
OBJECT, SIGN, TEXT

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FARANJI: BACK TO THE ORIGIN AND USAGE OF THE OBJECT AND HISTORY OF THE TERM

Put together Central Asian miniature of the 15th—16th centuries, archaeological monuments, documentary data available, as well as collections of the MAE RAS make it possible to get significant material able to clarify some peculiarities on the history of the women's *faranji* head cover, which is one of the most well known and yet very little studied attribute of the women's costume of the Muslim population of Central Asia. Current publication tries to trace some aspects of the origin and formation of its prototypes, as well as their gradual transformation into the discussed head covers.

In regards to its form and function *faranji* is a long robe-like cloak thrown over a headdress by women, when the latter leave their house going outdoors. The cloak is long, and completely covering the figure, and is used together with a made of horse hair *chachwan* face net (fig. 1). Nowadays, similarly to the *chadurs* of the Iranians, and the *chatri* of the Afghan women, it is accepted as a symbol of women's seclusion and a marker of its owner belonging to the Muslim world. However, judging from the literature and representative sources, even two hundred years ago wearing of the *faranji* was not obligatory, while the history of its origin in the early stages of usage is described rather fragmentary [1].

Most of the European collections of Central Asian textiles show us fabulously bright and beautiful items, thus looking at them and the 15th—16th centuries miniature (fig. 2), one may assume that even back in the 19th century the streets of Bukhara and Samarqand looked like a designer's studio of high fashion. In reality the everyday outdoor attire of local population was made — and is still made — from the fabrics, which are strictly regulated according to colour and pattern and is always modest (fig. 3).

The described picture concerns *faranji* as well, which, judging by the sources, right up to the 19th century were made of dark blue *alacha*, and were not decorated. In all likelihood it was defined by the fact that *faranji* was mainly used by women from the clergy families, who were obliged to be modest in manners and outlook, and who until recent times often originated

from the native Arabic countries [2]. From the second half of the 19th century *faranji* gradually becomes an attribute of Muslim townswomen's costume. Broadening of the circle of “users” inevitably led to gradual decline of the cloak's status and, together with that, of the choice of materials for their making. Thus, beginning from the second half of the 19th century they were often produced from elegant — yet modest in colour — *misri* (“Egyptian”) or *nukrakhub* (“forged silver”) semi-silk [3], named for the silver tint of its blue-white shades (fig. 4) [4]. At the end of the 19th century the situation changed even more, and now *faranji* were sometimes made of single-colour silk or velvet, while cloaks for girls could well be manufactured of bright red velvet (fig. 5). It also should be noted that *faranji* cotton lining was often made of bright calico of Russian manufacture [5]; from the inside their skirts and front hems were fringed with diagonally-cut bands of striped rainbow-looking *adras* semi-silk, whereas from the outside all the edges were finished with ornamented *jiyak* silk stripe (figs. 4, 5).

The manner of wearing of the *faranji* and the way it was treated had definite peculiarities known to every Central Asian girl from her childhood, but oftentimes not clear to us today. Thus, entering the house women will carelessly put their cloaks somewhere in the corner; or could sit on them while visiting their friends and relatives; when torn the holes could be patched by different in colour pieces of cloth, etc. [6]. Besides, it was prohibited to wear *faranji* inside the habitable rooms: according to O. A. Sukhareva's information the cloak had to be taken off in the inner court of a house [7], while the *chachwan* face net had to be put on only at the threshold of the exit doors. The official reason for that was the idea that the black colour of the net could bring miseries to the inhabitants of the house. Thereat, in the course of a wedding bride put on a white face cover since she had to enter the house of her bridegroom in *faranji*, which forced out traditional for some centres rectangular mantle and / or shawls. (Let us note that at present rectangular mantle returned as part of bride's attire, for instance in Samarqand). It is also known that women never made