



Persian accessories for women and men in the 16th century

Baron Afrasiyab al- Isfahani

Introduction

No outfit is complete with out the right accessory. This was as true in 16th Century Persia as it is today. Persians of the 16th century, the Safavids, had all sorts of accessories many where gender specific. Males being the dominate gender had more of the flasher accessory pieces of the time. This is not to say that the females did not have accessories that where not as flashy, they just did not have as much as the males did. 16th century Persia is the Asian equivalent to that of Queen Elizabeth's region. It was a very opulent and extravagant time. The clothes, the art, and the accessories were exquisite not only in shear design but also in the detail that the artists put in to the work.

This class is to give an over view of what a noble or a member of the royal family down to the common man or woman in Persia would have worn in the 16th century.

Earrings



Both Safavid males and females wore earrings. The earrings for both sexes were the same style no matter the age or the gender. The two main types worn in period are gold loop earrings or long dangling earrings. The loop and the dangling earrings where made out of gold, either wire or cast. Most of the loop earrings are cast with elaborate detailing or just a solid loop. The dangle earrings where made out of gold wire with either glass or precious stones strand onto the wire. The glass beads where plain or with detail. More elaborately



detailed earrings were worn by the elite of Persian individuals.

Necklaces

Necklaces are mostly seen on women in Safavid Persia, but this is not to say that men did not wear necklaces. The reason why you do not see necklaces on men is that in



the miniatures men's qaba or coat is buttoned all the way up where the women's qaba has two, three to four buttons undone so the necklaces are able to be seen, and therefore are then depicted in the paintings. It is not unreasonable to say that men did wear necklaces like the women.

Women's necklaces would have been made of gold as a plain chain or a strand of precious stones and glass beads even pearls would have been used. They would have worn as little as one to as many as three to four at all different lengths. The men if they did wear necklaces they would have had just a plain chain with maybe a single stone or charm

attached to the chain.

Belts



There were two types of belts in the Safavid Dynasty, one is a plaque belt and a cloth belt.

The cloth belt is worn by both males and females in Persia. The cloth belt is nothing more than a strip of cloth long enough to go around the waist and be twisted round each other to lock it in to place. This type of belt would have one or many different colored cloths wrapped around the body.

The second type the plaque belt was worn strictly by men.



The belt was made from strips of leather bound in velvet or another type of fabric. The fabric used was any color but black. Black was seen as an unlucky color in Persia. The belt was assembled by attaching the leather to the plaques till it fit around the waist of the individual. The plaques were cast out of gold or copper depending on the person's social state. The plaques themselves were elaborate with different designs embellished with precious stones. The plaque belts did have what we call today a belt buckle to keep it attached to the body.



In the men's belts, objects such as pen cases, fans, knives and swords were often tucked into it. For the most part, this is not the case with women.

Bags/ pouches



Bags or pouches in Safavid Persia were made out of leather or cloth. They come in many different shapes, sizes and color.

With the bags/pouches they were worn mostly by men, but there is one type pouch that is worn by females in Persia. They are usually seen on females of nobility and are worn around the neck. The bags/pouches used by men came in all different styles. They had bags that attached to their belts, or the type that was carried like a purse.

The ones that were worn on the belt were made of leather and had designs pressed in to the leather and then was panted. The designs were pressed in to the leather using a soap stone that had the design carved in to the stone the leather was then placed on top of the stone and stretched over it. Then the artisan would use embossing tools to push the leather in to the stone transferring the design from the stone to the leather.



The pouches worn by the women are made the same way and are worn around the neck by an elaborate chain. The chain is usually made of roses or a flower pattern, and were probably made of gold. The other type of pouches/ bags were made of cloth, the cloth was either plain or made from brocade. There is a possibility that they might have been embroidered. Since there is no extent pieces of the cloth ones and only late period examples of the leather pouches, most of the findings are based off of the miniatures and soap stones found in digs.

The cloth bags/pouches were either round or square. The square pouch is not very common but there are some seen in miniatures.

Rings



Both Safavid males and females wore finger rings; they varied from very simple to very elaborate. The rings were made from either gold silver or copper. The most common ring was just a plain band. Then the next would be a stone set on the band. The third is rings with carved stones. Some have the face of the

ruler or an animal. Rings in Persia were also used as seals, these rings were used to sign legal or business documents. The rings also had prayers carved in to them to protect them, and to always have God's words with them all the time.



Shoes



There are many types of shoes worn by males and females. The three major types are simple slip on, boots and slip on with no back. The shoes are made of leather they could be plain and simple or have elaborate or cut work done to them. The slip on style with no backs is seen mostly in the homes or court yards. The slip on style with a back are seen

more when they are out side walking. In miniatures it is common to see them with the slip on style, riding horses playing polo. Boots were also worn. They were high all most up to the knee they are seen in long travels or in camp, where hard work or travel is taking place.

Leggings or fabric sock boots are often wore in conjunction with boots or shoes. They seem to have been worn indoors without shoes to keep the foot covered (a private area of the body) and to protect the beautiful tile floors.



Fans



There are two types of fans used in 16th Century Persia. The one seen used by the men are the collapsible fans which are kept tucked in their belt between their coats. These fans where made from wood soaked with perfume.

Females in Persia had a different type of fan. Their fan is similar to that of the Chinese; it is square in shape and was made of fabric. The fan was made with either wood or metal. The fan is constructed from a square frame with fabric stretched around it to the frame a handle is connected and is moved back and forth to move air.

Scarves

Scarves are mostly worn by men in the Safavid Dynasty they are made off all kinds of fabric. The scarves are either seen tied to the belt or is held in their hands. They are as simple as white or brocaded. Some might have embroidery done on the ends of the

scarves. There are not many miniatures showing females with scarves but you will see it occasionally. When you do see them, they have them tucked in to their belt or in their hands when they are dancing.

For men, the scarves are almost always a different color than their belt and their clothes, but females often matched their belt, pants, and headpiece. The females used the scarves to cover the face as well, from unknown people or foreign people.



Prayer beads



Men were the only ones in Persia that that cared prayer beads with them, as prayer was a man's responsibility. The prayer beads were made of all different materials. They were made of wood, ceramic, glass, and precious stones. In miniatures the prayer beads are pictured either in their hands or attached to the belts.

Conclusion

This is just a brief overview of the myriad of accessories options for men and women in Persia. Adding just a correct piece of jewelry, a little scarf or fan, will really

dress up your outfit and make it look much more authentic. I highly recommend studying miniatures to get even more ideas on proper accessories.