



Evaluation of Women's Clothing during the Sassanid Era

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Abstract

The present study aimed to evaluate women's clothing during the Sassanid era. The research population consisted of the women's images in the reliefs, coins, seals, paintings, stuccos, and tessellations during the Sassanid era. The study sample included women's clothing in cultural data of this era. The research design was a descriptive-analytical method. The data were gathered via library (documentary) research method by using written sources, field research, and tools such as cameras and taking note cards. The pictures were analyzed using an archaeological data method. The Sassanids' archaeological findings such as metal dishes, reliefs, coins, seals, etc. clearly showed that Iranian women were using a special kind of clothing despite their broad range of political and economic activities. The clothing was inspired by the art and culture of Sassanid kings and artists, and it was mentioned in the Avesta and most importantly, the clothing of Persians during the Sassanid era was a little different from the past so that various kinds of pleated silk and thin clothes such as shirts or tunics, capes, belts have replaced the rough and thick clothes of the past eras. In conclusion, Sassanid women such as goddess Anahita, the queen, and princesses wore clothes, running down to the ankles, a crown on their heads, pearl necklaces, and braided their hair, following the clothing described in Avesta.



Extended abstract

Introduction: Getting to know the clothing styles of an era is a way to understand the culture of the civilization in that era. Clothing is the most indicative element and symbol of the culture and values of a society. For example, the clothing of women during the Achaemenid era was partly represented by artworks such as Pazyryk burials. People of various eras wore different clothes, and technological advancements had changed their clothing, sometimes drastically. Eventually, the clothes became a tool for expressing beauty and the class, the social and religious status of individuals. Clothing during the Sassanid era is no exception. One of the most important features of Sassanid art is the role that women played in the artwork. Studying Sassanid art can provide information regarding women's social status and society's attitude toward women. Following the teachings of Zoroastrianism, Persian women in the Sassanid era benefited from privileges and rights and gained the same position as men had in performing religious duties. Based on available evidence, the difference between women's clothing during the Parthian and Sassanid eras was the diversity of fabrics and embellishments. Most studies investigated this difference from a historical point of view, and there is no comprehensive study regarding other aspects of women's clothing in the era. The objective of the current study was to describe women's clothing during the Sassanid era based on archaeological data.

Method: The study population included reliefs, coins, seals, paintings, stuccos, and tessellations during the Sassanid era. The study sample subsumed the Sassanid women's clothing in the cultural data. Besides the archaeological documents, other books, sources, and texts such as Avesta were studied to gain information about the Sassanid women's clothing. The research used a descriptive-analytical method and the data were gathered using the library research method as well as surveys and taking photos of samples. The historical data were used for comparison to achieve a better and more accurate result.

Results: The Anahita relief is the best example for investigating women's clothing in the Sassanid era. For the Anahita and Narseh petroglyph, Narseh receiving the ring of kingship from the hands of a woman, and there is a little prince between the king and the woman. In relief, Anahita is wearing a long pleated dress and she is looking to the left. She was portrayed in profile wearing a pearl necklace, and her long braided hair is on the back of her shoulder. Feminine manifestations in Sassanid coins included the picture of individuals such as queen Shapurdukhtak (wife of king Bahram II) and goddess Anahita whose pictures are on both sides of Sassanid coins. Women's pictures on mosaics during the Sassanid era consisted of women wearing dresses with inclined pleats. Long dangling scarfs and thin silk fabrics are the main features of Sassanid women's clothing illustrated on stuccos, and long pleated dresses are the main features of seals and wall paintings. Seals containing women's pictures are the best option for studying high-ranking women's clothes because seals were used in royal courts.

Conclusions: The results indicated that the clothes of the Sassanid era were more sophisticated and thinner than the previous dynasty. Evaluation of Sassanid women's clothes revealed that women of various social classes had their specific clothes. The dresses of wealthy and high-ranking women were long and pleated and various decorations of their clothes were a sign of their high social class. In general, the analysis of women's clothes showed that



women were valuable and they enjoyed a significant status in the Sassanid era. Capes were a significant feature of Sassanid women and they were worn by high-ranking individuals. In Taq-e Bostan rock relief, a cape is worn by Anahita, and some information about capes could be deduced from Avesta. The Avesta description of Sassanid women's clothes features such as long loose pleated shirts sometimes wrapped with tape was comparable with the findings of the current study.

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