

## 16<sup>th</sup> Century Safavid Persian Headwear:

### Part II; Styles for Men

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Continuing with our brief study of Persian headwear during the Safavid Dynasty, we will now focus on millenary options for men.

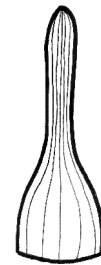
As seen in the miniatures, there are quite a few hats, headpieces and other adornments worn by males. As stated in Part I, it is quite natural for those interested in creating Persian men's clothing to first turn to the turban for a viable head covering. As we will see, while the turban is certainly a very common headpiece, and one steeped in interesting customs, variations, and a plethora of historical accounts, there are also many other interesting headwear options for Persian male attire that we will also explore.

#### The Taj-Hayedari, or Qizilbash Hat



At the very beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while the Safavid Dynasty was still in its infantile stages, a large group of Shiite militants made up of several Turkic tribes, yet heavily populated by the Turkoman people, won several key battles and political victories, and took over the capital of Tabriz. They were called by their enemies the **Qizilbash**, pronounced /Kee'zeel-bah-sh/ or "Red Heads," because of the distinctive tall red hats they wore. They embraced the term and called their tribe and the hats they wore by this name.

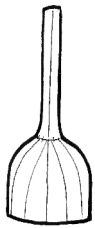
The legend held that this hat came in a dream to Haydar, the Sufi spiritual leader of the Safawiyya order, who originally organized his followers into this body of militant troops. The plunger-shaped hat was made wool, cut from of twelve gores, which commemorated the twelve imams, who were the spiritual descendants of Mohammad, and the cornerstone of the Shiite movement within Islam. The names were embroidered on the gores, and the gores rose from the hat into a twelve-piece faceted baton. The hat also began to be made in other colors besides red, and is seen in the miniatures painted blue, green and yellow as well. Later versions of the hat, seen by the French merchant John Chardin while visiting Persia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were reported to be "stuffed with cotton" to hold the erect shape. It is possible that the ones in period were made this way was well. This was a very special hat, and became a symbol of the Safavid Shah and his power. It was given as a gift by the Persian rulers during this time period, and only those who were supporters of the royalty and his regime could wear them. There are stories of Shah Abbas gifting European dignitaries with this hat on very rare occasions, and in these unique circumstances it was decorated with a Christian crucifix to respect the beliefs of these special recipients.



This hat was also called the **Taj-Hayedari**, pronounced /tazh-high-eh-dahr-ee/, which means "Crown of Haydar." Wrapped with a cloth turban made of cotton or linen, it was then sometimes wrapped with a decorative silk layer. The turban was also carefully arranged in order to display twelve distinct symbolic folds. These turbans were

probably sewn on a hat form, rather than wrapped every time, as they are often seen pictured sitting on a pillow or tipped on a person's head intact. As they were given in ceremonies by the Shah, it would make sense that the entire hat was sewn together, although there are a few miniatures where the plunger shaped hat can be seen worn alone without the turban. These hats were often decorated with chains, feathers, fans of horse hair, decorative jewelry pins called a **sarpiche**, pronounced /sahr-peesh'/ all of which were symbols of rank.

This hat, known both as the Taj-Hayedari and the Qizilbash Hat, evolved greatly over time, and its shape changed greatly. As each Safavid Shah assumed the throne, the shape changed; becoming first, more elongated and graceful, and then, as we move out of period, shorter and wider. During the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the use of the hat dwindled, but was resurrected to great effect and celebration by Shah Abbas I toward the end of the century. This is where the greatest variations began to occur...height,



and shape of the turban itself. There seemed to be some social differences as well; as those of lower rank seemed to wear types that were not as graceful and curved, as if the ones made by higher nobility were made by milliners with much more skill and better materials. Both styles are seen worn simultaneously in the same painting.

By looking at miniatures, and using the small bits of information we do have, one can easily experiment with making their own Taj-Hayedari.

Although we do not have the space to cover construction of the hat in this article, with a little experimentation with a basic baseball cap pattern, a fairly accurate looking hat can be made onto which a turban can be wrapped and sewn into place.

### **Other Types of Turbans**



As stated in Part I, turbans are a head covering that are reserved for the men in period. Towards the middle to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, the laws changed regarding turbans, and women started wearing them, but not for our time period within the Society. This often comes as a surprise to many people, as we are accustomed to seeing folks dressed as ladies at events wearing turbans frequently in the SCA. Well-meaning

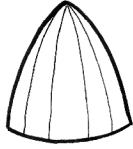
individuals will even argue this point, showing miniatures they believe that illustrate their view.

The problem stems from the fact that Islamic representations of people differ than that of Western art. Very often, men appear feminine to our eyes in the miniatures. What we interpret as a woman; because of the way the eyes, face, hair, etc, are rendered, is actually a man...especially when the figure is wearing a turban. It takes much practice to learn how to see the correct genders in Persian or other Islamic miniatures; so the best advice is to keep looking at them and practice! Understanding will come with time.

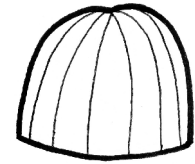
Besides the Taj-Hayedari, one can also see other types of turbans being worn in Persian miniatures. With our new understanding of this Qizilbash hat, it makes sense that not everybody wore one, as it was a gift from the Shah. There is also the possibility that some people had religious beliefs or cultural differences that may have prevented them from wearing it. Along with this, there are pockets of time within the Safavid Dynasty in

which the distinctive red hat was almost never worn, and therefore not seen at all in miniatures of that time frame. Whatever the reasons, there are men frequently wearing turbans in miniatures without the high red baton.

There are several period words for turban, including **mandil**, pronounced /mahn-deel'/. Men from the Uzbek mountains were generally not a part of the Qizilbash regime, and therefore generally wore a different turban. They were always



wrapped around a gored hat of some sort, which varies in height, shape, and color. It is possible that these turbans were wrapped every time they were worn, but sewing them onto the hat as with the Taj Hayedari is not outside the realm of possibility. Turbans were commonly white,



but there were turbans of many other colors as well. The only color universally avoided in Persian culture was black, as it was seen as an unlucky color and the symbol of evil. Turbans that look black in miniatures are actually painted with dark blue indigo paint that has oxidized with time. Striped and plaid fabrics of many bright colors were also used for turbans.

The Sufi holy men, often seen in miniatures sitting together, discussing religion, reading books, teaching, or dancing in groups, wear a distinctive turban. It is white, with the tail ends of it draped over the shoulders or under the chin. Sometimes the end of the turban cloth is striped or embroidered. In these miniatures, you can see a small gored cap that it worn under the turban, and the cloth is then wrapped around.

Whether the Qizilbash turban hat, or the plainer styled turbans; in period they were quite large and heavy. Wound of many yards of fabric, written accounts said that they weighed around 15 pounds! Of course, it takes time getting used to a hat of such size and weight. One also has the option of not making it quite as heavy if it proves to be too unwieldy.

### Furred Hats

For those who find turbans uncomfortable or uncreative, thank goodness Persian clothing for men has many other headwear choices!

Although many think of Islamic clothing as being “desert” attire, it is important to remember that a good deal of Persia’s landscape is mountainous, and quite cold in the winter months. This explains why the clothing is in several layers, and why coats are lined with fur. But it also forced the Persians to top off their clothing with some great hats to keep their heads toasty warm in the Iranian snowcaps!



Because Safavid clothing is greatly influenced by the Mongol invasion of Persia, men of lower nobility or servant class wore hats with fur-covered brims that were very similar to Mongolian styled hats. Although we no longer have extent hats of this variety left, there are hats from Mongolia that resemble those seen in the Persian miniatures. From studying these headpieces, we can make educated guesses as to how they may have been constructed.

Many of these hats may have had a gored hat-form that was made of burlap soaked in

glue, sculpted onto a hat form and allowed to dry. This would support the weight of a golden finial which is often seen on top of the hats. Some of the hats appear to be of the “soft” variety, with no hat form inside, just simply sewn of silk brocade and fur. There are literally dozens, perhaps more, of various styles, and are well worth experimenting with.

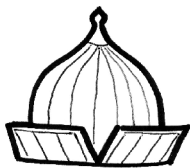
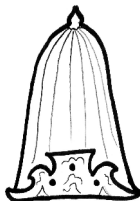


Another type of furred hat seen in miniatures is shaped very much like a Phrygian cap, and looks to be made of a blue-gray wool. After researching different furs and fibers from Persia, I discovered that this hat looks to be made of Karakul, or Persian lambskin pelt. This is a fur that comes from dark gray curly-haired sheep that are raised throughout Persia, but especially in the Bukhara region. These sheep can be gray, blue-gray, brown, or black. Often in the miniatures, it is the nomadic men from the mountains that are pictured wearing these hats. As Bukhara was a mountainous area in Persia, it might explain why these particular men are wearing the hats. They are often wrapped with a piece of cloth that looks like a loosely tied turban. Karakul lambskin was a popular material for coats, hats, and hand-muffs in the 1950’s and 60’s in the West. An old coat or hat is fairly easy to find at a yard sale or second-hand store, and can be used to make a wonderful hat of this style.

### Crowns and Coronets



For an SCA appropriate coronet, the **taj-kulah**, /tahzh-koo’-lah/ or “crown-hat” is perhaps the best Persian option that resembles the European coronet. As stated in Part I, this is an obviously Mongol-inspired hat, worn by Persian nobility, made of an attached crown brim, and a quilted fabric or leather hat with a finial on top. Since the Mongols greatly influenced the fashions of 14<sup>th</sup> century Persia and beyond due to their invasion of the region, it is easily understood why this hat became fashionable. Although there are no extent Persian examples left, there are enough Mongolian hats from varying time periods that we can study the construction and make an educated conjecture to the methods of creating their Persian counterparts. Men are



pictured with many different types of taj-kulah. The hat portion of the headpiece appears to have been made in a variety of different heights and a few slightly different shapes. The brim-crown portion varies as well...sometimes it is a full crown, encircling the entire hat, flaring out much like a Western coronet, and other times resembles more of a tiara shape, only being seen in the front of the hat. Some of the taj-kulah from the earlier part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century have a plain, straight brim. It is unclear whether the crown was made of metal; stiffened fabric covered with metal thread embroidery, or tooled leather with metal overlays, etc. All of these methods are possibilities.

There is a suitable solution for a make-shift Taj-Kulah for those who wear a coronet in the SCA and would like to wear Persian garb. A simple gored hat can be made using the baseball cap pattern as mentioned above, from a silk brocade or similar fabric. It would be best to line it with cotton or linen, and the cap should fit nicely, not being loose. The cap should also be long enough to have a “cuff” on the edge that can be

turned up, which works nicely especially if contrasting fabric is used for the lining. A few glass beads can be sewn to the center top of the hat to emulate a finial. To wear this, one would simply place the cap on the head, and put their coronet over the top of it, fitting it around the “cuff” so that it sits inside of it. This makes the hat and cap appear to be one piece, and looks similar to a Taj-Kulah. This works especially well for those who like to wear different types of garb and may not want to wear Persian clothing all the time at events. One can “Persian-ize” their coronet temporarily this way, and then wear it in the usual European style with other garb later on.

### Other Interesting Hats

There are quite a few other hats that were worn by men as well. Often, in the backgrounds of miniatures, you will see workers, youth, or men from the country side wearing hats of very unusual shapes, and in many bright colors.

In bathhouse scenes men are pictured wearing skullcaps that are made using the basic gored method that seems to be the way most hats are generally constructed. Many times they are white, but they can also be of alternating colors, made of brocade. They appear to be of a “beanie” type shape. These hats were probably used to keep Islamic tenets of covering one’s head. Workers are seen in fields wearing them on occasion as well, as if they have removed their heavier hats in order to labor properly. There are rare miniatures in which men are grieving over the death of a loved one, and they have removed their Qizilbash hat, and are wearing a thin, white skullcap underneath.



Servants, workers, nomads, and sometimes those of lower nobility are also seen wearing soft brimmed hats and stocking caps that appear to be made of felt. They seem to have been lined with fur on occasion, and wrapped with decorative scarves, with flowers or feathers tucked into them. The construction of these hats seems to be different, however, only one seam is painted, rather than multiple seams as other hats.



as usually with the



This hat,

made of brocade or felt cut from four pieces, lined with fur, was worn with one flap down, and one up. It seems to have been worn mostly while hunting, by archers, or falconers. Hats of this variety are still worn today as an accessory to traditional costume in Kyrgyzstan, which was part of Persia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### Summary

Through study of 16<sup>th</sup> century Persian miniatures, textiles, and other art, it is exciting to witness the countless variety of headwear options there are for the male persona. One can quickly see that although the turban is a wonderful, interesting, and common headwear style, it is not the only choice that awaits the men. Through multiple

explorations, the Persian clothing recreationist interested in male garb will have many wonderful and challenging projects ahead of them that are attractive and rewarding; an endeavor which will offer a different look and approach to historical clothing within the SCA that will hopefully be well worth investigating.

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All line drawings by Master Safi al-Khansaa' (Heather Stiles,) based on 16<sup>th</sup> Century Persian miniatures.