placed on the shoulders, or used as blanket while sleeping. It is dark brown in color. “The Bakhtyari men wear loose and dark pants which are tight in waste and loose in foot; it is called “Tremboon Dabit”. This kind of pant is tightened by a leather belt called “Shal”. The Bakhtyaries consider the famous statue of a Mad warrior that is made of bronz and located in the city of Izeh as one of belonging to their tribe, because of his pant” (Salehpoor 2000).

The shoes worn by these people is named “Giveh Takhti”; its wooden part is thick and it is made of fillets through which long leather cord pass horizontally keeping the fillets tight together. The shoe is covered with cotton strings named “Shaligh”. At the back of the shoe, there is a piece of leather.

The Clothes Used by Bakhtyari Women
Women have always given proper importance to their clothings and make up. The women used to weave their hairs. They used to apply henna to hairs, freckling on two hands and eyebrows, and also using bracelets made of silver on their hands. They also used necklaces called “Zirna” and used a small gold piece hung from their nose. These make up designs were used in the past, but they are not used today. The women in the past used to wear necklaces made of gillyflower in order to aromatize themselves. They used to wear clothes based on their positions in the tribe.

The clothings used by the Bakhtyari women differs from those used by men. The clothes used by women in the tribe do not express their social status. The Bakhtyari woman tights a ‘Lachak’, ‘Kolahcheh,’ or ‘Kolooy’ to her lock of hair; it is made of a string of green velvet that covers her ears and head. It is as long as her neck. The inner part of the string is decorated with lining and the outer part with small pieces of glass named ‘Manjagh’, and its looks like diamond. At both ends of the headscarf, there is a string, which is tighed around neck. (Salehpoor 2000)

A gauze of 2-5 meters long and with the height of 1 meter named “Meyna” is tightened to the scarf. The gauze serves as a veil that covers neck, chest, and the face. “Jovoo,” is a long shirt reaching to the knees; it consists of long sleeves. There are six vertical strings sewed on the shirt. At each side of the shirt, there is a crack that keeps the shirt loose. “Sholar” is a long skirt that is worn on the Jovoo. The length of this pyjama ranges from 8 to 10 meters. (Sarlack 1372)
CONCLUSIONS

The clothings of men and women has been an important issue since the ancient times in Iran. The Iranian clothings have been changing since the ancient times, but the concept of clothings has been maintained as it was in the past. The study of clothing that is the main focus of attention in this article, can provide us with the information pertaining the historical survey, anthropology, aestheticism, beliefs, social classes and industrial progress of a tribe or civilization.

Indeed, the most important factors influential in the forms of clothes in different societies include: the climatic conditions, the way of life and social conditions, wars and the political conditions and the kind of rulers ruling those societies, the economic conditions and the technological progress, religious beliefs and customs, cultural, and finally, economic and political relationships with the neighboring nations. Although wearing clothes help us in keeping ourselves warm and covering our bodies, but in some cultures, the choice of color and the images painted on them and the designs using colorful Manjooghs and gold, or silver, coins on them, indicates the social status and personalities and identities of the people and the concerned tribe.

In the modern Iran, based on their particular custom and culture, people wear particular clothes. Those women living in the villages, tribal women in particular, based on their national concerns and spirits and in order to create variety in the desert or even in pleasant areas, turn to cheerful and beautiful combinations of colors by choosing beautiful and colorful clothes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clothing has been of great social and cultural issues in different societies. People living in different parts of the world are interested to communicate with each other, and this is possible only if they have a thorough knowledge of the data they receive on each other’s cultures and ways of life. In most of these societies and cultures, the communication between individuals and societies is influenced by the way they dress, which turn on the first communicative signal among them. Different people use their own particular dresses; however, they have tried to attract the attention of other people with different cultures through clothing. Although there is generation gap among people of the world, and new world order has been established, but the particular clothes used by people from different tribes and cultures still persists, and plays important role is developing cultural and social relationship between these two generations.

NOTES

1 Names of different Iranian tribes.
1 A very big tribe located near Zagros Mountains
1 Leaders of the tribe called Khan.
References