
An Investigation into the Weaving Techniques of Shaal Fabric for the Production of Traditional Chogha and Ranak in the Uraman Region of Kermanshah

Mohammad Ghorbanian^a

^aInstructor of Textile Sciences, Department of Textile Engineering, Technical and Vocational University (TVU), Tehran, Iran

Received 15 February 2023; revised 20 May 2023; accepted 15 August 2023

Abstract

Expanding on the cultural significance, the present study delves into the symbolism and rituals associated with Chogha and Ranak attire within the Kurdish community. It explores how these garments are woven into the fabric of everyday life, from weddings to religious ceremonies, serving as markers of identity, status, and belonging. By understanding the cultural meanings attached to these garments, the research uncovers the intricate interplay between tradition, modernity, and cultural preservation. Moreover, the present research delves into the challenges and opportunities faced by traditional weavers in the Uraman region. It examines issues such as access to resources, market demand, and the impact of globalization on traditional craftsmanship. Through collaborative efforts with local stakeholders, the present study seeks to identify strategies for sustaining and revitalizing the traditional weaving industry, ensuring its continued relevance and vitality in a rapidly changing world. By presenting a holistic view of Chogha and Ranak production, encompassing technical expertise, cultural significance, and socio-economic dynamics, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of traditional crafts and their role in shaping cultural identity and heritage preservation.

Keywords: Chogha, Ranak, Uramanat, Mers

* Corresponding author. Instructor of Textile Sciences, Department of Textile Engineering, Technical and Vocational University (TVU), Tehran, Iran

E-mail address: mgh1461@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Is Kurdish attire earns recognition as one of Iran's authentic forms of dress, gaining prominence at national and international festivals and conferences. Its vibrant colors, alignment with Iranian and Islamic fashion norms especially for women and its construction from all-natural materials place it among the premier local costumes [7]. Across various provinces, this garment has gained significant popularity, with the distinct Kurdish dress from the western regions attracting visitors from afar. Proudly, the Kurdish people actively preserve and promote their cultural dress and heritage. Artisans, known as Julahas, craft the traditional men's Chogha and Ranak from goat hair yarn, while the Halaweh, women's attire, once mirrored Islamic and Iranian values and is made from indigenous cotton [6]. Despite no longer producing the women's Halaweh, men's Kurdish clothing continues to thrive. They are well-suited to the local climate and reflect the community's pride and dedication to their cultural roots, which helps maintain their popularity and respect [8].

Despite the enduring popularity and cultural significance of Kurdish attire in Iran, particularly the traditional men's Chogha and Ranak garments, there is a noticeable decline in the production and preservation of women's Halaweh attire. This shift raises concerns about the potential loss of an integral aspect of Kurdish cultural heritage and the diminishing representation of women's traditional clothing in contemporary society. The disparity in the continuity of crafting these garments highlights the need to investigate the factors influencing the decline of women's Halaweh production, the impact on cultural identity and representation, and potential strategies to revitalize and sustain the legacy of Kurdish attire for future generations.

2. Introduction to the Various Types of Kurdish Men's Clothing

Kurdish men's clothing, adapted a coat and trousers with distinct purposes, tailored to the mountainous and cold environment. The traditional coat (Chogha) and trousers (Ranak) are hand-woven from goat hair, known as Shaal, characterized by their narrow width, length, and vertical stripes. In contrast, when made from synthetic fibers, the coat is named Kewa and the trousers Patoul [4].



Figure1. Chogha and Ranak

Here's a more concise and well-written version of the provided text:

Chogha: A goat hair upper garment with sleeves, worn over a simple shirt or the "Lefkeh Sorani." [8]

Rank: Wide-legged goat hair trousers with narrow ankles [7].

Lefkeh Sorani: A shirt featuring wide, long sleeves that end in a triangular flap, designed to wrap around the wrist or arm [5].

Sorani: A triangular wool or cotton fabric worn over the sleeve of a Chogha or Kewa, wrapping around the wrist and forearm. It supports the wrist and forearm muscles while providing warmth [5].

Shaal (Pashtineh): A 3- to 10-meter-long strip of wool or cotton tied around the waist to prevent kidney diseases and back pain in cold weather [5]. Textiles can incorporate woven or layered optical fiber sensors. For fabrics intended to function as sensors, larger sensor surfaces are created using chemical-optical sensors applied through dyeing, printing, or coating. Detection can be achieved through visual color changes, spectrophotometry, or calorimetric measurements.

Recent advancements have integrated physical sensors (breath rate, heart rate, temperature) into garments. Chemical sensors in fabrics offer a novel approach to intelligent textiles, with coated sensors providing insights into individuals' health conditions.

Chogha: This is a sleeved upper garment made from goat hair, worn over Dastar: (Kalaghe or Sarvin) made from wool or silk, this headgear is sometimes worn by men instead of a hat, offering beauty and protection against sinusitis and ear or forehead infections [6].

Ferengi: (Kolbal) A sleeveless felt garment, some with ear-like appendages on the shoulder area, specific to men in the mountainous Uramanat region. This garment is used for protection against the cold and warmth. Shepherds in grazing areas also wear the Ferengi or Kolbal.[7]

Kolav: A local Kurdish hat that Kurdish women intricately weave with black and white patterns reflecting their rich culture.[8]

Pich: A primarily black and white scarf wrapped around the hat [8].

Saq Band: (Pozvaneh) A woolen strip used in the past to protect against cold, facilitate movement in snow, prevent moisture effects on the legs in winter, protect against snake bites, and tighten the trouser ends for easier mountain traversal in summer [8].

Kalash: (Giveh) A white footwear delicately woven with cotton thread in the Horaman region. The sole is made from layers of cotton fabric, and the joining strip is made from goat hair. Benefits include lightness, preventing sweaty and smelly feet, keeping feet cool in summer, and its unique beauty [9] **Kolav: ** this is a traditional local Kurdish hat, elegantly woven by Kurdish women. It features patterns that reflect their authentic culture and is typically styled in black and white.

Pich: This is a scarf, primarily in black and white, that is wrapped around the hat.

Saq Band (Pozvaneh): This is a woolen strip that was historically used for several purposes: to protect against the cold, facilitate movement in snow, prevent moisture from affecting the legs, safeguard against snake bites in summer, and gather the loose ends of trousers for easier passage through mountainous areas.

Kalash (Giveh): This is a type of white footwear intricately woven with cotton thread, originating from the Horaman region. The sole is crafted from layers of cotton fabric, while the joining strip is made from goat hair. Benefits of this footwear include its lightweight design, prevention of foot sweat and odor, cooling effect during summer, and unique aesthetic appeal.

3. Shaal Fabric Preparation for Chogha and Ranak Sewing

This fabric is made from the hair of a specific breed of goat found in the Zagros Mountains. Known as the Mers goat, this breed is unique to the Kurdish provinces of Iran. In Kurdish, the term “Mehrehz” refers to its soft and fine hair. Mers goats have long, soft, and glossy hair, and each goat can produce between 2 to 2.5 kilograms of hair annually, with yields doubling in purebred herds. The Mers goat is a result of a cross between Angora goats and local Kurdish goats, making it one of the best goat breeds in Iran due to its fine and long hair.

Among animal fibers, Angora goat hair, commonly known as mohair, ranks second after wool. Mohair is appreciated for its softness, glossiness, strength, elasticity, flame resistance, reduced wrinkling, and suitable length. In addition to their hair, Mers goats also provide meat, milk, and dairy products.

The diet of the Mers goat consists of 90% oak leaves found in the northern Zagros forests. Herders often use dried oak branches to feed their goats during the winter months. The goat fibers are spun into yarn at traditional workshops in the cities of Horaman and Nodush, as well as in the villages of Baneh and Hejij in Paveh County. This yarn is then woven into narrow strips of fabric known as Shaal, which are typically 15 to 20 centimeters wide and 30 to 40 meters long.

The choice to use goat hair for this fabric is due to its lightness and natural properties. Unlike other materials and fibers, goat hair contracts in heat and expands in cold, facilitating thermal exchange between the body and the environment in warm weather. Additionally, goat hair has a natural water resistance because the grease and wax from the animal's hair are retained, making it effectively waterproof.



Figure 2. Harvesting hair Fibers from Angora Goat

3.1 Spinning

Goat hair is harvested once a year, at the end of spring. If the animal's hair is dirty, it is washed before being sheared [6]. After shearing, the hair is handed over to skilled Kurdish women who clean it of any thorns, debris, and unwanted particles tangled within, while also

separating the hairs by color. In the next step, the hairs are aligned parallel to each other and slightly twisted by hand, a process known as spinning, turning them into yarn [9]. The yarn is then wrapped around the forearm and one end is attached to a tashi or latare, a simple spinning tool consisting of a pencil-thick stick with a protrusion at the top and a nail at the tip. The spinner twists the Tashi to spin the yarn, a skillful act that ensures the yarn's uniform thickness throughout (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Spinning operation

It's important to note that the hairs are not dyed, either before or after spinning [3]. Due to the natural oils in the hair, it does not take dye well; even if dyed, the color is not vibrant or permanent and fades back to its original hue over time. Goat hair naturally is in white, light and dark brown, grey, red, and black colors. After spinning, the yarns are wound into balls to prepare for the warping process [10]. The spun yarn balls are briefly immersed in a mixture of salt and alum, just enough for the solution to penetrate the yarn [4]. This process, known as scouring, smooths the yarn and removes any extra fuzz because the salt causes the fuzz to brittle and breaks off, leaving the woven fabric with a smooth surface. It also strengthens the yarn, preventing it from breaking during weaving and combing (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Threading operation

3.2. Threading

Warping is usually done outdoors, but some workshops use a metal frame with rods placed at specific intervals to create a long warp. In an open space, a lengthy path is chosen, and at both the start and end points of the path, a wooden peg in the shape of the number 8 is driven into the ground [5]. The warp thread alternates between these two wooden pegs and changes its position as shown in Figure 8. Additional wooden pegs are placed along the path to prevent the warp threads from falling or loosening. The length of the warping path depends on the size of the person who will use the fabric [6]. For example, a person who is 170 centimeters tall and has a normal weight of 70 kilograms requires a strip of fabric 16 to 17 times the length of their height. If the person is slightly overweight, an additional length is added, making it 18 times the height. One with 180 cm height requires approximately 1400 to 1500 grams of hair for a densely woven fabric of high-quality yarn [8], with three-fifths used for warping (the warp threads) and the rest for weft insertion. That means, out of 1500 grams of hair required for weaving Chogha and Ranak fabric, 900 grams are used for warping and 600 grams for the weft. Of the woven fabric, two-thirds is used for Ranak and one-third for Chogha.[10].



Figure 5. Threading yarns

3.3. Weaving

Once the warp is prepared, it's separated, wound, and moved to the loom. The two warp threads (dezane) are threaded through the heddle. A typical warp setup ("pieh") uses 20 pairs of warp threads. Chogha and Ranak strips commonly use 2.5 pieh (50 pairs of warp threads). For denser fabric, 3 pieh (60 pairs of warp threads) are used, woven in sets of three dezane, consuming two-thirds of the hair and reducing the need for weft. The weaving loom is a simple four-heddle device, each heddle with a frame and looped threads attached top and bottom.

Every two or three warp threads (dezane) that pass through the teeth of the reed or shuttle are alternately passed through these loops. The weaving loom is set up in a pit so that the weaver sits beside the pit and alternately presses pedals beneath their feet to move the heddles. With each lift of a heddle, the weft insertion is done using a shuttle and immediately followed by a beat with the reed or shuttle [4]. The standard width of the woven strip is about 20 centimeters. However, if a narrower strip is desired for aesthetic

reasons, one meter of length must be added to the fabric for every 2 to 3 centimeters of reduced width [10].



Figure 6. Weaving Shaal Fabric

3.4. Finishing and Preparation of the Fabric

After completing the weaving process, the woven fabric is soaked in water to remove the alum from it [10]. Afterward, it is rinsed and dried to thoroughly cleanse it of any remaining alum and excess fuzz, preparing it for the next stage known as "kooting" or pressing [10]. The pressing stage involves folding the fabric into three parts and creating a crease. To do this, a board nearly 5 to 6 cm wide and 35 cm long is placed in the center of the fabric, and both sides of the fabric are folded over the board, smoothly and precisely [6]. Then, a smooth stone is drawn over the fabric, acting like an iron. This process ensures the fabric is neatly folded along its length and divided into three sections [10]. After pressing, the fabric undergoes a molding process. In this stage, the tri-folded fabric is tightly rolled and then immersed in boiling water for half an hour to an hour. Afterward, it is removed from the boiling water and pressed underweight for 2 to 3 days to set the creases firmly [9].



Figure 7. Fertilizing

After molding, the fabric is hung from a height and weighted at the bottom to straighten out any unevenness or irregularities through tension, ensuring it becomes completely smooth and uniform. This stretching and hanging process lasts 2 to 3 days [1]. Next is the fabric collection stage, where a board approximately 6 to 7 centimeters wide and 25 centimeters long is chosen. The fabric is then tightly and neatly wrapped around the board and once fully wound, the ends are securely tied [3]. The process prepares the fabric for the tailor for sewing into Chogha and Ranak. This step not only compacts and organizes the fabric but also helps fix the creases and maintain the fabric's form [4].



Figure 8. Packets of Shaal Fabric for Preparing Chogha and Ranak

4. Conclusion

Despite the presence of modern spinning and weaving factories capable of rapidly producing a wide variety of colorful and diverse fabrics, traditional weaving with natural fibers and materials remains alive and well in the Uramanat region, using completely traditional and indigenous equipment that is centuries old. This tradition persists not only in the production of fabric for clothing but also for other uses. The Kurdish people living in the western part of the country continue to desire and seek out these garments because, in addition to aligning with the culture, art, and geographical location of the region, the unique properties of the goat hair used in the fabric distinguish these clothes from all others. Wearing these garments is desirable in any season. Given the fabric's value and the labor-intensive production process, Kurdish men often wear them with a sense of dignity only on formal occasions, reflecting their respect for their culture and art

Acknowledgement

We extend our gratitude to Mr. Manouchehr Ranjbar (respected manager of Klash Rasan Nodehsh Company), Master Khalil Fazooni (weaver of Chogha and Ranak fabric), Master Abdulrahim Fazooni (traditional textile artisan), and the esteemed residents of Nodehsh city in the Horaman region of Kermanshah province for their sincere cooperation in the conduct of this research.

References

- [1] Bevilacqua, A., & Tucci, A. (2012). *The textiles of Western Iran: Production, techniques, motifs*. Gangemi Editore.
- [2] Bier, C. (Ed.). (1998). *Woven from the soul, spun from the heart: Textile arts of Safavid and Qajar Iran, 16th–19th centuries*. The Textile Museum.
- [3] Edwards, C. (1992). *The Persian carpet: A survey of the carpet-weaving industry of Persia*. Duckworth.
- [4] Elahi, M. (2017). *Textile arts and artisans of Iran*. Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization.
- [5] Gillow, J., & Sentance, B. (1999). *World textiles: A visual guide to traditional techniques*. Thames & Hudson.
- [6] Harrow, L. (1996). *The art of Persian textiles*. Antique Collectors' Club.
- [7] Moheban, A. A. (2008). *The encyclopedia of Persian carpet patterns*. Moheban Publications.
- [8] Paine, S. (2013). *Textiles of the Islamic world*. Thames & Hudson.
- [9] Tanavoli, P. (1989). *Persian flatweaves*. SCB Distributors.
- [10] Wertime, J. T., & Wertime, S. (1982). *Traditional crafts of Persia: Their development, technology, and influence on Eastern and Western civilizations*. MIT Press.