

## Fashion under the name of Allah

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### Abstract

*Attending Muslims to preserve their culture and fashion under the name of Islam is an important of social life for many Muslims family. But in this study Objects like the color of chador from the material culture of those involved are examined as distinguishing components used to establish stigma in the past and Legitimizing for now. Remarkable question is that despite the color of Iranian chadors which is black why this urban area is worn by white one? This study is based on ethnographic material collected in Varzaneh-Iran between 2012 and 2014 and on written sources. In particular, it is based on interviews with 37 female between 24-67 Years Old and other individuals male working on the cultural Heritage Office; fieldwork observations from the town of Varzaneh. This project is an examination of the specific color of Muslims chador in Varzaneh-Iran as a process and social Muslims world that had stigma features and activities that serve to Muslims families, reinforce their identity, and distinguish members of this culture from other Muslims group and from the larger Muslims social world. This project is shown by the important role played by the religious organizations and the Islamic role fashion in Iran.*

**Key words:** Islamic Fashion; Governors Fashion; Varzaneh; Color of Chador (hijab); Stigma

### Introduction

With focusing on Islamic fashion, and the everyday corporeal practices of young Muslim women, the starting point of this paper is different. We argue that to be better understand the importance of dress even its color to religion, we need to recognize that Muslims share a concept of religion that foregrounds faith and spirituality rather than external manifestation of religion belonging and also understand of dress to governors and beyond that to religion. The question of What Muslims dress practices are emerging in this location/Varzane<sup>1</sup> and to what extend Islamic governors or charismatic's one can reap benefit from this channel? And How far are they shaped by local circumstances, immigration histories, particular religious tradition, multicultural interfaces and transitional links? While Islamic fashion is often not recognized as fashion owing partly to the historic hierarchies of fashion mentioned earlier where it is recognized as fashion it tends to be greeted in one of two ways. Either it is perceived as yet another demonstration of the secularization of public space or it is welcomed in celebratory tones as proof of the freedom and creativity of Muslim woman in spite of what is often assumed (Tarlo and Moors 2013-P14). However, as number writers on fashion have shown, fashion is as much about emulation as it is about freedom. It involves a combination of individualizing and conformist impulses (Simmel 1971) Finkelstien even goes so far as to suggest that fashion is better understood in terms of subjectivities than in terms of individual autonomy of freedom of expression (Tarlo and Moors 2013-P14). In IRAN, where the establishment of the Islamic dress republic in 1979 transformed voluntary veiling into a state-imposed dress code, the turn to fashionable style took on different meaning. At one level, Islamic fashion in this contest could be perceived as a form of everyday resistance through consumption. At another level it, it might be understood as a product of the state's response to the demand of women who had expressed their loyalty to the regime (Moruzzi 2008 P 225-34). Tarlo and Moors's work became aware that forms of covered dress do not relate simply to matters of religion but also to issue of national and ethnic belonging, class and generation, consumer culture, aesthetic preference, fashion and style (Moors and Tarlo 2013-P7). It is impossible to achieve to the Culture and Islamic Fashion of Varzaneh without considering its ethnic belonging, class and generation, consumer culture, history and changing during the time. Varzaneh's culture has undergone lots of changes by the

<sup>1</sup> Varzaneh urban-rural district to be located in center of Iran have been culturally considered quite rich for ages. Its population is currently estimated to be 12000 and geographically to be located 110 KM in southeast of Esfahan.

lapse of time and these changes have prolonged up to now. If we consider veil to include form and color, in this research, we will make an attempt to trace the color of the veil which is white in Varzaneh.

### **In terms of literature, the Study of Dress and Religion**

More than a decade ago, Mahmood (2001) suggested that the literature on veiling only paid scant attention to the religious motivations of any of the women concerned (Tarlo and Moors 2013-P5). Instead, covered dress had often been discussed in instrumentalist terms—for instance, as a means for women to acquire greater freedom of movement (MacLenod 1991) or as a form of identity politics or sign of allegiance to Islamic movements (El-Guindi 1981; Ahmed 1992; Göle 1996; Navaro-Yashin 2002). This has also been the case in public debate and policy-making. In a critical reading of the French Stasi report, Asad (2006) argue that this report's definition of Muslim headcoverings as 'conspicuous affiliation' did not entertain the possibility that the young women concerned may cover their heads because they consider this a religious duty (Tarlo and Moors 2013). Focusing on devoutly practicing Muslim women participating in the mosque movement in Cairo, Mahmood (2001, 2005) emphasizes the extent to which adopting covered dress as first and foremost a religiously motivated practice for these women, Mahmood's work has been important not only for stressing the strong levels of religious intent expressed by some Muslim women who adopt covered dress but also for suggesting how we might rethink debates about gender and agency in relation to religious practice (Tarlo and Moors 2013). Covering then work as a technique of the self, as a bodily act that serves not only as the marker of piety but also as 'the Ineluctable means by which one trains oneself to be pious' (Mahmood 2005:158). Emphasis on the reformative power of dress has similarly been a theme of much recent historic and anthropological work on dress (see Camaroff 1996; Tarlo 1996, 2005; Woodward 2007; Lemire 2010; Riello and McNeil 2010).

### **A Note on Methodology**

Varzaneh urban-rural district to be located in center of Iran have been culturally considered quite rich for ages. Its population is currently estimated to be 12000 and geographically to be located 110 KM in southeast of Esfahan. Generally people are Shiite and consider them self to be successors of Zoroaster. A unique characteristic of this district is the white Chador (hijab) to be worn by all women. Iranian women wear the black chador except in Varzaneh. The hypotheses formulated within this study have not been tested before. This study is based on ethnographic material collected in Varzaneh-Iran between 2014 and 2015 and on written sources. In particular, it is based on interviews with 37 female between 24-67 Years Old and other individuals male working on the cultural Heritage Office; fieldwork observations from the town of Varzaneh. The three components that make up the triangular approach are direct observation, interaction (interviews) and study (of both primary and secondary written and other sources). John L. Esposito (2012 pp. 325-358) has contended that this approach is particularly appropriate for the study of Islamic movements because many Islamic activists do not produce many writings. All of the interviews for this research were conducted in the homes of the interviewees or at an alternative venue chosen by them. Some interviews were recorded on audio equipment and some were not depending on the preference of the interviewees. Also I as a female freelance researcher in Iran interviewed all if the interviewees. Because of the fact that I was a member of the city council for a short time which is belong to Government for sure meanwhile probably I affected the ethnographic or interview dynamics.

### **Historical Framing**

The Destruction of the Iranian land borders by the Arabs (more than one thousand year ago), paved the way for mutual relationship among religious boarders. The stories related to the change of religion which has been registered in minute books and local histories, together with statistical data of biography cultures shows that this stage has been of significance between 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The last stage was the converting of rural Zoroastrian to Islam and establishing Islamic domiciles throughout Iranshahr and Transoxiana. The rural often accepted Islamic customs and Ideas comparing them with Zarathustra customs and beliefs (Choksy, J.k 2001-p133). From 10<sup>th</sup> century AD to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, many people residing in villages accepted Islamic beliefs (Choksy, J.k 2001-P148). During that period, Muslims regarded Zoroastrian with contempt. The unjust laws, backed by verse 29 of chapter of Koran which express "fight with those having heavenly book who do not believe God and Judgment day and do not declare whatever God and messenger declare unlawful and accept the truth religion till give tribute abjectly "were enacted

which under those laws Iranian gave tribute to Muslim Arab lords many years. Arabs took the tax according to the same tax system of Sassanian together with land tax and per capita tax also in those years, including that financially discriminated (Choksy, J.k 2001-P147) even they must be different from Muslims in type of wearing by specific stigma Governors Fashion, Belk and Tharp believed that Possessions can be an important part of self-identity (Belk 1988; Tharp 2007). Daulier – Deslandes (Mah Journal-1997:7), the tourist who visited Iran many years later in Saffavid period; described Zoroastrian: their clothes were in joyful color i.e. green and red. But they had to wear achromatic clothes (wool or linen) and these clothes made them distinguished wherever they went. Wearing white clothes-colorless to distinguish Zoroastrian from Muslims in Saffavid period which was forced by specific stigma Fashion Saffavid Governors, little by little and after some generations it became customary while social memory forgot it then made a causal relationship between their body and their new religious. Human memory does not behave like the hard disk of your computer; it is not always accurate and reliable. Human memory can fail completely or it can be influenced by a variety of different factors, and the past can thus be altered (Lowenthal 1985 Pp193–210). One important group of such factors, as Maurice Halbwachs argued (1980), derives from the social arena, which people always inhabit when they remember. He therefore introduced the term 'collective memory' (*mémoire collective*). Halbwachs stressed how strongly social processes influence not only people's personal memories of their own lifetimes, but also a community's shared memories of the past (Kohli-Kunz 1973: 39–42; see also Shils 1981: 50f.). Going far beyond Halbwachs's argument, cognitive psychologists, brain specialists, and sociologists have recently proposed that human memory works radically differently from the traditional archive model and is in fact constructed in the human brain (e.g. Bolles 1988 and the view of Radical Constructivism). Likewise, scholars in the humanities have argued that memory of the past is not only influenced but constituted by social contexts of the present (Kohli-Kunz 1973: 31–54; Middleton and Edwards 1990; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Samuel 1994: introduction). As a consequence it becomes fruitless to discuss whether or not a particular event or process remembered corresponds to the actual past: all that matters are the specific conditions under which such memory is constructed as well as the personal and social implications of memories held (Berger 1963: chapter 3; Thelen 1989: 1125; Fentress and Wickham 1992: XI). Sedigheh Ramazan Shojaei, the Iranian researcher wrote in her book concerning "History and art of weaving in Yazd": basically white is the emblem of Zoroastrian, hence, Zoroastrian were remembered as white clothes in some of the books. People, sometimes interact with objects, in this case garments, as if they are humans, sometimes because they want show to others what they believe they represent (Adelman, 2008, 23, 735 – 739). A mother in Varzaneh believed that: Children should be clad in white. We clothe our children white shirt, pants and hat. At the top of the hat is painted with a sun design or prayer letters. They believe that they expected to protect them. Clothing itself can serve to as a means for socialization and/or social control or, conversely, for liberation (Crane and Bovone 2006). In pahlavi dynasty the Pahlavi Shahs were the rulers of Iran between 1925 and 1979 and they introduced many reforms concerning women's rights. An example of an early reform introduced by Reza Shah was the 'forced unveiling of women by a special decree on January 8, 1936 which, as the name suggests, involved the police force pulling the hijab away even from religious women (Pappé, Ilan 2005 237). Instead of that after the Islamic revolution in Iran it was the Islamic governors who have forced to cover the citizenships bodies under 'The Set of Cover Rules and Regulations' (Sadr 2009) beyond the specific stigma fashion Governors but for now it is gender stigma. When you see white veil of Varzaneh women and if you see white color on the Arabian –shape veil of Zoroastrian, in fact it was the means of distinguishing Zoroastrian class and /or new Muslim Iranian from other Muslim Arabs classes. At the beginning of Islam, in order to separate Zoroastrian and the Jews the white and blue color were used respectively. The White veil represented middle - low class gradually before that time because the Zoroastrian families were placed in middle and poor class of the community due to payment of heavy taxes. According to one of the old women of Varzaneh: Master women used to wear black veils and the peasants' women wore white veil although they were Muslim.



In the past, Varzaneh women themselves painted wool and linen with natural color material consisting herbal, animal and mineral colors. One of the weaver women of Varzaneh said: Many years ago, we mixed Cliya a kind of fuel or charcoal with lime and steeped in wet cloth, heat it and finally it whitened after drying, but if these stages were not carried out the cloth would not whiten and would get green or yellow. In fact, this whitening method was very expensive at that time. In interview with one of the Varzaneh women we asked her why Varzaneh women' veils are white and why they prefer it to black veil, she said: wearing white cloth is recommended very much but black is abominated. "Look Muslims' clothes are white in Pilgrim to Mecca. Clothing can serve as a marker or sign of membership in a culture or subculture (Kidder 2006), and reflects how we define ourselves (Crane and Bovone 2006), and this people is no exception.

#### **A Note on Theory**

In one hand, Georg Simmel's 1895 help us to understand how an essay on fashion defines it as a system of social cohesion that allows the individual's membership of a group to be dialectically reconciled with his relative spiritual independence. Fashion, says Simmel, is governed by motives of imitation and distinction, which are transmitted vertically to the community by a particular social circle. They are accompanied by the 'stimulating, piquant' charm that fashion conveys through what Simmel describes as the 'contrast between its broad, all-pervading dissemination and its rapid, fundamental evanescence' and as the 'right to be unfaithful to it'. Social stigma is the extreme disapproval of (or discontent with) a person or group on socially characteristic grounds that are perceived, and serve to distinguish them, from other members of a society. Stigma may then be affixed to such a person, by the greater society, who differs from their cultural norms. Social stigma can result from the perception (rightly or wrongly) of mental illness, physical disabilities, diseases such as leprosy (see leprosy stigma), illegitimacy, sexual orientation, gender identity, skin tone, education, nationality, ethnicity, ideology, religion or criminality. Attributes associated with social stigma often vary depending on the geopolitical and corresponding sociopolitical contexts employed by society, in different parts of the world. According to Goffman there are three forms of social stigma: Overt or external deformations, such as scars, physical manifestations of anorexia nervosa, leprosy (leprosy stigma), or of a physical disability or social disability, such as obesity. Deviations in personal traits, including mental illness, drug addiction, alcoholism, and criminal background are stigmatized in this way. "Tribal stigmas" are traits, imagined or real, of ethnic group, nationality, or of religion that is deemed to be a deviation from the prevailing normative ethnicity, nationality or religion. If we consider stigma wearing white clothes and separation a group of community individuals by color, the theory of stigma will also be

included clothes and fashion process. Definition of clothes color changes in actor's mind within years and passes from stigma and enters into stage of culture and identities of individuals who wear them. Clothing reflects how we define ourselves (Crane and Bovone 2006). The remaining pressures like Non-Muslim heavy taxes causes indifference of future generation of Zarathustra toward ancestral ideology and caused religious stigma enters into applied stage so that after that having honor of father's religion has changed into having a disgraceful attribute, this stage can be known a gap between culture and dominant ideology which led to a tendency of generation to accept Islam in that period. The new generation accompanies culture with Islamic ideology and based on statistic, the seventh generation of the Zoroastrian population has been the minimum population composed in the Iranian community. On the other hand, People learn and acquire their religious beliefs from others<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the religion is a social learning (Zuckerman 2005 94). Religion is some kind of sociability process which is the same process of attracting numerous aspects of surroundings culture. This process is the process of unofficial learning unconscious internalization of norms and beliefs and values of our family – of similar group – society – nation etc. (Zuckerman 2005 84). Indeed, our religious identity usually and mainly is the result of socialization base processes (Fowlkes 1988). We learn our religious beliefs from others, often these important individuals are in our lives which have major role in introducing a religion to us and determining religious nature for us<sup>3</sup>. Although the main part of available researches imply this result that parents obviously affect religious beliefs and practices of children, yet the argument about the clear scale and real period of this effect continues<sup>4</sup>. Although Zuckerman believes that while religion is concerned with the connection to God or other highest true outside and religion depends on the relation with mother, father, husband, brother, sister or friend on the Earth, more importantly, researches have shown that in addition to this belief, it can be said that religion and any code related to this belief has come from a long route of human history by which human has tried to verify his priority. Inside the created shapes to verify human priority, some codes from order and plan are presented which finally are collected in present time but are being continued. Social groups, who themselves are the creators of religion, make special values and codes to prove their identification priority and the creator religion plans the social expectation required for re-creating the new code for the circumstance of social relation. Finally, the religion elevates its followers' identity; instead provide codes for its revival which strongly wants to perform them.

### Conclusion

Religious/Islamic fashion is still one of the key elements of governors' charismatic identity. Hence, clothing may become an operator of socialization, social control/force, and/or even freedom from cultural factors. This socialization is shown by the important role played by the religious organizations and the Islamic role dress in Iran, while liberalization is shown by the plenty members of various forms in clothing of popular groups such as White chador in Varzaneh. Although Mahmoud and others give importance to paying attention to the motivation of women for their veil, a critics reading of religious sociology toward fashion can be a new key for understanding fashion. Religion is a social re-producing (with the governor's axial effectiveness) whose main mission is recreating momentarily and elevates the followers' identities toward others even though it had an opposite code in the society( block color of veil implied belonging to a lower level in the past but today is the sign of honor). The created religion owes its creator so it organizes patterns from social relations of which fashion codes are the most important. The religion instills some codes to the society to make ready unconscious of the society to accept sociability ordered by the governor, codes which are always effects and its main cause is not clear for the acceptor, causes which in the mentioned motivations have never heard by the consumers of fashion; all are untrue fashions be in the service of the religion, If we consider fashion by motivation we come to only pseud-fashion.

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<sup>2</sup> Finney (1978); Chalfant and Le Beff 1991; Baston, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Baston, Shcoenrade, and Ventis 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Kalish and Johnson 1972; Hoge, Petrillo, and Smith 1982; Bengston 1975; Dudley and Dudley 1986; Francis and Brown 1991.

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