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Samanid Pottery, 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Centuries,  
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Samanid Goblet, 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Centuries,  
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*Two Authors:*

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## Review Paper

# A Look at the Evolution of Women's Clothing During the Qajar Era as a Visual Language

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**Abstract:** The final goal of this research is to investigate the design of Qajar women's clothing in different periods. In the first step, the question arises whether the cover can be a language. Then this research seeks an answer to the question of what messages in the form of language mean. Therefore, in the current research, the above issue has been analyzed by a case study of Qajar women's clothing and using a descriptive-analytical qualitative research method. Findings: This study shows that the clothing of Qajar women can be considered a single language of signs. In deciphering this language, concepts such as women's attention to religious foundations, gender inequality, and patriarchal view in society, the value of wearing Iran's old traditions, as well as the desire to move towards westernization and fashionism of Europeans can be inferred. The results of this research show the importance of the role, color, code, sign, symbol, and finally language in the field of women's clothing in the Qajar period.

**Keywords:** *Clothing, Women, Qajar Period, Language, Signs, Linguistics, Semiotics.*

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## ***Introduction***

If we take a searching look at the existing written sources, we will come to the point from the very beginning that in the definition of clothing, its covering aspect is emphasized and clothing is considered an important means of protecting the human body against any possible damage in the environment. "Clothing is the concept of covering the body completely, and of course, the amount of coverage depends on the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the people of each garment. Shirts, skirts, suits, and other clothes are considered" (Yavari and Hokambashi, 2010: 7). After satisfying basic human needs, clothing has shown itself in different ways among different civilizations. Therefore, what is certain is not only the covering property of clothes; Rather, it is other features and functions that clothing has. Type of material, color, design, clothes, sewing method, and a set of words related to clothes with cultural, moral, and spiritual values and standards such as dignity, sobriety, polytheism, greatness and humiliation, attraction, poverty and wealth, happiness and mourning and... are mixed (Yarshater, 2004: 18). Clothing can have a direct relationship with the understanding of the culture, customs, and religious politics of a society. Through a set of signs and symbols, clothing establishes a communication system among people in society. From this point of view, the reading of each of the signs in the clothes can express many other components in addition to expressing the personality and psychological characteristics. "In the clothing system, expressive forms (signifier) and content forms (signified) and what is mental signification and what is meaningful are inseparable" (Kakavand, 2014: 4). Deciphering these signs and understanding the meanings and concepts of the language of signs in each social group requires understanding the social and cultural behaviors of the people of that group of society and knowing the beliefs from which clothes get their symbolic values (Yar Shater, 2004: 17).

In the meantime, women's clothing will have a special importance in terms of investigating symbolic signs due to the subtleties and details in the design, and as a language, it can have a huge contribution in reading the cultural and social components of a society. On the other hand, it is considered to be one of the ups and downs in political, economic, social, and cultural terms in the history of Iran. "This dynasty emerged in an era when not only Iran, but most countries in the world were in the hands of a wave of social, political, and economic transformations; The changes that challenged the cultural and artistic traditions of a large part of the nations of the world and caused different reactions in the cultural fields" (Chitsazan and Rahimi, 2011: 69). In addition to the political and economic effects, Iranians' familiarity with Western culture and civilization in this period brought with it important social and cultural developments. In this research, with a case study of women's clothing in the Qajar period and the importance of women's clothing in that era, the semiotics of clothing and its role as a language are discussed. The point of view of this research is based on the approach of recognizing women as a language in the mentioned period and based on the theories of semiotics, linguistics, and social function and relying on the opinions of theorists such as "Ferdinand de Saussure", "Roland Barthes", and "Wolfgang Bruckner" analyses the clothes and study the cultural and symbolic components of that era.

What makes the authors of this article clear about the need to pay attention to the study of the design of women's clothing in the Qajar period is the lack of research on the reading of clothing in that period as a language. Therefore, due to the implication of symbolic elements of clothing on cultural, religious, national, and artistic expressions in society. In this research, by introducing the components of women's clothing in the Qajar period and using the methods of semiotics and linguistics, the symbolic elements in each of the different pieces of women's clothing of that

period are analyzed. Also, this research seeks to find an answer to the question that the signs in the form of a language contain what messages and what they imply.

### ***Theoretical foundations of research***

Clothing is the most important and specific ethnic symbol and the fastest and most obvious sign of recognizing the cultural and social components of a society. On the other hand, the clothing system as a symbolic system can also be considered a language. For this reason, pleasure, the concept of sign, followed by semiotics, linguistics, as well as the signifier and the signified, are considered to be the basic concepts of this research. The word "sign" has the same meaning as the words "diagram" and "reason" in Dekhoda's dictionary. Conceptually, the sign has a broad aspect that the mind analyzes after receiving it. In other words, the representation of any attribute or situation through a sign is an attempt to express the desired concepts and meanings (Kakavand, 2014: 11). Seeing the dome, the first thing that comes to mind is the mosque. In a deeper sense, the dome is a sign of monotheism, unity, spirituality, etc. So, the external concepts along with the signs can have a deeper meaning.

The concept of "semiotics" was first proposed by "John Locke" with the term "cognitive sign" in 1690 A.D. One of the goals of semiotics is to understand codes, languages, and signs. Through semiotics, a mental matter becomes an objective matter. Signs are an objective thing that implies a mental thing (ibid., 13). The science of semiotics helps people to better understand the world around them by examining signs. "Language" is a sign system like other sign systems such as handwriting, sign language, signs, and symbols, and language is more important than all these systems (Dine San, 2009: 34). Therefore, the science of "linguistics" examines the deeper layers of language by examining signs and the relationship between them in similar patterns. Conceptually, the word "sign" is the physical form of an object that can be touched, seen, and heard objectively (Kakavand, 2014: 22). Clothing is known as a sign in this research. The word "signified" is conceptually the same as signified and indicated (same). The meaning of the word clothes is not its appearance, but the mental image of the clothes.

Until now, there have been reviews and comprehensive information collected about the issue of Iranian clothing in the Qajar period in the works of authors such as Jalil Ziapour, Jafarshahri, Shirin Najmi, Yahya Zaka, Hossein Yavari, etc. Also, in the articles and theses, some of which are mentioned in the references section, acceptable research has been done in the field of clothing of this period. For example, Mahnaz Jahani and Saharchengiz in the article "Comparative study of the fashion of ladies of the court of Feth Ali Shah and Naseruddin Shah Qajar" investigated the commonalities and differences of the inner and outer clothing components of the two mentioned courts in a comparative manner and sought to identify the components affecting change or stability. They are the style of clothing of this era. The results of this research show that religion is an important factor in preventing the complete change of clothing style among Qajar women. On the other hand, the personal influence, taste, and will of the Shah have been a very effective component in changing the fashion of court women (Jehani and Cengiz, 2016).

In a thesis entitled "Qajar fashion and clothing and the influence of western culture on it", Azam Asadi analyzes the gradual changes in women's and men's clothing during the Qajar period and states how due to the industrialization of Europe and the influence of western culture on Iran, freedom from The social and cultural restrictions and requirements, the way of thinking, the way of life and the dressing customs of the people of that era have undergone a significant transformation (Esadi, 2014). Another notable research in this field is the dissertation he wrote with the title "Irony of Iranian Clothing in the Qajar Period". The results of this research



show that it is possible to examine clothing within the framework of semiotic theories and also that different pieces of clothing in the discussed period, as signs contain different and multiple meanings that can express age, gender, religion, culture, social class, etc (Karkan Jalal, 2013). In addition, the travelogues of travelers who were present in Iran during the mentioned period and wrote down their observations and experiences, such as Polak's travelogue, will help the authors of this article in achieving the goals of the research. From the point of view of semiotics, compared to other approaches, less attention has been paid to the clothing of the Qajar period. However, no research has been done that only examines the design of Qajar period women's clothing as a language, and in addition to semiotics from the perspective of terminology and social function, this category has not been done.

The theoretical framework of the current research can be examined from the semiotics and linguistics approach. "Ferdinand de Saussure", a Swiss linguist, considers the sign to be composed of signifier and signified elements. He believes that the sign is the result of the adaptation of these two elements. A sign without a signified, or in other words, a sign that does not imply any concept, is nothing more than a dumb sound, and a signified that has no form (sign) to signify it. It is not possible to receive and recognize. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is called signification (Sujudi, 2013: 18). The current research deals with the signification of signs as something we see (clothes) and something that creates a conceptual impression. From the point of view of "Charles Sanders Peirce", the American philosopher, signs are not included in the same definition. If we compare the views of Dossier and Peirce, it must be acknowledged that dossiers refer to the symbolic aspect of signs, while Peirce considers signs to be a mixture of three known profile, iconic and symbolic aspects. Therefore, it should be seen under which group the signs in this research fall under Peirce's point of view.

"Profiles" are not a contract between the signifier and the signified, and both express the same reality. There is a temporal and spatial relationship between them; Like smoke that indicates fire (Ahmadi, 2008: 46). From this point of view, there is no need to sign the agreement between the signifier and the signified. They define each other. Like indexes, "image" is not a contract between the signifier and the signified, and on the other hand, there is no temporal and spatial relationship between them. Like a person's photo, they can be independent of each other. Based on the symbolic aspect, clothes can be examined independently of their time and place. In the "symbol", there is a contract between the signifier and the signified, and like an icon, it is based on similarity. Like the airplane sign on the road leading to the airport (ibid). In this definition, there must be a similarity between the signifier and the signified. The pleasure of this view is closer to the theory of bisaurus. In fact, from the point of view of Peirce's theory of semiotics, clothes can be analyzed from two aspects of icon and symbol, in which the symbol is the common feature of Dossier and Peirce.

Now let's talk about the concept of language in Dossier's theories. Language is a part of communication between humans and unlike speech, it can be studied separately. As mentioned earlier. Language is a sign system. Considering the linguistic sign as a norm, Dossaussor argues that all signs are conventional and include the association between the signifier and the signified (Kakavand, 2014: 23). "Roland Barthes", a prominent European semiotician and linguist, defines by using the rules of linguistics and semiotics that semiotics is a part of linguistics. In the category of clothing, the opposition of pieces and parts of clothing is a language, and any change in them creates a change in meaning (Barth, 1991: 27). A language that is affected by the prevailing social, cultural, and political system. "Wolfarg Brokar" proposes four theories regarding the study of clothing from the perspective of history, among which the theory of social or non-historical function can be used in this research. From his point of view, the diaper is like a



language of signs that makes it representable and decipherable. This theory has a symbolic approach to clothing and introduces it as a language made of signs that can be decoded and read (Metin, 2013: 38 & 39). Therefore, it should be said that the approaches of semiotics, linguistics, and social function can form the theoretical framework of the current research, and the clothes of Qajar period women can be explored based on them.

The current research is fundamental and has been conducted qualitatively. The research method used is descriptive-analytical, and in this direction, based on the nature of studying the course of women's clothing design in the Qajar era, the historical research method is also very promising. The method of collecting its information is in the form of library documents (written documents) and photographs and works left of all kinds of clothes, crowns, and ornaments used by women of the Qajar period (visual documents), available in the Golestan Palace Photo Museum and the website of the Institute of History Studies. It is a contemporary of Iran. Since it is not possible to mention all the historical documents in this article, it is enough to collect some examples of the remaining evidence and documents. In the study process of this research, the authors first describe the components of women's clothing in the Qajar period and in two groups of inner and outer clothing. Then, the process of changes and transformations in each of the mentioned components of women's clothing are examined in two important moments from the beginning of Fath Ali Shah's rule to Naser al-Din Shah's first trip to Europe and Naser al-Din Shah's trip to Europe until the end of the Nasrid era. Because the theoretical framework of this research is based on the theories of semiotics and linguistics. In the analysis of the collected information, the semiotics of the pieces of clothing and how they play a role as a language are discussed.

### ***A look at the course of political and cultural developments during the Qajar era***

During the Qajar era, our land experienced periods of ups and downs politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Since reading the semiotics and linguistics of women's clothing design in this period, paying attention to the political, cultural, and symbolic components is one of the necessities of this research. Therefore, in the first step, it is necessary to deal with the aforementioned dynasty and its political and cultural changes, especially in two stages. It is an important time when we get to know more about the beginning of Fath Ali Shah's reign until Nasir al-Din Shah's first trip to Europe and Nasir al-Din Shah's trip to Europe until the end of the Nasrid era.

The Qajar dynasty, in other words, Qajar dynasty, was a Turkish dynasty that ruled Iran for 129 years. Qajar was officially founded in 1175 A.H. (1796 A.D.) with the success of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar. His reign was very short. After Agha Mohammad Khan, his nephew Baba Khan, known as Fath Ali Shah, finally managed to sit on the throne in Tehran after a tough battle with rivals. In the early years of Feth Ali Shah's rule, along with the political, social, and economic transformations in other countries of the world, Iran also underwent a huge wave of political and social transformations, which left a deep impact on the cultural and artistic fields of the people of this country. History has mentioned Fath Ali Shah as a man of pleasure, wife, and tributary. According to historians, he took thousands of wives during his lifetime. Therefore, most of the time this king spent on partying instead of prosperity and development of the country. On the other hand, during the reign of Feth Ali Shah Qajar, Shah's interest in returning to the values found in the ancient history of Iran caused many arts to achieve a national language under his support, despite the influence of foreign culture on art. In fact, "Fath Ali Shah paid special attention to calligraphy, poetry, and music, and this made fine arts and crafts flourish in the early Qajar period, with the presence of artists and literati" (Hikarit, 2005: 579). The fourth king of the studied dynasty was Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, known as "Sultan Sahib Qur'an" or "Qibla Alam",



who became king after Muhammad Shah in 1885 A.H. During his long reign that lasted nearly fifty years. Extensive efforts were made in the field of developing Iran's foreign relations with foreign countries, which is considered a turning point in the history of political and cultural developments in this land. "The importance of Naser al-Din's era is due to the long duration of the kingdom and his acceptance of the manifestations of modernism and the importance of the constitutional revolution due to the great influence it had on women's thought, culture, and clothing as an important cultural symbol. It is significant" (Kiyavash and Ashuri, 2018: 88). One of the important factors in the Qajar political and social transformations was the trip of the kings of this dynasty to Europe. Naseruddin Shah's first trip to Europe was in 1873 A.D. Bringing a camera to Iran is one of his important works. In the meantime, Naser al-Din Shah's visit was a quick move towards modernity and the modernization policy of Iran and modernist movements. In the face of Western culture, the traditional structure of Iranian society was challenged and a new social-cultural phenomenon called Westernism or "Fangsati" was born in the Nasrid era.

### ***Semiotics of changes in women's clothes of the Qajar period***

#### *From the reign of Fath Ali Shah to Naser al-Din's first trip to Europe*

During the reign of Fath Ali Shah Qajar, there was relative peace in Iran and a kind of return to the life of ancient Iran occurred in most of the affairs. The traditions of ancient Iran returned to the court and even the king wore a Kiani crown in the manner of the Achaemenid and Sassanid kings (Zaka, 1975: 14). In this period, according to the authors' studies, the inner dress of the women of the Qajar court was very luxurious and glamorous. According to the available documents, when "Lady Ousley" met the wife of the British ambassador, king lady Fath-Ali-Shah, she observed that her scarf and turban were so jewel-like that it caused her problems when she moved (Yar Shater, 2013: 218). In analyzing the clothing of Qajar period women, it is necessary to pay attention to the social class. In this regard, it can be stated that there are always two upper and superior classes, including the king, princes, harem women, courtiers, government employees, high-ranking businessmen and military, and the old and inferior class, including Afshari, who were not included in the first class. They existed in the structure of society (Shariat Panahi, 1992: 111), therefore, the changes and transformations in the design of women's clothing of the upper class over time significantly affected the lower class.

#### ***Underwear***

*Shirt:* Women's clothing in this period included a shirt embroidered with pearls and jewels on the back and two slits in the front, where the navel was visible. This was sometimes attractive and sometimes embarrassing for foreign observers.

The main use of this chuck was to make breastfeeding easier (Yarshater, 2004: 218). According to the presence of this sign in the upper body clothes of Qajar women, it is concluded that they were nursing mothers in this period rather than being recognized as women. The task of having children was so tangible among them that it also appeared in their clothes. In addition, by studying the social status of women in this period, we find out that the importance of a woman among the men of the society was summed up in fertility and feminine characteristics (Figure 1). In such a way that a woman in the Qajar court seemed satisfied with wearing such a dress that was especially for breastfeeding. Pollock mentions in his travelogue that the shirt is a thin fabric made of silk and silk in pink or blue color embroidered with gold borders that is visible from under the clothes and as it reaches the navel, the stomach remains bare and uncovered (Pollock, 1989: 116).



*Arkhalag:* Arkhalag referred to a long coat that women wore over their shirts. Although the arkhalag had a button, women often did not use the button to show their jewelry on the chest and left it open. Its triangular or pear-shaped heads were called "breasts". In the winter season, women wore something similar to today's overcoat called "Kalijeh" and had a collar and a lining made of expensive animal skin (Yavari and Hekak Kashi, 2009: 84). In Arkhalag's design, the characteristic of being free showed that for women, the possibility of freedom of movement in clothes during activities and doing daily tasks was considered very important. In addition, this issue adds to the visual beauty of the said garment. At the end of the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, Pushin Arkhalag was somewhat obsolete.

*Qaba:* During this period, women wore long Qabas on their clothes, which did not have a collar and were open and loose in the front, and were usually worn in two types short and long sleeves. The material of Qaba was generally chosen from velvet and cashmere, which were common fabrics at that time (Dehghani et al. 2017: 9). In examining the signs in this piece of clothing, it can be stated that the current culture of the society still followed the culture of ancient Iran and the influence of the West in women's clothing was not yet visible. In other words, Qaba was influenced by the design of the "tunic" in Achaemenes-era clothing.

*Daman:* The design of the domain in this period was the continuation of its design method in the Zandiye period. with the distinction that women's skirts became much longer than before. so that the edge of the skirt was stretched on the ground and because the length of the skirt prevented the appearance of the pants. Therefore, at this time, trousers lost their importance and their openings became narrower and their ornaments less (Zaka, 1957: 19). Therefore, the preservation of ancient cultural traditions and values is still visible in the clothing of women of this period. In addition, the characteristics of long skirts are well evident even in the design of the court dancers of Fath-Ali-Shah.

*Shawl:* Women's waists were covered with long white or red shawls, the lower edges of which included curved designs, similar to big bushes. A hook that was tied to a shawl. It was made of gold, silver, and jewels. In the first Qajar period, there was always a sign of jewels and gold on the clothes of court women, which itself expressed a significant desire for decorations and wealth in the Qajar court.

*Headcover:* The cover worn by women in the first Qajar period included a lace cloth and a cap. Women wore their hair wavy on the shoulder or back. During this period, women wore sweatbands or half crowns and decorated their hair with jewels or pearls at the end (Yavari and Hakakbashi, 2009: 83). This form of design in the clothing of gentlemen was another evidence of the deep influence of ancient hair styling in previous dynasties. Also, the use of jewels and pearls in the hairstyle was a sign of women's strong interest in representing wealth and wealth in clothing. It is worth mentioning that women sometimes used a thin scarf on the head, which was generally floral and made of expensive fabrics (Figure 2).

### ***Outerwear***

*Chador:* Women in this period of Qajar used to cover their feet with a white chador and a white veil with two holes made of a net. They drew in front of their faces (ibid., 84). According to what was described in Androvin's clothing section. There is a strong contradiction between the inner and outer clothing of women in the Qajar period. This difference in clothing showed the social requirements to show two different faces of women in the family and society.

*Shoes:* In the first period of the Qajar period, women used to wear the same suspension, chamoush, comfortable shoes with pointed back or saghari (backless and heeled shoes) before the





arrival of imported shoes. Sagris were in red, green, and blue colors (Shariat Panahi, 1994: 153). This form of designing and sewing shoes for women showed its simple function for leaving the house and being in the street and Barzon; Because in this day and age, women spend most of their time in the home environment due to the gender perspective of the society and the colorful role of being a wife and mother, and she would leave the house as soon as necessary.

### ***From the journey of Naser-al-Din-Shah Qajar to the reign of Muzaffar-al-Din-Shah***

#### ***Underwear***

*Shirt:* The women's shirt of this period was short and tight, and its material was generally chosen from "gauze" or "muslin" fabric. This shirt with long sleeves and close to the wrist was opened and closed with the help of tiny buttons. In its design, an "Arabic collar" was used, and in addition, the size of the chest pocket was smaller than before (Yavari and Hakakbashi, 2010: 84). Comparing the mentioned features in the women's shirts of this period with the first period of the Qajar rule shows more complexity in its sewing and cutting; Because the decorations have been reduced and the sewing details have been added (Figure 4). Wearing a shirt on the sleeve, the presence of a collar, and a button in the front is a sign of women's focus on hijab and chastity in this period.

*Tunban:* Fabrics made of zari, velvet, cashmere, taffeta, and net were usually used to sew tunban. The width and length of the ester cloth were considered to be three cubits and four cubits, respectively, and they used to put a hem on top of it. The turban band was a narrow and long band that passed through this sheath. By wearing a turban, this band was pulled from the front, which caused the creation of many cases and folds, which were intended in its design. Then a tight knot was tied to the turban strap to hold it well. In those days, although the women's turban was not very wide, it was very thick and wide. In the design of the turban, the characteristic of being hedged and having an umbrella shape was so important that sometimes a spring was used under its lining. Wearing this piece of underwear among women is to cover more, and as it can be understood from its terminology, tunban means "body protector". Wearing tunban among Qajar women was almost abolished in the last years of Naser al-Din Shah's reign.

*Shaliteh:* In that period, in addition to the Ahardar turbans, women wore another short skirt called "Shiliteh". The cultural roots of this piece of clothing go back to Naseruddin Shah's trip to Europe and seeing ballerinas dance. They were wearing a tight and thin knitted shawl and a very short undergarment with a width of a few ways. They danced on tiptoe to the music. The king saw them for the first time and was strongly seduced by this dress, and when he returned from a trip to Europe, he ordered the women of the shrine to dress in this dress (Zaka, 1957: 22). "Mary Shail" also states in her memoirs that Naseruddin Shah's mother, known as "Mehd Alia", Shaliteh Zarbafti wore a very wide dress and each skirt was even wider than European skirts (Dehghani et al. 2017: 10). Among the affluent classes, Shaliteh fabric was chosen from rainbow velvets and soft fabrics; While in the lower classes of the society, the material of the cloth was generally made of white pants or flowered and colored chits. Therefore, it can be concluded that the person of Naser-al-Din-Shah's mother played a significant role in transferring western fashion to the women of nobles and nobles and, accordingly, to other members of the society. Later, when the wearing of the turban among women became obsolete, the shaliteh took its place completely and the women wore it with black pants.

*Pants:* At first, Qajar women wore only shaliteh and tunban. Therefore, a part of their thigh and leg always remains Arab. Later, following the trip of a French businessman and his wife to Tehran, it became common to wear white woven and elastic pants that stuck to the leg due to

tightness and were called "Tengeh Tunban". The length of the legs of these pants was so long that it reached the toes. Therefore, there was no need to wear socks and they wore socks over them only when attending a party or during the winter season (Yavari and Hakakbashi, 2008). The influence of western culture at that time was to such an extent that the presence of European tourists and businessmen and their wives in Iran caused a huge change in fashion. It is worth noting that the mentioned trousers were not common among the women of the lower class of society today, and black trousers similar to men's trousers were used instead.

*Shoes:* During the Nasri period, following the expansion of trade relations with foreign countries and the beginning of importing many goods to Iran, some Zoroastrian and Armenian shopkeepers started European businesses, among them black and shiny leather shoes called "Fundare", which were generally used by The women of nobles and nobles were placed (Shariat Panahi, 1994: 153). This was while women from other classes of society and women from other cities of the country were still using Sagri. Gradually, in the women's clothing of this period, open-toed and high-heeled shoes became common. In addition, wealthy women wore comfortable shoes that had velvet and mahout uppers and were decorated with pearls or vermilion beads.

*Charqad:* In this period, women generally wore charqad indoors. Charqad was a square cloth made of thin and light lace material, which is made into double and triangle shapes. Women used to tighten their clothes under the throat or connect them with the help of a pin. According to a French traveler named "Dalmani", this charqad was a white gauze cloth worn by the late Qajar period, which he did not consider to be similar to priests' bashluq. Wearing charqad indoors was a sign of women's adherence to religious beliefs and the need to maintain hijab even at home.

*Ornaments:* As in the first Qajar period, women in this period, in addition to adorning their hair with face makeup, according to their financial wealth, adorn and adorn such as a crown (formal circles) and half a crown (informal circles) on their heads, and gold ornaments and strings. Pearls were used in a part of the hat or on the forehead and neck. This was a sign of women's strong interest in using all kinds of decorative and generally expensive ornaments, which are considered to be one of the aesthetic standards of that era.

*Bust and waistcoat:* With the abolition of the arkhalq at the end of the reign of Naseruddin Shah, the bust took its place. The bodice had narrow sleeves called "shamshiri" and had no special decoration. It was used to cover the upper body like an arkhaleq, and its collar was Arabic and lapped (Zaka, 1957, 29). This form of torso design was a sign of the reduction of clothing decorations in this period compared to the first Qajar period and the increasing imitation of Western women's clothing designs. The loincloth was a semi-circular and short cloth. Women tie it around their waist; in such a way that its length reaches the back of the leg. It became common to use it among women instead of short turbans and long-leg skirts. Women generally chose fabrics made of velvet, zari, cashmere, and madame satin for the bodice and waistcoat. This tent was fastened at the waist with a pin or button, which includes today's skirts.

## ***Outerwear***

*Tents and tents:* There were several types of prayer tents and tents. The prayer tent was made of chit or canvas, which was used by ordinary women. The material of the nobles' tent was made of velvet, satin, and silk, and its shape was a semi-circular or square cloth that they wore at home. Another tent that ordinary and village women wore outside the house was made of checkered colored canvas, which was called "Chadorshab" and was in blue and red-brown colors. The chador of noble and courtly women had a premium quality and the quality of its fabric

was a sign of the women's social status. The black or purple chador woven in Yazd was popular among the women of nobles and elders, and they were decorated with embroidered golabaton and silver border.

*Chagchur*: It was loose pants with a sewn-on sock attached to them and held up by a sock strap. The color of the chagchur was chosen as purple, sharp blue, and hyena breast, and the women of Seyedah wore green chagchur. While black chagchur was considered more luxurious and modest among women. Because the chador was considered one of the main outer garments of women in the Qajar period and it was in different colors. Therefore, the color component is very important in its semiology. In such a way that the use of dark colors such as brown or black shows more modesty and wealth, and light colors have an informal and everyday function. Another sign that can be identified in the tent as an independent covering was the dominance of religious thought on various aspects of women's lives. In addition, this form of outer covering for the presence of women in the social scene can be a testimony to the power of male thinking and the gender view of women in those days.

*Veil*: The veil was the long and narrow white pitcher that women used to cover their faces in their tents. In the part of the eyes, there was a mesh cloth, the holes of which were sewn with special taste using silk. Sewing it with silk was considered a delicate and difficult work that was done by some women artists and it was a place to provide for their living expenses. Young women rolled up their headscarves in the street and market and kept them on one side of their faces so that they could show part of their beauty. But the old and faithful women covered their whole faces with veils. Raising and throwing the veil behind the head was considered a sign of rudeness and rudeness, as well as a sign of protest in riots and public excitement.

From the middle of Naser-al-Din Shah's reign, attention and imitation of European lifestyle and their clothes had started among Qajar women. In their association with European women living in Tehran, the women of the wealthy class imitated their clothing design and sought a fundamental change in their clothing style. These gradual developments, which continued until the beginning of the constitutional revolution, became more intense after the constitutional revolution. In this way, the components of women's clothing, including shirts, shaliteh, pants, turbans, waist chadors, etc., gave way to long one-piece shirts with varying skirt lengths. Also, instead of arkhalag and bodice, women used coats, gilets, and blouses of European stitching design. It is worth noting that the changes in the choice of clothing fabric were also significant. Cashmere, velvet, net, and silk fabrics gradually gave way to satin crepe, dash in crepe, Val and georgette, etc. Long black pants and trousers are obsolete, and women instead use short t-shirts and long stockings. There was a significant reduction in the length and width of the tents. Young women no longer wore chagchur at all. The veil was also obsolete and instead, it became common to wear a veil.

### ***Qajar period women's clothing as a language***

According to what was mentioned in the theoretical discussions, examining signs and the relationship between them leads us to a correct understanding of language. Based on the definitions presented in Chargob Nari, if we objectively call each piece of women's clothing a signifier and consider any conceptual idea of it as a signified, then we can establish a relationship between the signifier and the signified. In other words, there are two ways to understand the signs and language in women's clothes of this period; The first perspective examines the clothes from the appearance point of view, which observes and describes the clothes symbolically and objectively. In the next look, it is the concept and mental perception of clothes that is taken into consideration, which is called the meaning of clothes. For example, "Shaliteh" is a signifier and

its similarity to the skirts of ballerinas and their influence on the design of this piece of Qajar women's clothing is implied. There is a connection between the objective form of clothing (Dal) and its mental concept (Medalul). This connection creates the signs. Sometimes the signifier and signified do not have a spatial and temporal relationship. They are called "Shamail". Like the image of a dress from the past, which itself is a sign of that era.

Such images are icons belonging to the Qajar period and have semiotic capabilities. Also, sometimes there is a similarity between the signifier and the signified, and one can simply match an objective piece of clothing with its mental concept in terms of similarity, in which case it should be called a "symbol". A tent alone can bring to mind the concept of covering in religion and be a symbol of religious beliefs. Therefore, on the one hand, clothing should be seen as an icon of the past and Qajar era, and on the other hand, it should be defined as a symbol of that era. From the sum of these signs in the pieces of clothing, we can reach a language that can be decoded and represented. The historical language of clothes is always received based on the signs in the images and documents. One of the best documents is the travelogues and memories left by non-Iranian witnesses and tourists who can represent the language of clothing due to a fresh look at the environment.

"Clement Markham" in his book entitled "The History of Iran in the Qajar Period" describes the women's clothing in the second Qajar period, stating that women's clothing in the old days was a silk shirt and a short skirt and a very long undergarment; But now the clothing situation has changed a little and the women of Tehran, like the women of Pars, make new inventions in their clothes every day. Shariat Panahi, quoting the American "Benjamin", writes about the effect of Islam on the clothes of Iranian Qajar women, that it was spectacular when four thousand white heads and veils were seen in the entire circle of support, without a single woman's face being seen. Women in Iran have learned that religion requires them to cover their faces from men. Looking at these descriptions, the language of the Qajar woman's clothing is nothing but that there is such a gap between her inner and outer clothing. In the analysis of pieces of Qajar clothing, this distinction between inner and outer was very significant. What causes this difference is a kind of religious and gender view of women in this period. If we ignore the role of men in society and the harsh view of gender, the Qajar woman herself has played an effective role in choosing this point of view, and this can be seen from the careful design and tailoring of the outer clothing. Religion and its deep influence on the layers of women's lives is an expressive language of these signs; According to the evidence of all the tourists who had traveled to Iran, veiling was not observed even among the women of religious minorities in Iran, including Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. As mentioned earlier, the fashion and changes in clothing made their way from the inside of the court to the outside. "From the beginning, the new dress became common among princesses, noble women, and then among others."

Considering the analysis of the clothing components and the influence of the women of the society from the court, whether in the first period, when the impressive decoration of the clothes and transformations is visible or in the second period, we witness the changes and transformations of the clothing towards westernization, the clothing is considered as a single language of the signs... Women's clothing in this period can recreate the political, social, and cultural situation of Iran. Looking at the different social classes of the Qajar era, it is important to note that the language of clothing women can express the type of their social class; As mentioned in the analysis of the pieces of clothing. For example, in the type of cloth, not everyone had the same right to choose, and the fabrics used by the lower and upper classes were different from each other. This article also applies to the tent. Therefore, the type of fabrics and even their color is considered a social language. Based on the presented interpretations, women's clothing during



the ups and downs of the Qajar era can be considered something that can be deciphered.

### **Conclusion**

As mentioned earlier in this article, the current research based on the methods of semiotics and linguistics and relying on the opinions of theorists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, and Wolfgang Bruckner, seeks to analyze the clothes of Qajar period women and read its components. It was cultural and symbolic of that era. Also, the basic question in this research was whether it is possible to call the clothes of Qajar period women a language. If their cover is considered a language from that time. The signs in each piece of clothing in the form of a language contain messages and what they mean. According to what was stated in detail in this article, the ups and downs of the Qajar kings' rule over Iran and the set of measures that marked the political, social, economic, and cultural developments of that era. There were also differences between the mentioned kings in governance and especially cultural policies. So that Fath-Ali-Shah Qajar's strong interest in returning to the values and culture of ancient Iran caused that despite the presence of Europeans in his court and the beginning of political relations with Western governments, the signs in the inner and outer clothing of women in that period continued. They testify to the preservation of ancient values and are full of luxury and use of decorative elements such as precious stones, pearls, gold and jewels in the style of court ladies' clothing designs in the past. While during the reign of Naser-al-Din-Shah, due to the long period of the kingdom and his acceptance of the manifestations of modernism and his trip to Europe, a rapid movement towards modernity and the policy of modernization of Iran and modernist movements took place. Following Naser-al-Din-Shah's trip to Europe and his visit to the performance of Russian ballerinas, profound changes took place in the design of court women's undergarments at Shah's command, which eventually influenced the clothing of women of the upper classes such as the nobles and the lower classes of the society... This process continued until the end of the Qajar period. As far as during the reign of Ahmad Shah Qajar, it was customary to design women's clothes in a completely European style among different classes of society. The semiotics of the components of women's inner and outer clothing in the Qajar period indicates that the distinction between inner and outer clothing is very significant; In such a way that the inner clothing was more influenced by the cultural and social developments of its time than the outer clothing. In a general view of the analysis of the pieces of clothing of the mentioned period, one of the important points is that from the reign of Naser-al-Din-Shah to the end of the Qajar period, the number of women's clothing components more than the first Qajar period; While during the reign of Fath-Ali-Shah, we are faced with more decorations on clothes, and this itself reveals to us the importance of designing and sewing clothes during the era of Naser-al-Din-Shah. The clothes of women of the Qajar period can be considered a single language of signs, which is a reflection of the political, social, and cultural situation of Iran at that time. In deciphering this language, concepts such as women's attention to religious beliefs and the need to preserve Islamic rituals, gender inequality, and the patriarchal and restrictive view of women's presence in society, valuing the ancient traditions of Iran and at the same time the desire to move towards westernization and the manifestations of European fashion are deduced. The results of the above concepts consider Qajar as a labyrinth of roles, colors, codes, signs, symbols, and finally a language for wider studies. The suggestion of the authors in this research is to have a practical look at the category of clothing linguistics. As clothing speaks of its time as a single language in such a deep and meaningful way, it can be considered a very valuable component in historical and social research. In addition, based on the results of such research, clothing designers in the present era should pay much attention to the linguistic function of clothing and look at clothing as a historical and expressive language document for future generations.





Fig. 1: Women's shirt and dress, modeling based on a lady's painting from the reign of Fath-Ali-Shah (Source: International Women's Association of Iran)



Fig. 3: Qajar women's shoes (source: Museum of Anthropology of Iran)



Fig. 2: Qaba Irq Chin shirt and head covering in women's clothes of the first period of Qajar (Source: Behdekhht site)



Fig. 5: Qajar women's clothing with shaleiteh and charqad, (source: Iran Institute of Contemporary History Studies)



Fig. 4: Naser-al-Din-Shah's daughter (source: Iran Institute of Contemporary History Studies)



Fig. 6: Qajar women with shaliteh pants, waist chador, and shoes (Source: Golestan Palace Photo Gallery Museum)



Fig. 7: The women of the Qajar court with the maqat charqad (Golestan Palace Photo Gallery Museum)



Fig. 9: Qajar women's chador, chagchur, and headscarf (source: Iranian Institute of Contemporary History Studies)



Fig. 8: Bust and waist veil in Qajar woman's clothing (Source: Iran Institute of Contemporary History Studies)

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