

IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR BALUCH WOMEN'S ATTIRE IN SISTAN: AN EMPHASIS ON ANCIENT BACKGROUND AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract: The traditional attire worn by Baluch women in the Sistan region has evolved in response to the geographical conditions, encompassing cultural, social, economic, and natural factors, spanning extended historical periods. Adaptations have emerged with technological advancements over time. This distinctive clothing not only serves as a key element of identity but also stands as a representative expression of the authentic Baluch ethnicity. Rooted in the historical antiquity of the Sistan region, the dressing culture of Baluch women exhibits unique characteristics and features, shaped by diverse developments across cultural, social, historical, and climatic dimensions from ancient times to the present day. Hence, considering historical precedents and current conditions, this paper aims to scrutinize the attire of Baluch women in Sistan, specifically emphasizing the ancient background and cultural identity. The objective is to discern strategic priorities and glean insights from Baluch women in Zabol regarding the criteria guiding the selection of dress types and overall decision-making processes pertaining to the cultural aspects of women's attire, through a comparative analysis of the past and present. The central research question is formulated as follows: What constitute the most important selection criteria for Baluch women's dresses in Sistan, with a focus on ancient background and cultural identity? The research methodology employed is descriptive-analytical, relying on documentary, library studies, and field surveys. Additionally, the analysis utilized the Analytic Network Process (ANP) model, breaking down the data into 3 clusters (groups) and 9 sub-groups (nodes). The findings reveal that, in the analysis of Baluch women's dresses, the node "Compatible with traditional culture" (0.708) within the "Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City" cluster, the node "Stemming from neighboring lands" (0.668) within the "Traditional Attire" cluster, and the node "Adhering to Sistan traditional culture" (0.525) within the "Modern Attire" cluster, have been assigned higher priority compared to alternative options. These results hold significance for decision-makers, planners, and officials involved in cultural matters, providing valuable insights for prioritizing strategies concerning women's dresses. Implementing these insights can contribute to the preservation and safeguarding of Iran's indigenous and traditional culture.

Keywords: Attire, Baluch Women, Archaeology, Sistan, Zabol City.

چکیده: لباس زنان بلوچ منطقه‌ی سیستان، طی دوره‌های متمادی تاریخی از شرایط جغرافیایی محیط انسانی (فرهنگی، اجتماعی، اقتصادی و ...) و محیط طبیعی تبعیت نموده است، با گذشت زمان و تحولات فن‌آوری، تغییراتی داشته است. این لباس بخشی از هویت و معرف قوم اصیل بلوچ است، با توجه به قدمت تاریخی منطقه‌ی سیستان و بر اساس تحولات مختلف در عرصه‌های گوناگون فرهنگی، اجتماعی، تاریخی و اقلیمی از دوره باستان تاکنون، فرهنگ لباس زنان بلوچ منطقه‌ی سیستان دارای مشخصه‌ها و ویژگی‌های منحصر به فردی است. از این رو، با توجه به سوابق گذشته و شرایط کنونی، هدف مقاله حاضر، بررسی لباس زنان بلوچ سیستانی با تأکید بر پیشینه و هویت باستانی جهت تعیین اولویت‌های راهبردی و اخذ دیدگاه‌های زنان بلوچ شهر زابل نسبت به معیارهای گزینشی نوع لباس و بطورکلی تصمیم‌گیری در خصوص مسائل فرهنگ لباس زنان در تطبیق گذشته با حال است. روش تحقیق توصیفی - تحلیلی و مبتنی بر مطالعات اسنادی، کتابخانه‌ای و بررسی‌های میدانی است همچنین با استفاده از مدل ANP، ۳ خوشه (گروه) و ۹ زیرگروه (نود) مورد تحلیل قرار گرفتند. نتایج نشان می‌دهد، نود «متناسب با فرهنگ سنتی» (۰.۷۰۸) از خوشه «انتخاب زنان بلوچ شهر زابل»، نود «منبع از سرزمین‌های همجوار» (۰.۶۶۸) از خوشه «پوشش سنتی»، و نود «تابع فرهنگ سنتی سیستان» (۰.۵۲۵) از خوشه «پوشش جدید»، در اولویت انتخاب، نسبت به سایر گزینه‌ها در تحلیل وضعیت لباس زنان بلوچ قرار گرفته‌اند، این نتایج برای تصمیم‌گیران، برنامه ریزان و مدیران مرتبط با مسائل فرهنگی می‌تواند در تخصیص اولویت‌بندی‌ها و راهبردهای لباس زنان جهت حفظ و صیانت از فرهنگ بومی و سنتی ایران مورد توجه قرار گیرد.

کلیدواژه: لباس، زنان بلوچ، باستان‌شناسی، سیستان، شهر زابل.

I. Introduction

Apparel across the globe is influenced by the geographical conditions of the human environment, encompassing cultural, social, economic, and neighboring factors, as well as the natural environment. The attire worn by Baluch women in the Sistan region reflects a millennia-long continuity of cultural identity. Rooted in the historical antiquity of the Sistan region and shaped by diverse developments in both human and natural landscapes from ancient times to the present,

the clothing culture of Baluch women in the Sistan region boasts distinctive characteristics, authenticity, and notable features.

The significance of Baluch women's attire remains steadfast even in the face of contemporary cultural shifts and global interconnectedness. Its enduring uniqueness and distinct identity highlight the need for scholarly investigation to safeguard, preserve, and elevate the role of Baluch women's clothing across various dimensions, encompassing techniques, designs,

patterns, and more. This initiative is crucial not only for preserving cultural heritage but also for fostering its role as a cultural reservoir in the creation and advancement of Iranian-Islamic clothing on the global stage.

Relying on archaeological data and historical insights, this study delves into the evolution of women's clothing in the Sistan region. Given that Zabol serves as the focal point of the Sistan region, boasting a population of approximately 500,000 (half a million) residing within a radius of about 50 kilometers around Zabol, encompassing seven cities and 900 villages, the research specifically addresses the state of Baluch women's clothing. Employing the "Analytic Network Process (ANP)" model with active female participation, this article aims to analyze and prioritize aspects, particularly focusing on the present scenario in Zabol. The utilization of this model facilitates strategic decision-making. By scrutinizing the current status, especially in Zabol, and involving women significantly, the research seeks to establish a comprehensive understanding before any substantial alterations to the cultural fabric of Sistani Baluch women's clothing, emphasizing the importance of a thorough examination and a form of "pathology."

II. Methodology

Considering the expansive scope of the Sistan region and the extensive workload involved, the research focused exclusively on Zabol City during the years 2020 and 2021. The research methodology adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, relying on documentary, library, and field survey studies conducted within Zabol. Cluster and multi-stage sampling methods, as outlined (Hafeznia, 2000: 109), were employed to administer questionnaires and gather data, allowing for the weighting of criteria and indicators. This approach proves more suitable considering the extensive geographical spread (horizontal expansion of Zabol City) of the units under analysis, coupled with the absence of a statistical population framework. Following a pilot phase to establish questionnaire reliability, 250 questionnaires were distributed, completed, and subsequently input into the computer after the completion of methodological steps. It is noteworthy that, aligning with the research focus and, more significantly, the evolving status of criteria and indicators over time, the ANP model facilitates the scientific extraction of priorities. Given the intricate and voluminous nature of calculations involved, the Super Decisions software was employed. The weighting of criteria and indicators in the ANP model is determined based on the output derived from field survey data at the Zabol City level, utilizing a numerical range of 1 to 9 within the ANP model.

III. Review of Literature

This section emphasizes studies that delve into the historical, identity, and distinctive facets associated with Baluch women's clothing. In a study conducted by Keshavarz and Javadi (2019), the primary objective was to identify the aesthetic elements of Baluch embroidery, recognized as the foremost indigenous art in the Baluchestan region, and to extract its key components. The findings of their research revealed that geometric patterns constitute the most crucial shared aspect of this art. Moreover, symbolic abstraction emerged as the paramount aesthetic feature of Baluch embroidery art (Keshavarz & Javadi, 2019: 5). Pourheydari and Sabet (2019) explored the feasibility of a novel venture within the realm of traditional Baluch clothing, adopting an innovative approach. They identified the traditional embroidery of the Baluchestan region as a potential avenue for fostering home businesses (Pourheydari & Sabet, 2019: 1). In a study conducted by Mounesi Sorkkeh (2017), the examination of clothing's role as a manifestation of cultural identity and the exploration of components within Iranian clothing were paramount. The study aimed to reconstruct Iranian clothing and proposed solutions for revitalizing it following transformations prompted by external influences. The research findings indicate that the role of design, color, texture, and decorations in clothing extends beyond mere aesthetics; it contributes to the preservation of human dignity. Moreover, these elements align with native and national ideologies, harmonize with temporal and spatial conditions, and exhibit cohesion with the representational values found in traditional Iranian arts (Mounesi Sorkkeh, 2017: 107).

In a study conducted by Hashemi Nia (2017), a detailed examination of the distinctive embroidery of Baluch women was undertaken. Employing a comparative method based on description and analysis, the research delves into the historical, cultural, and authentic significance of carpet designs, patterns, and other similar handmade fabrics within the same region. The comparison results lead to the advocacy for the preservation of this art, emphasizing the meaningful embroidery and carpet patterns (Hashemi Nia, 2017: 1). In an anthropological study by Javahari (2017), examples of indigenous clothing for women and girls are identified and introduced as a cultural asset among the Baluch and Turkmen ethnic groups, presented in pictorial form. The research findings reveal that these patterns can contribute significantly to the admirable objective of fostering greater interest among young women and girls in Iranian-Islamic dressing (Javahari, 2017: 1). In a study conducted by Paidar (2016), the primary objective was to identify and prioritize the factors contributing to the decline of Baluch handicrafts and arts in the rural areas of Qasrqand County. The research highlighted that the villages in question possess

substantial capabilities and capacities in handicrafts. However, the effective management of the supply and sale of their products encounters fundamental barriers (Paidar, 2016: 215).

Yasini (2016) conducted a sociological-aesthetic evaluation of traditional women's clothing in the desert areas of Iran, with a specific focus on the cultural and natural climate. The study considered four fundamental components - "geography, culture, religion, and occupation" - in analyzing the various types of clothing. The results underscored that the primary influential factor shaping the form, design, and texture of women's clothing in Iran's desert areas is the natural climate, followed by cultural geography. Additionally, religion and occupation were identified as significant variables, each ranking subsequently after the first two components (Yasini, 2016: 163). Furthermore, Yasini (2016) conducted a study investigating traditional women's clothing within the cultural geography of Iran. Drawing upon scholars' perspectives on fashion, tradition, and identity, the aim was to identify indicators and characteristics of authentic Iranian women's clothing. Employing inductive and comparative methods, Yasini examined women's traditional clothing in four countries - Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan. Through this approach, he elucidated the distinctive features of women's clothing in these regions, seeking to identify components integral to authentic Iranian women's clothing (Yasini, 2017: 53). Mousavi Haji et al. (2014) introduced and analyzed the clothing of Baluch men and women. The research revealed that Baluch local clothing is intricately linked to their way of life. The presentation of Baluch people through their clothing serves as a clear testament to their identity as one of the indigenous Iranian ethnic groups (Mousavi Haji et al., 2014: 179). Nazari et al. (2015) aimed to investigate the relationship between motifs in Kulporgan pottery art and Baluch embroidery, both drawing from a common cultural context. The study delved into the similarities and potential differences between these two forms of art. The findings indicated that both arts share common features such as the presence of geometric patterns with abstract and symbolic expressions inspired by nature and Baluch beliefs, as well as simple and composite patterns. Additionally, there is a parallel structure in the naming and selection of patterns based on the natural phenomena of Baluchestan (Nazari et al., 2015: 31). Ghasemi et al. (2014) sought to elucidate and showcase Baluch embroidery art, specifically focusing on the communicative aspects of its pattern structure intertwined with natural elements. The outcomes of their investigation unveiled that Baluch embroiderers, in crafting natural patterns, not only considered aesthetic harmonies and their surroundings but also pondered over their functional utility in accordance with the

geometric design style (Ghasemi et al., 2014: 61). In a study conducted by Khamooshi (2008), an examination of the traditional embroideries of two ancient Iranian ethnic groups, Baluch and Turkmen, highlighted the distinctions and resemblances in the application of traditional and contemporary ornaments in the embroideries of these ethnic groups (Khamooshi, 2008: 73). Experiences and historical context demonstrate a prevailing emphasis in most research on conserving the identity values embedded within cultural artifacts, particularly in the realm of Baluch women's clothing.

IV. Theoretical Principles

In this section, the content is succinctly outlined in light of the chosen subject, case study, and selected model. Due to the necessity of elucidating the status of Baluch women's clothing in both the broader Sistan region and the specific context of Zabol, the historical evolution of women's clothing in the Sistan region is initially explored, followed by an examination of the present situation in Zabol.

Historical Record of Women's Clothing in Sistan Region According to Archaeological Studies

The historic land of Sistan, with its illustrious civilizational legacy, has significantly contributed to the inception and advancement of culture and civilization in Iran. Abundant ancient artifacts, particularly the *Shahr-I Sokhta* of Sistan (circa 3200 years BC), stand as crucial archaeological evidence shedding light on the styles of women's clothing in this region for researchers.

The *Shahr-i Sokhta* harbors valuable artifacts that facilitate a relatively accurate reconstruction of the economic, social, and cultural milieu of the region. Situated along trade routes, the city exerted influence on and engaged in interactions with neighboring areas. Its trade and cultural ties extended to northern neighbors, such as the Namazgah culture in southern Turkmenistan, and eastern and southern counterparts like Bampur in Iranian Baluchestan and Miri Kalat in Pakistan, thus illustrating these interconnected relationships (Jahanbakhsh et al., 2018: 30). Regarding the attire worn by women in the *Shahr-I Sokhta* of Sistan during the 4th and 3rd millennia BC, archaeologists analyze the available data and evidence. In this context, the initial series of studies scrutinizes the unearthed clay and metal figurines and statues, which offer valuable insights into this aspect.

Research on figurines excavated from the *Shahr-I Sokhta* indicates that women's attire during that period was extensive, covering a significant portion of their bodies. Among the noteworthy discoveries in this realm is a bronze figurine depicting a woman, discovered within the *Shahr-I Sokhta* archaeological site. This depiction portrays a standing woman, her right hand gently positioned beneath her left breast, while her left hand securely holds a vessel atop her head. The woman

is adorned in a modest yet snug dress that extends to her knees, as illustrated in Figure 1. The lengthy, form-fitting garment lacks the typical soft texture associated with conventional fabrics. The presence of a ring encircling the woman's neck raises ambiguity regarding whether it constitutes the upper segment of her dress or serves as a slender collar (Tozi, 2006: 643, 654). An additional instance is represented by a standing female figurine measuring 4 centimeters in height, adorned with petite decorative tassels that extend down to the figurine's knees (Seyed Sajadi, 2004: 42). These embellishments are meticulously arranged in three distinct rows, demarcated by a belt, bearing a striking resemblance to contemporary artistic practices in Baluchestan, specifically the tassel embroidery found on women's aprons (Yaqubi, 2013: 170). Refer to Figure 2 for a visual depiction of the attire worn by this figurine.

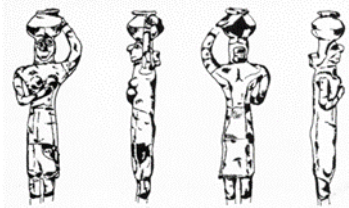


Figure 1: Bronze figurine of a woman in full attire, discovered in the Shahr-I Sokhta (Tozi, 2007: 666).



Figure 2: Clay figurine of a woman adorned with bead decorations, found in the Shahr-I Sokhta (Shirazi, 2007: 155).

Ancient artifacts discovered by archaeological teams on the Iranian plateau and in ancient India suggest a history of close ties and ongoing trade exchanges between the inhabitants of Iran and India from ancient times (Nurinezhad & Talebpoor, 2015: 162). Cultures are not isolated systems devoid of interaction with the external world; instead, they are perpetually engaged in interactions with other cultures. This interaction takes place within the context of economic or political relationships between various regions. The evolution of women's clothing in different periods in Iran has been shaped by the attire of both dominant and subordinate cultures (Babaei & Akbari, 2014: 245). It appears that the *Shahr-I Sokhta* represented a multicultural society, a characteristic inferred from the examination of artifacts retrieved from its burial sites. The racial, cultural, and civilizational attributes discerned from these burial sites affirm that the residents of the *Shahr-I Sokhta* originated from diverse locations (Seyed Sajadi, 2004: 45). Presently, the attire of Baluch women bears a significant

resemblance to clothing styles prevalent in the Indian subcontinent, particularly in Pakistan. In essence, it is noteworthy that the limited communication routes and the absence of mass media (in the past) between the Sistan region and inland Iran have exposed this area to the material and spiritual aspects of Indian culture (Moeidfar & Shohli Bor, 2007: 196). The hems of women's attire in Sistan and Baluchestan are embellished with intricate mirror work, embroidery, and vividly sewn strips. Moreover, the adorning of garments with beads, coins, and tassels constitutes another decorative technique that enhances their unique beauty and allure (Yasini, 2016: 185). Within a collection of prehistoric clay figurines excavated from Baluchestan, this particular figurine stands out as a notable representation of the mother goddess, particularly noteworthy for its attire (Zaboli Nezhad, 2009: 38). As depicted in Figures 3 and 4, the present-day fashion of women's clothing in Sistan, influenced by neighboring regions and adorned with intricate details, closely mirrors the tassel embroidery observed on the clothing of the figurine.

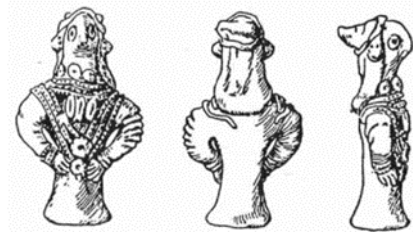


Figure 3: Clay figurine with bead-adorned dress, originating from prehistoric Baluchestan (Zaboli Nezhad, 2009: 36).



Figure 4: Illustration of Sistani women's attire, reflecting influences from neighboring lands (Pakistan and India) and featuring beads, at the central bazaar of Zabol City (Author: 2021).

Several archaeological reports highlight intriguing facets of the affluent clothing culture in this region. An additional illustration is the stone statue portraying a woman attired in a Saree, discovered in the *Shahr-I Sokhta* (Figs. 5 and 6). The configuration of this woman's garment closely mirrors the traditional Indian women's attire, specifically the "Saree." Additionally, the woman has elegantly draped a shawl or a scarf over her shoulders.

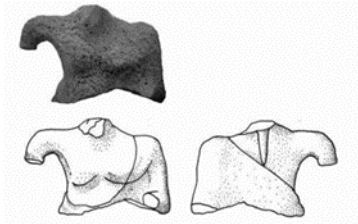


Figure 5: Stone figurine of a woman wearing a Sari, crafted from soapstone, excavated from the Shahr-I Sokhta (Vidale, 2018: 112 & Moradgholi, and Srivastav, 2018: 64782).



Figure 6: Reconstruction of a woman wearing a Sari stone figurine from Shahr-I Sokhta, showcasing a dress reminiscent of Indian women's attire (Moradgholi and Srivastav, 2018: 64782).

Another series of studies involves anthropological research focusing on the physical dimensions, height, stature, corpulence, and slimness of the individuals in that society. The aim is to develop models of the clothing worn by the inhabitants of the *Shahr-I Sokhta*. Additionally, meticulous attention is paid to various pieces of unearthed fabrics, with efforts directed towards identifying clothing components and their adornments—a crucial aspect in determining the nature of the attire. Recent research has unveiled an intriguing revelation: a substantial number of garments and textile tools utilized by the residents of the *Shahr-I Sokhta* bear striking resemblances to contemporary clothing and textile implements (Seyed Sajadi et al., 2009: 4-5).

The ancient city of *Shahr-I Sokhta* stands as one of the most crucial archaeological sites in Iran, housing a valuable assortment of prehistoric and early historical textiles. Through a meticulous series of comprehensive anthropological studies and attentive examination of various fabric fragments, the reconstructed clothing closely aligns with the authentic characteristics of that society. This alignment encompasses not only the fabric types but also reflects the physical dimensions, appearance, and physique of the people from that historical period. An intriguing observation discerned from these studies is the comprehensive nature of women's attire during that era, encompassing and concealing a significant part of their bodies. Notably, within the ornate embellishments adorning textiles from the *Shahr-I Sokhta*, likely components of upper garments, the utilization of decorative tassels is noteworthy on depictions of female figurines. In areas of the fabric weave exhibiting greater strength relative to others, discernible along the edges are meticulously incorporated additions. These additions, manually

inserted and sewn, serve the dual purpose of averting the unraveling of warp and weft threads and enhancing the aesthetic allure of the fabric. Figure 7 presents a model illustrating the application of these textiles. This depiction is informed by anthropological investigations conducted on human remains extracted from the *Shahr-I Sokhta* cemetery, allowing for the determination of the physical attributes and dimensions of the city's inhabitants (Seyed Sajadi et al., 2009: 4, 25, 31).



Figure 7: Analysis of clothing culture among the people of the Shahr-I Sokhta through technical examination of unearthed fabrics, with models based on female figurines (Seyed Sajadi et al., 2009: 36).

Archaeological research undertaken in the *Shahr-I Sokhta* reveals that women adhered to the prevailing fashion of the era and placed significant emphasis on adorning themselves with makeup, incorporating decorative elements in their clothing, and wearing jewelry.

V. The Present Attire Worn by Baluch Women in Zabol

The cultural manifestation of Baluch women's attire in the Sistan region reflects a systematic historical evolution steeped in their artistic preferences. The continuity between some contemporary clothing and the historical identity of the land is evident. In times past, the entirety of women's shirts bore intricate embroidery. However, in the present day, owing to the intricacy and complexity of the patterns, embroidery is reserved for three specific pieces of women's shirts, with the upper piece commonly referred to as "zi" or "ziq," signifying the collar. The pocket segment of a garment is referred to as "gofan" or "guptan," while the wrist cuff is known as "astinak" (Mohammadi Seif, 2015: 62). Illustrated in Figures 8 and 9 is the overarching design of Baluch women's shirts in the Sistan region, showcasing intricate embroidery adorning the collar, pocket of the garment ("guptan"), wrist cuff, and trouser hems. Presently, the art of embroidery in Baluchistan, commonly recognized as "Baluch needlework," thrives as a decorative-practical craft. Beyond the aesthetic appeal of its patterns and colors, Baluch embroidery also contributes to the fabric's resilience and durability. Baluch embroidery designs

exhibit a diverse array, drawing inspiration from nature and the imaginative ingenuity of Baluch women, often incorporating geometric shapes. In their artistic endeavors, Baluch women have strategically selected areas of a garment or fabric with optimal visibility to showcase their designs, demonstrating a deliberate approach to highlighting the embroidery (Nazari et al., 2015: 43 and 39).



Figure 8: Exemplification of Baluch girls' attire adorned with intricate embroideries on the collar, "guptan" dress pocket, sleeve cuff, and trouser leg ends, from the Sistan region, Zabol City (Author: 2021).



Figure 9: Overview of the design of Baluch women's shirts with embroidery, as per corrections made by the author (Yavari, 2014: 61).

The embroidered elements are meticulously affixed to the garment, enveloping the unstructured square-shaped upper body entirely (Mohammadi Seif, 2014: 62). Despite numerous transformations in the attire of urban Iranian ethnic communities over the last century, the cultural ethos of the Baluchestan region, encompassing Sistan, persists. Even in urban settings, members of this ethnic group continue to demonstrate a dedicated commitment to donning their traditional clothing, underscoring the enduring significance of their cultural heritage (Keshavarz & Javadi, 2019: 14). A noteworthy aspect of Baluch women's attire in Sistan is the prominent display of handicrafts, notably embroidery, Yaraghdoozi, and blackwork, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the clothing (Omran Nasab, 2007: 120). This tradition has endured across various historical epochs, evident in the present day where such characteristics, along with others outlined below, are observable in the central bazaar of Zabol City.

A) It has been influenced by neighboring regions such as Iranian, Pakistani, and Indian Baluchestan.

B) The traditional hand-embroidered garments, renowned for their exceptional quality, command significantly higher prices compared to typical attire in Iran, with the current price range (2020) starting from 25 million Rials and above.

C) Conversely, the traditional machine-embroidered garments (e.g., those produced by the machine industries of Yazd province) exhibit lower quality in comparison to their hand-embroidered counterparts but are more budget-friendly, with the current price range (2020) starting from 5.2 million Rials and above. Figure 10 depicts an example of Baluch girls' attire available in the central bazaar of Zabol city in 2021.



Figure 10: Illustration of Baluch girls' dresses, observed at the central bazaar of Zabol City (Author: 2021).

prominence, with historical records indicating their residence in the small village of Khajeh Ahmad beside the Sistan River (Tate, 1985: 179). The dispersion of the Naroei tribe has led to diverse considerations regarding their original homeland, including the Barez mountains, the Naroei mountains of Khash, the Bampur region, and Sistan itself (Ebrahimzadeh, 2009: 247). The "Sanjarani" tribe inhabits the villages of Dostmohammad in the Miyankangi district, Ghalehno in the Shahraki district, and Naroei in Sistan (Afshar Sistani, 1991: 449, 487). The "Saravani" tribe, originating from Saravan in Baluchestan, has established their residence in Hoseinabad, an ancient and foundational area in Zabol City, following their migration (Ebrahimzadeh, 2009: 250). The elders of the "Saravani" tribe trace their roots back to Saravan in Baluchestan. Their migration was prompted by an ethnic conflict and a power struggle, compelling them to move under the leadership of an individual named Haj Malek. Their journey took them first to India (present-day Pakistan), then to Afghanistan, ultimately settling in Sistan (Raeis Al-Zakerin Dehbani, 2009: 68). The "Barahoei" tribe, known for their stronghold in the villages of Lutak, Sekuhe, and various other regions of Sistan, held considerable influence throughout Sistan and Baluchestan from ancient times until the end of the Qajar era. Similarly, the "Gorgich" tribe resides in villages such as Malek Heydari, Lutak, and other locales across Sistan (Afshar Sistani, 1991: 293, 471). A

significant observation lies in the settlement of Baluch tribes in the Sistan region, reflecting their dispersion. In authentic Baluch embroidery designs, distinct variations in form and color usage across regions have resulted in the southern areas of Baluchestan exhibiting more intricate embroidery patterns and vibrant, lively colors,

whereas the northern and eastern regions feature simpler patterns and softer hues (Nazari et al., 2015: 32). This distinction is aptly manifested in the embroideries adorning the clothing of Baluch women in the Sistan region, particularly in Zabol City.



Figure 11: Exemplars showcasing the utilization of colors, shapes, and intricate textures in the embroidery of Baluch women's attires (Author: 2021).

This art predominantly employs geometric shapes characterized by sharp corners, with triangular forms being the most prevalent. Baluch embroidery is renowned for creating a dense, intricate, and diverse texture through the repetitive use of visual elements, exemplified by numerous instances. In essence, the visual culture of Baluch women's clothing embroidery is distinguished by a high volume of ornaments, intricate patterns, and meticulous attention to small details, emphasizing delicacy (Fereydonzadeh et al., 2019: 73). Figure 11 illustrates examples of the vibrant colors, geometric shapes, and intricate, delicate textures employed in Baluch women's clothing embroidery.

Today, due to urban development, coats, pants, and black chadors have become commonplace among women; however, traditional clothing still holds sway in the majority of Sistan (Yaghoubi, 2013: 173). In such circumstances, the Baluch people's steadfastness toward their traditional attire and the art of embroidery is immensely valuable. By identifying and promoting the most pivotal cultural aspect of the Baluch as an ethnic and cultural emblem, there is hope for the perpetuation of this cultural and ethnic bond amid the influence of dominant cultures. Art and handicrafts stand as the foremost visual expressions of a society's culture, and their preservation offers one of the optimal means for safeguarding cultural identity (Keshavarz & Javadi, 2016: 15). Given the significance of comprehending the

clothing preferences of Baluch women in Zabol City for decision-makers, planners, and managers involved in various cultural sectors, this article deems it imperative to introduce a suitable model—the ANP model.

VI. Results

In the current investigation, the model has been meticulously designed utilizing the Analytic Network Process (ANP) framework. This design takes into account the structure of the ANP process, considering both the data type and content, as well as the intricate interrelationships among all criteria and options, as illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 12. The selection of the three primary criteria, organized into clusters, is informed by the status of available data and the essential alignment required with the numerical matrix and network calculations. It is imperative that the data type is compatible with the ANP analysis, emphasizing the need for a cohesive integration with the model. Consequently, the three main criteria identified are:

A) Traditional Attire: Derived from the rich historical tapestry of the Sistan region and adjacent territories such as Iranian, Pakistani, and Indian Baluchestan.

B) Modern Attire: Reflecting the "present," it is an amalgamation of Sistan's traditional culture, Iran's overarching cultural influences, the cultural tapestry of

neighboring lands, and a synthesis of traditional, prevalent Iranian, neighboring, and global elements.

C) Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City (Strategic Considerations): Options include "Traditional Style with High-Quality Hand Embroidery," and "Traditional Style with Machine Embroidery at a Lower Cost," aligning with the city's traditional culture as detailed in Table 1. Criteria and Sub-Criteria Effective

in the ANP Model Based on the Analysis of Baluch Women’s Clothing Situation in Zabol City Criteria are delineated as clusters (groups), while alternatives are specified as subgroups or sub-networks (nodes). In this current investigation, the model's design incorporates 3 clusters (groups) and 9 subgroups (nodes) (refer to Table 1), as illustrated in Figure 12, and undergoes comprehensive analysis.

Table 1: Criteria as clusters (Groups) and alternatives as subgroups (Nodes).

Criteria/Cluster (Group)	Subgroup (Node)
1 Traditional Attire	Stemming from (past history) Sistan region Stemming from neighboring lands Adhering to Sistan traditional culture Adhering to Iran's general culture
2 Modern Attire	Adhering to neighboring lands culture Adhering to combined (traditional, common Iranian, neighboring and global) situation High quality
3 Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City	Low cost Compatible with traditional culture

As depicted in Figure 12, each box is identified as a criterion, with the contents inside representing sub-criteria. Each criterion is associated with a calculation matrix, and similarly, there exists a calculation matrix among all the content inside the boxes (sub-criteria). Notably, the boxes (criteria) engage in matrix calculations not only with the sub-criteria but also with other boxes (criteria), leading to intricate and time-intensive computations, including supermatrix calculations, among others.

The arrows within Figure 12 denote the interconnection among the boxes or criteria (matrices, etc.). It is essential to underscore that, in the present study's model, the connections between all criteria and sub-criteria are multidirectional and thoroughly defined. Figure 12 presents the overarching framework of the ANP model, elucidating the analysis of the Baluch women's clothing situation at the city level of Zabol. The titles delineate clusters, while the subtitles elucidate nodes within the model.

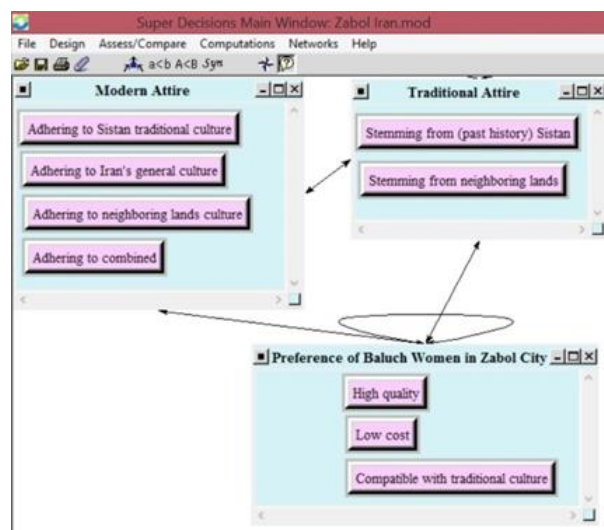


Figure 12: Comprehensive depiction of the ANP model derived from the analysis of Baluch women’s attires in Zabol City.

Figure 13 illustrates the network of interactions among dimensions and indicators, represented as clusters and nodes. These connections are derived from the network of interactions within the core process dimensions and indicators. The modeling outputs serve

as inputs for the ANP software, delineating the relationships and prioritization of cluster dimensions and nodes within the software model, subsequently executing these specifications.

Cluster Node Labels	Modern Attire				Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City			Traditional Attire
	Adhering to combined	Adhering to Iran's general culture	Adhering to neighboring lands culture	Adhering to Sistan traditional culture	Compatible with traditional culture	High quality	Low cost	Stemming from (past history) Sistan
Modern Attire	Adhering to combined	0.097644	0.084909	0.089854	0.096867	0.072988	0.208098	0.088261
	Adhering to Iran's general culture	0.042852	0.021326	0.032152	0.035233	0.024346	0.038315	0.012922
	Adhering to neighboring lands culture	0.018106	0.031692	0.014140	0.016920	0.013530	0.012625	0.025848
	Adhering to Sistan traditional culture	0.174731	0.195406	0.197188	0.184313	0.222469	0.074296	0.206302
Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City	Compatible with traditional culture	0.238146	0.110778	0.243968	0.233658	0.258038	0.233592	0.248793
	High quality	0.028235	0.100737	0.027475	0.035382	0.018651	0.026669	0.026801
	Low cost	0.066953	0.121818	0.061890	0.064293	0.056645	0.073073	0.057740
Traditional Attire	Stemming from (past history) Sistan	0.250000	0.266667	0.277778	0.066667	0.055556	0.277778	0.291656

Figure 13: Demonstration of the weighted supermatrix method derived from data and information collected through survey studies in Zabol City, employing the ANP model (resulting from clusters).

Results of the ANP Model Based on the Analysis of the Clothing Situation of Baluch Women in Zabol City. Each cluster (group) and the overall model yield distinct outcomes. Due to the intricacies of the presentation process, we provide a summary of noteworthy findings resulting from the model implementation. In essence, some impactful results are elucidated in the format of the model software output. In Figure 14, a comparative analysis is presented between the node status of "low cost" in the "Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City" cluster and the nodes within the "Contemporary Attire" cluster. This visualization highlights the significance and priority assigned to the "Adhering to

Sistan traditional culture" node in contrast to the "Adhering to neighboring lands culture" node. Understanding the priorities within the "women's clothing status" is imperative for effective cultural planning and management. Consequently, identifying these priorities through various forms of ANP model network analysis unveils strategic insights. The conclusive outcomes of prioritizing the clothing status of Baluch women at the city level of Zabol, derived from calculations involving clusters (groups) and subgroups or nodes of the ANP model, are presented both numerically as normalized figures, accompanied by cluster statuses, and graphically in Figure 14.

Icon	Name	Normalized by Cluster	Limiting
No Icon	Compatible with traditional culture	0.70758	0.235861
No Icon	Low cost	0.19650	0.065500
No Icon	High quality	0.09592	0.031972
No Icon	Adhering to neighboring lands culture	0.05226	0.017421
No Icon	Adhering to Sistan traditional culture	0.53477	0.178257
No Icon	Adhering to Iran's general culture	0.09580	0.031934
No Icon	Adhering to combined	0.31716	0.105721
No Icon	Stemming from neighboring lands	0.66778	0.222594
No Icon	Stemming from (past history) Sistan	0.33222	0.110739

Figure 14: Final prioritization of the status of Baluch women's attires in Zabol City, based on calculations from clusters (groups) and sub-groups or nodes of the A

As depicted in Figure 14, the prioritized nodes in the analysis of Baluch women's clothing status in Zabol City include "Compatible with traditional culture" (0.708) from the "Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City" cluster, "Stemming from neighboring lands" (0.668) from the "Traditional Attire" cluster, and "Adhering to Sistan traditional culture" (0.525) from the "New clothing" cluster. These prioritizations signify the emphasis on cultural considerations in the selection process, reflecting the historical clothing culture of Baluch women in the Sistan region and the contemporary situation in Zabol City.

VII. Discussion and Conclusion

The attire of women in the Sistan region boasts a historical lineage dating back to the archaeological excavations of the *Shabr-i Sokhta* and its satellite mounds. According to research conducted by a collaborative Iranian-Italian group, over 51 types of fabrics have been unearthed and studied in the *Shabr-i Sokhta*, affirming the historical depth of women's clothing in the Sistan region. Moreover, ancient figurines and statues provide visual evidence of the diverse styles of women's clothing across various historical periods.

The evolution of women's clothing throughout historical epochs has been shaped by diverse factors and elements, all of which find expression in the creation and representation of cultural artifacts associated with women's attire. The enduring presence and consistency of cultural and identity elements in the clothing of Baluch women in Sistan are substantiated by historical evidence. Crucial to note is the sustained connection between historical and cultural identity spanning from the past to the present. This study demonstrates that the implicit prioritization of traditional women's clothing aligns with the historical background of the Sistan region. In addressing clothing-related decisions, the examination and analysis of criteria and indicators associated with the ANP model have been deemed essential. This model facilitates the determination of priorities grounded in the defined criteria and alternatives.

The conclusive outcomes of prioritizing the clothing status of Baluch women at the city level of Zabol, derived from calculations involving clusters (groups) and subgroups or nodes of the ANP model, are presented in both numerical format (normalized alongside cluster statuses) and graphically. As indicated by the results, the prioritized nodes include "Compatible with traditional culture" (0.708) from the "Preference of Baluch Women in Zabol City" cluster, "Stemming from neighboring lands" (0.668) from the "Traditional Attire" cluster, and "Adhering to Sistan traditional culture" (0.525) from the "Modern Attire" cluster, surpassing other options in the analysis of

Baluch women's clothing status. These findings underscore the historical clothing culture of the Sistan region and the current scenario in Zabol. They can be valuable considerations for decision-makers, planners, and managers involved in women's clothing issues when prioritizing strategic initiatives.

VIII. Strategic Suggestions

In light of the results obtained from the current study, which include interviews with Baluch women, discussions with sellers situated in the traditional (central) bazaar of Zabol, and insights from local tailors in Zabol, the following suggestions and strategies are put forth:

The prices of hand-embroidered sets of Baluch women's clothing in Zabol have surged in recent years, concurrently with a decline in customers' purchasing power to afford them.

The escalating costs of "hand-embroidered" fabrics pose a threat, resulting in the flourishing demand for "machine" embroideries. However, these machine embroideries often compromise on artistic intricacy and quality (including color, shape, texture, etc.) compared to their hand-embroidered counterparts.

An additional concern arises from the diminished quality and aesthetic appeal of machine embroideries, potentially leading to reduced interest among the new generation of Baluch women in Zabol towards this particular style of clothing.

Over the forthcoming decades, the economic viability of Zabol's traditional (central) bazaar, specifically in the domains of sewing, retail, and occupations associated with Baluch traditional embroidered clothing, may confront the risk of extinction due to a declining demand from the emerging generation of Baluch women.

A segment of Zabol's traditional (central) bazaar has long been dedicated to the production, sewing, and sale of Baluch traditional embroidered clothing, contributing to the authentic identity of the locale. The potential threat or risk of decreased sales is anticipated to bring about modifications in the operational dynamics of these establishments.

A significant facet of the genuine identity of Zabol city's traditional (central) bazaar has been intricately involved for numerous years in the production, sewing, and sale of traditional Baluch hand-embroidered clothing. The impending threat or risk of decreased sales is poised to instigate alterations in the operational dynamics of these shops. Consequently, it is imperative to safeguard and preserve the functions of these establishments within Zabol's bazaar, which embody crucial elements and symbols of identity, particularly those related to professions and trades associated with Baluch women's clothing. Urban planners, managers, and officials should formulate and implement incentives

to ensure the protection and continuity of these integral aspects.

The advancement and flourishing of the artistry and craftsmanship behind Baluch women's hand-embroidered clothing, both nationally and internationally, can have a significant impact with comprehensive backing extending from production to showcasing in domestic and foreign exhibitions. This approach proves effective in preserving, safeguarding, enhancing quality, generating employment opportunities, and stimulating economic activities in the Sistan region and Zabol City.

Reviving and creating opportunities to enhance the promotion of Baluch women's hand-embroidered dresses can serve as a preventative measure against the threats and risks of the potential extinction of this

valuable technique and art form. Moreover, fostering enthusiasm and momentum within the production, sales, and consumption chains at both national and international levels will contribute to the comprehensive promotion and development of associated professions and Baluch women's hand-embroidered clothing in the Sistan region, particularly in Zabol City.

The Baluch women's dresses in Sistan stand out as some of the most exquisite elements within the authentic attire of Iranian women. In order to safeguard the identity of Iranian-Islamic dressing culture, cultural officials responsible for women's clothing matters should attentively address both opportunities and threats within this domain.

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