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Journal of Art Faculty, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

A Comparative Study of Women's Role in Two "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" Pictorial Rugs Based on Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Social Theory

Volume 10 Issue 26. Page 1-14

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Original Research Article

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Received: 7 December 2021

Revised: 3 April 2022

Accepted: 29 April 2022

DOI: 10.22055/PYK.2021.17278

URL: paykareh.scu.ac.ir/article_17278.html

How to cite this article: Dianati, S., & Kakavand, S. (2022). A Comparative Study of Women's Role in Two "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" Pictorial Rugs Based on Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Social Theory. *Paykareh*, 10 (26), pp. 1-14.

The Persian translation of this article is published in the same issue with the following title

مطالعه تطبیقی نقش زن در دو قالی تصویری بهرام گور در هفت‌گنبد از منظر نظریه نمایشی اروینگ گافمن

A Comparative Study of Women's Role in Two "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" Pictorial Rugs Based on Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Social Theory*

Abstract

Problem Definition: Part of our current information about the lives of Qajar women is obtained from the Oriental travelogues. Women-centered illustrated works, including pictorial rugs as a visual document, can be helpful in this regard. For this purpose, two Qajar rugs have been selected better to understand the role of women in this era. The present study addresses how women are illustrated in two pictorial rugs, namely "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)". Based on Goffman's dramaturgical social theory, this research tries to remove the literary mask of the story and explore the simulated realities of women in two rugs.

Objective: This study aims to compare the various dimensions of how the identity of Qajar women appears in the two rugs of "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)".

Research Method: Data collection is a library-based approach, and the method includes descriptions, miniature paintings analysis, and elements' comparison. The instrument is reliable, and non-probable samples are selected.

Results: Given its urban texture and literary background, this type of rug seeks intentionally to illustrate powerful women from different social classes. It also intends to move upward in the strata of society to show the unreal position of women in the Qajar society.

Keywords

Pictorial Rug, Dramaturgical Social Theory, Erving Goffman, Qajar, Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)

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*This article is extracted from the first author's master's thesis entitled "Sociology of the Image of Women in Qajar Era Rugs Based on the Dramaturgical Social Theory of Erving Goffman," supervised by Second author's at the University of Arts.

Introduction

Recognition and awareness of personal and social identity have always been human concerns. In response to the essence of the identity concept, many schools of thought have been formed, trying to clarify the blurred dimensions of the term "identity". Sociologists have defined identity as dependent on society; That is, human social identity is defined in interaction with others. Erving Goffman (1892-1982), the last Chicago school philosopher, was a proponent and extender of identity construction in the dialectic between the individual and society. He proposed dramaturgical social theory in the field of the analysis of social actions and reactions, influenced by the "theater" metaphor. Goffman used the "theater" metaphor to formulate his theory. He viewed social situations as theatrical scenes in which people with different identities perform. By "perform", Goffman meant the same daily actions and reactions between the individual and society. Human's innate characteristics and interest and desire for self-expression force him to express himself in different ways and by manipulating different tools and showing his characteristics, which may sometimes be unique, to others. Everyone is interested in impressing others using various tools at their disposal (Goffman, 2019, p. 12). One tries to express oneself and views different ways forward. These may include clothing, makeup, jewelry, and even body movements. Goffman's theory can be an approach to understanding some aspects of women's identity in the Qajar era. Masculinity in the Qajar era was the dominant ideology that did not recognize the existence of women as an independent identity. Women and girls were identified with and beside the family men and were ignored in society. According to some travelogue writers, "Men always believe that women are inferior to them in terms of status. They constantly try to prove their superiority over them" (D'Allemagne, 1976, p. 300). On the other hand, the representation of the Qajar women's appearance in this era's artworks differs from the fact that we know about the Qajar women's lives. According to the descriptive facts about women's social lives in the Qajar era and also the knowledge of women's daily lives in this period, a question arises in the audience's minds: despite the social restrictions for women on the one hand, and the desire to express themselves on the other, how can these two opposing trends be handled? Fortunately, many artworks from the Qajar era have survived, including pictorial rugs. The examples studied in this research are the two pictorial rugs of the "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" story. This study aims to examine the presence of women representing the role of Bahram Gur's court women. This study raises the question of how the individual and social identity of Qajar women in Bahram Gur's two pictorial rugs has emerged in the form of rug motifs?

Research Method

This research approach is qualitative and presented in a descriptive, comparative and analytical manner. The study samples are related to the Qajar era, the story of Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes), and the presence of women. Accordingly, two pictorial rugs from Kashan and Kerman regions have been selected. Both samples include inscriptions and have implemented different ways of illustrating stories and characters. For this purpose, a comparative study has been conducted in two parts. First, according to the location characteristics and date of the texture and inscription, the expressions under the dome, dimensions, and storage place are studied separately. The second part compares the mentioned characteristics based on Erving Goffman's sociological theory.

Research Background

Among previous research conducted about the living conditions of Qajar women, the book entitled "Women in the Qajar Period" written by Delrish (1997) addresses various aspects of women's lives. Foreign authors have also written books on the situation of women in the Qajar era, including the book entitled "Semi-secret Women's Associations in the Constitutional Movement" by Afary (1998). She has specifically studied the state of education, social rights, and the women's movement during this era. But the travelogue that specifically addresses women's lives is entitled "Persian women and their way" by Collier Rice (2004), who has referred to the life situation of Qajar women. Also, relying on travelers' travelogues, two books entitled "Persian women according to French travelogue writers" by Mehrabadi (2000) and "History of women: A study of Persian women's status in the Qajar era" by Hejazi (2015) mentioned various aspects of Qajar women's lives. It should be noted that the authors of the books mentioned above have not analyzed the women's situation and have only extracted women-related material from various travelogues. Articles related to the study of the women's image in artworks are also included as follows: In the article entitled "Character design of women in the Qajar era by focusing on travelogues, miniature paintings, and photographs of this period", Zarei and Tahmasebizadeh (2018) compared the appearance of women in Qajar paintings with other pictorial documents such as photos and travelogues. Finally, they conclude that the artist tends to be idealistic and uses painting as a tool to express glory and reign. In this article, sociological views and theories are not used, and the authors only compare the descriptions of travelers and pictures and drawings of women in the Qajar era. In the domain of the analysis of women's motifs in Qajar rugs, the article entitled "Study of women's in nomadic rugs, "nine women" motif, by focusing on the social components of nomadic women" by Nouri, Mousa Nejad Khabisi, & Keshavarz Afshar (2020), can be mentioned. In this article, the women's motif in the "nine women" rugs in three nomadic rugs from three different tribes is discussed, and researchers have tried to find out the relationship between the depiction of women in nomadic rugs and the women's social appearance. In addition, women's appearance has been given more attention in analyzing women's motifs. Moreover, sociological theories have not been used when analyzing the clothing of motifs, but only the motifs have been compared. In the article entitled "Study of lyrical literature in the pictorial rugs of the Qajar era (Case study: Stories of Bahram Gur)" by Ahani, Vandshoari, and Yaghoubzadeh (2015), attention has been paid to the introduction of background and influential factors on the illustration process in Qajar rugs. By emphasizing rugs with the theme of Bahram Gur's stories, the authors conclude that these stories reflect the political, social, and cultural situation of that era in Iran. In this article, only the story of Bahram Gur is emphasized, and the sociological study of the women's role has not been one of the goals of the authors of this article. In another article entitled "Comparative study of women's clothing depicted in the Shahnameh of Baysangori and Shah Tahmaseb", Ansari Yekta and Ahmadi Payam (2014) compared the general characteristics of women's clothing in the Timurid and Safavid eras, and women's clothing in the paintings of Baysangori and Tahmasebi Shahnameh. The focus has been primarily on women's type of clothing and appearance. The present research attempts to analyze the women's motif sociologically in Bahram Gur's two pictorial rugs.

Theoretical Approach

In Goffman's dramaturgical social theory, social life is analyzed from a theatrical perspective. He views social life as a theatrical scene in which human performers come on stage to portray different roles and characters (Goffman, 2019, p.1). This theory is not only limited to the field of drama but can also be used in the analysis of everyday interactions. In other words, Goffman's purpose in using and relying on the theater metaphor and the drama components was to simplify the concepts of sociological analysis of a social situation. These theatrical metaphors do not limit this sociological theory to the drama field and allow researchers to simplify and then analyze social situations such as the theater stage. For example, the illustration of social status in the pictorial rugs includes representations of women in the Bahram Gur rug, in which women speak to Bahram, ride a horse, sit on a chair, etc. Thus, it is possible to analyze the social situations in which women's motifs are the primary performers in Qajar rugs by using the elements Goffman suggested by drawing on concepts from theater and drama. Based on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical social theory, each of the social situations in the two rugs examined in this research, in which women are also present, will be investigated. Finally, by analyzing each social situation and exploring women's motifs in these two rugs, the differences and similarities and the true identity that we know of Qajar women will be addressed. Goffman framed each social situation in his theory, stating that "social situations are frameworks" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 118). The present research considers the women's motif texture in Qajar era rugs as a non-verbal expression and a theatrical presentation based on Irving Goffman's dramaturgical social theory. According to the type of expression and performance of women depicted in Qajar rugs, the following concepts can be defined following Erving Goffman's dramaturgical social theory. The following elements are extracted from Erving Goffman's views and theories and then expressed in the context of rug-related concepts.

Setting: The background of Qajar handmade rugs and their motifs show the performance setting. "The setting is the furniture, arrangement, physical design and other background items that provide the scene and the space of the scene to act inside, in front of, or on it" (Goffman, 2019, p.34). The setting itself comprises different components, frontstage, and backstage. The frontstage is the rug's main background in which all the actions take place. The backstage includes private spaces, interiors, and any setting where women lived differently from those depicted in Qajar rugs. Weavers, designers, and painters who have influenced or cooperated in preparing the women's motifs are among the behind-the-scenes performers.

Performance: Goffman used this term for all of the characters' activities when they are observed constantly by a particular set of observers and impact them" (Goffman, 2019, p.33)

Performer: An individual who is present in the setting (frontstage) in front of others and has a lot of motivation to control the perception that others form about him" (Goffman, 2019, p. 25). In the rug background, every woman's motif is considered a performer.

Front and Personal front: The front is what an individual exhibit: "fixed expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance." (Goffman, 2019, p.34). The way women are placed on the rug and the behaviors that indicate a particular social status and class will be the front.

Audience: The audience is the addressee in front of whom the performer performs and tries to influence them with his action. The audience of women's motifs in Qajar rugs is all consumers, buyers, traders, and in general, all those who have watched women's motifs in rugs. This study attempts to identify the differences and similarities between women's

motifs in Qajar rugs and actual women who lived in this historical era. Thus, Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory seemed appropriate for this investigation because Goffman, in his theory, refers to a concept called "misrepresentation". According to him, "The audience (all consumers, buyers, rug traders) can find their way in a situation by trusting the signs displayed by the performer (the woman's motif) and treating these signs as evidence of something larger or different from the sign-carriers themselves" (Goffman, 2019, p.69). This concept can reasonably explain the differences or similarities between the woman's motif in the rug and the women of the Qajar era. This concept in Goffman's dramaturgical theory explains the reasons for the conformity or non-conformity between the rugs' context and the facts of Qajar society. Suppose the motifs and actual identity of Qajar women do not conform. In that case, it can be said that the representation arranged in the context of the Qajar handmade rug is an unrealistic performance and far from the reality of the Qajar era. Another reason why this study has relied on Goffman's dramaturgical theory is Goffman's attention to human beings (performers) compared to other sociologists of symbolic interactionism theory. Accordingly, he believed that performance is "risky actions that are inherently decisive and consequential (Goffman, 2019, p.2). Goffman's focus was often on specific social actions and situations in which performance is disrupted for whatever reason¹. Through a study of the Qajar rug context, researchers are attempting to discover whether the performance inside the handmade rug is real and without intervention or whether it is unreal or with intervention. Another reason for choosing Goffman's dramaturgical theory is the simplicity of the concepts proposed by him and the possibility of implementing these components in the context of an artwork. As Goffman notes, "If someone offers a product or service to others, they (those who have been confronted with a mediated presence) will often find that there is no immediate way to examine their claims and gather the necessary evidence during the interaction" (Goffman, 2019, p.12). The Qajar pictorial rug, which is the subject of this study, is the same "product" or "service" that Goffman refers to as a "mediated presence".

The Women's Situation in the Qajar Era

The women's position in the Qajar era's family system was different in each social class. Still, in general, due to the dominant traditional design in the structure of Iranian families in this era, women were in a lower position than men. The woman was considered weak, and the birth of a son in the family brought joy and pride to the puerpera while giving birth to a baby girl was not an honor. "The birth of a girl in the family is almost a grief sign, and the mother is saddened by her arrival" (D'Allemagne, 1976, p. 308). The women's identity depended on men. Women's individuality was not recognized in society, and they spent most of their lives indoors; "Iranian women are locked up in their homes for a lifetime" (Markham, 1988, p.63). Women were not even called that, nor were their real names revealed to anyone except a few indoors. When addressing a woman, a man still indirectly obscures her identity; "Her name [woman] should not be mentioned. Instead it should be a name after one of her sons or in the child's mother's name" (D'Allemagne, 1976, p. 309). Exit from the inside and presence in society was achieved only with the company of a man. To leave the indoors and be present in society, a woman must be accompanied by a man. The contribution of women to society, individually and independently, was not accepted, and it was the man who gave meaning to women's identity and "being". According to the French writer 'Anet' about Iranian tours, "women never accompany men on these trips. Because Iranian families believe that women should spend most of their lives at home. If a

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woman needs to leave the house, she must do so alone or in the company of other women. (Annet, 1991, p. 160). Men considered themselves higher than women, and their supremacist views toward women were not hidden from western travelers; Men always think women are inferior to them, and they constantly try to prove their superiority to a woman (D'Allemagne, 1976, p. 300). Madame Dialofova met with several women indoors and communicated with them to learn about Iranian women's activities during this era. In response, she found that women are engaged in putting on makeup, smoking hookah, and drinking tea at home (Dialofova, 1874, p.194). The women's outdoor clothing was uniform, including a Chaqchour¹, a black waist-veil, and a veil covering their face. Drouville, Flandin, D'Allemagne, and Annet, who came to Iran during the reigns of Fath Ali Shah, Mohammad Shah, Naser al-Din Shah, and Ahmad Shah, respectively, all had a common description of women's outdoor clothing. Annet explained: " In my opinion, Iranian women are more committed to the hijab than women from other eastern countries. They cover their bodies and faces more carefully and obsessively. They wear a large black veil made of relatively soft fabrics without any beauty or elegance when they leave the house. The top of the veil, where the face is usually located, is open. But Iranian women do not like showing their eyes to anyone. For this reason, they wear a long white face covering, which has mesh on top" (Annet, 1991, p. 162). The women's indoor clothing of the first period of the Qajar dynasty was influenced by the women's costumes of the Safavid era. Later, after Nasser al-Din Shah visited foreign countries, it was influenced by the Western ballerinas' clothing. But generally, during the many years of the Qajar era, clothing had common components, such as head coverings, including starched gauze fabric like a priest's hood, called Charghad, and waist-veil, or colored-veil. The clothes also included short coats, two or three short garments like European dancers, embroidered tunics with sleeves, and baggy pants in place of the short petticoats. As the last years of the Qajar dynasty approached, women's indoor clothing became similar to Western women's. However, the head and hair were always covered as well. Comparing women's outdoor and indoor clothing (See Table 1) during different periods of the Qajar dynasty shows that it is almost the same at different time intervals and has not changed significantly.

Table 1. Women's clothing in Qajar Era. Source: Authors

The Outdoor Situation of Women			
			
Qajar Woman Riding a Horse Source: Shariat Panahi, 1993, p.202	Outdoor Clothing of Two Qajar Women in Agha Mohammad Khan and Fath Ali Shah Era. Source: Mehrabadi, 2000, p.491	Qajar Woman Riding Horse. Source: Shariat Panahi, 1993, p.86	Qajar Woman Riding a Horse Source: Shariat Panahi, 1993, p.202



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The Indoor Situation of Women	
	
A dancer with a corsage and a coronate on her head. Source: D'Allemagne, 1976, p.884	A dancer plays tambourine and wears a tight waistcoat and a coronate on her head. Source: D'Allemagne, 1976, p.885

Haft Peykar

Haft Peykar, Bahramnameh, or Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes) ([Moein, 1973, p. 2283](#)), is the fourth of the Khamsa of Nezami. Nezami composed this Masnavi in 593 AH and by order of Aladdin Alp Arsalan, one of the Seljuk kings. The poem is a biography of Bahram V Sassanide (Bahram Gur), and it narrates various events in Bahram's life. Among these events is Bahram's marriage to the daughters of the kings of the Seven Climes. Shideh, a brilliant architect, built palaces and domes for each of the seven princesses under the command of Bahram. Bahram named the domes of the seven palaces after the seven planets and decorated each one with a particular color. The king used to go to one of the palaces every weekday, and each night the princess living in that palace would tell a story to Bahram. "Bahram Gur spent the weekdays in the dome in the following manner: Saturday, at the Black Dome, attributed to Saturn; Sunday, at the yellow dome attributed to the sun; Monday, at the Green Dome attributed to the moon; Tuesday, at the Red Dome attributed to the Mars; Wednesday, in the turquoise dome attributed to the Mercury; Thursday, at the sandal dome attributed to Jupiter; Friday, in the White Dome attributed to the Venus" ([Roshan, 2015, p.10](#)).

Pictorial Rugs

Pictorial Rugs have a long history in Iran in terms of human and animal motifs, and they can be referred to as the Pazyryk rug. Since then, there have been signs of the texture of human images on Iranian rugs in other historical periods. According to religious principles, the realistic motifs on rugs changed in the Islamic era. "The logic of Islam in boycotting 'illustration' was based on drying up the roots of the idolatry prevalent among the Saudi tribes at the time. But the boycott was implemented without any exceptions in all lands dominated by Islam" ([Tanavoli, 1989, p.9](#)). The first human motifs in Safavid rugs can be found in hunting-ground samples. Still, following the end of the Safavid dynasty and a long break, it was during the Qajar period that a wide range of human figures began to appear on rugs. Rugs of this type were known as "pictorial rugs" ([Tanavoli, 1989, p.9](#)). Several factors led to the emergence of these rugs, including the advent of photography in Iran, the printing phenomenon (especially lithography), the familiarity of Iranian artists with popular art in the West, and the tendency towards naturalism. It can be said that the influence of Western painting methods on Iran led to the emergence of image weaving in Iran ([Joule, 2011, p.39](#)). The themes of these rugs included a wide range of lyrical and epic tales, images of ancient kings or Qajar kings, and historic buildings. There are also illustrations of women in the

pictorial rugs, inspired by love stories such as Leily and Majnoon, Khosrow and Shirin, Bahram and Azadeh, etc.

Bahram Gur and Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes) Rug

One of the examples studied in this research [Figure 1](#) is an illustrated rug with the theme of "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)". The rug is made in Kerman and shows three domes depicting white, red, and turquoise, as in the "Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes) of Bahramnameh". Two narrow margins and one main margin are woven into the rug. In the upper part and the middle of the main margin of the rug, an inscription can be seen, the content of which is as follows: "فابریک میلانی کرمانی سنه ۱۳۳۵". In the same section and within an oval inscription, a woman's face is woven, seen symmetrically on all four sides of the rug. The second narrow border of the rug has a caption with the following text: "FABRIQUE DE MILANI KERMAN". The main background of the rug includes a variety of wild and domestic animals and is reminiscent of hunting grounds. There are two turquoise and red palaces at the top of the rug, and the third white palace is woven at the bottom of the rug. In addition to the story of "Bahram and Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)", the story of Bahram and his maidservant "Fetneh" in the hunting ground has also been narrated in two parts of the rug: One in the distance between the top and bottom of the rug, where Bahram and his maidservant "Fetneh" are shown while playing polo, and the other in front of the white palace, where two women (probably Fetneh and her maidservant) are watching Bahram hunting. Under the dome of each palace, Bahram is depicted with a princess surrounded by maidservants. Regarding each palace, there is harmony between the motifs and the color of the dome. In each of these palaces, Bahram is feasting and listening to princesses. At the same time, a phrase is written under the roof of each dome. The details of the rug are reported in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Specifications of rug number one: Bahram and Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes) (See Figure 5).

Source: Authors.

Rug's name	Bahram and Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)	
Weaving place	Kerman (city)	
Dimensions (meters)	16/1*25/2	
The phrase written below the dome	Turquoise Dome	کمند صید بهرامی بیفکن، جام بردار
	Red Dome	که من پیمودم این صحرا نه بهرام است و نه گورش
	White Dome	مژگان گلندام ربودی دل بهرام
Inscription	Main margin	«فابریک میلانی کرمانی سنه ۱۳۳۵»
	Narrow margin	FABRIQUE DE MILANI KERMAN
Weaving date	1295 AH	
Storage place	Private collection	

"Bahram in White Dome" Rug

Another pictorial rug with the theme of "Bahram Gur's story in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" includes the rug shown in [Figure 2](#), which addresses the last part of the dome, namely, the White Dome. It is woven in Kashan and ([See Table 3](#)) contains one main margin and two narrow margins decorated with delicate flowers and leaves. In the upper part of the main background of the rug, two inscriptions in Persian can be seen where the phrase «وارد شدن بهرام به گنبد سفید» (Bahram enters the White Dome) is woven on a white background. In

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the main part of the rug, the palace with a White Dome is woven where a man and a woman are sitting on the ground in the middle of the image, in the space between the two main pillars of the palace. The maidservant and male servant are standing behind the pillar, with their hands crossed on their chest. The story told by the Seventh Clime princess to Bahram is a story of lovers who do not get along. The image woven in this rug shows the princess in a white skirt, the same color as the dome, holding a cup in her hand, and crowned Bahram is her audience. Two symmetrical branches of the tree rise from both sides of the palace, and two birds can be seen on the branches. Delicate motifs can be observed in different spaces of this rug, including the dome.

Table 3. Specifications of rug number two: Bahram in White Dome (See Figure 2). Source: Authors.

Rug's name	Bahram in White Dome
Weaving place	Kerman (city)
Dimensions (meters)	14/2*32/1
Inscription	«وارد شدن بهرام به گنبد سفید» (Bahram enters the White Dome)
Weaving date	Early 14 th century AH
Storage place	Private collection



Figure 1. Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes), Weaving place and date: Kerman, 1295 AH., Storage place: Private collection. Source: [Maloul, 2005, p.17](#)



Figure 2. Bahram Gur in White Dome, Weaving place: Kashan. Source: [Tanavoli, 1989, p.235](#)

Comparative analysis of study rugs based on Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory

The story of Bahram Gur and Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes) of Nezami's Haft Peykar is relatively consistent with the themes of both studied rugs. A comparative study of two pictorial rugs shows similarities in the two samples. Both rugs belong to the cateclimey of

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illustrated rugs of the Qajar era. Both samples are urban textured and narrate the story of Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes). Both rugs depict the White Dome and the conversation between the Seventh Clime princess and Bahram on Friday. The women depicted in the Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad rug are aristocrats. The view, characteristics, and appearance, including the type and details of women's clothing, also remind the viewer that he must be watching an aristocratic environment. In "Bahram in the White Dome" rug, the environment and the frontstage continue to narrate an aristocratic scene according to the details woven on the rug. The central performers in both rugs, who appear in the role of princesses, have clothing similar to those of the Sassanid era (the real-time of the performers' lives). The women's motifs on the "Bahram Gur and Seven Domes" rug are the Seven Climes princesses, whom Bahram Shah meets in each dome. Still, the story of the White Dome is about a young man and woman, and the wedding scene between the two is narrated on this rug. From the perspective of describing the scene in the "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" rug, three white, red, and turquoise domes are depicted: Conversation between the Seventh Clime princess and Bahram on Friday in the White Dome, attributed to Venus; Conversation between the Fourth Clime princess and Bahram on Tuesday at the Red Dome, attributed to the Mars; The Fifth Clime princess in the arms of Bahram on Wednesday in the turquoise dome attributed to the Mercury. But in the "Bahram in the White Dome" rug (See Figure 2), only the White Dome is depicted. Both rugs address the White Dome. The central performers in rug 1 (Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)) are the princesses of the Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Climes. In addition, in one part of the rug, Fetneh, and another section, Fetneh and her maidservant perform. But in rug 2 (Bahram in the White Dome), the Seventh Clime princess and her maidservant are the central performers. The setting in rug 1 is completely outdoor, and in rug 2, it is indoor. Front and personal front of the central performers of rug 1 respectively include: coronet, corsage decorated with a skirt; a coronet and a long red embellished dress; a head-crown and a long well-embellished dress, a precious belt; a coronet and scarf freely wrapped around the head, equestrian pants and boots; Fetneh is wearing a crown and scarf freely around her head, and sumptuous clothes. Her maidservant is wearing a similar but simpler dress without a crown. The personal front of the central performers of rug 2 of the two characters of the Seventh Clime princess and her maidservant respectively includes a coronet and a shirt-dress with the upper part of the underneath clothing being well-embellished, in addition to loose and wrinkled pants. A triangular scarf is on the head and tied under the neck. The hair is center-parted in the style of Qajar women, and part of it is visible from under the scarf. She is wearing a dress with a floral skirt and simple clothing overall. From the perspective of comparison with the truth behind the scenes (social reality of the Qajar era), except for one of the central performers of Bahram rug in the White Dome (rug 2), namely maidservant, there is no adaptation in the other performers' front. The slight difference between "Bahram in the White Dome" and "Bahram Gur in the Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" rugs is in the details of the maidservant's clothing, who stands on the left side of the rug (No. 2), behind the woman. The maidservant's dress and posture show that she belongs to the lower social class (compared to the bride). The clothing is similar to what is seen in many Qajar texts and images: the headcover tied under the neck. But the bride, as a princess, has different clothing. She has no triangular scarf or headcover. The designer has tried to show the princess having a coronet on her head, following the Sassanid era. In "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" (No. 1), the scene is very similar to the indoor women's front: The setting and the front stage with all its details, i.e., the

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arrangement of the reception utensil and even the shape of the chairs, confirm this. The women in all three domes are dressed in indoor clothes. Moreover, the environment under each dome is considered an indoor setting. In the turquoise dome, a woman is sitting on Bahram's lap. Although women in the Qajar era had more unrestricted indoor clothing than outdoor situations, the type of these women's clothing and their performance were far from the indoor reality of the Qajar. It implies that an imaginary setting is depicted. The only outdoor setting is somewhere in the middle of the rug. A woman is playing polo with Bahram, who has different clothing in the outdoor space compared to the outdoor clothing of the Qajar women. Table 1 shows the outdoor clothing of Qajar women in the Qajar kings' periods, which are very similar and have not changed much despite the time intervals. Below that, there is an image of two women, one of whom is a princess and the other a maidservant. Both wear no veil or Chaqchour; clothes include cheerful colors contrary to what is observed in the Qajar women's outdoor clothing. The designer of this rug has tried to bring the design closer to what was in the mind of the Sassanid women, based on the historical context of the story; thus, this image is far from the backstage reality (See Table 4). The "Bahram in the White Dome" rug also depicts a performance far from the reality of the princess in the Qajar indoors. Still, the maidservant has a performance that corresponds to the backstage reality (See Table 5).

Table 4. Stage Features of "Bahram and Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" Rug. Source: Authors

Stage	Scene Description	Central Performer	Setting	Front & Personal Front	Matching with Backstage Reality
	The Fifth Clime princess in the arms of Bahram on Wednesday in the turquoise dome attributed to the Mercury	The Fifth Clime princess	Outdoor	Coronet, corsage decorated with a skirt	No
	Conversation between the Fourth Clime princess and Bahram on Tuesday at the Red Dome, attributed to the Mars	The Fourth Clime princess	Outdoor	A coronet and a long red embellished dress	No
	Conversation between the Seventh Clime princess and Bahram on Friday in the White Dome attributed to Venus	The Seventh Clime princess	Outdoor	A head-crown and a long well-embellished dress, a precious belt	No
	Fetneh, playing Polo with Bahram	Fetneh (Bahram's maidservant)	Outdoor	A coronet and scarf freely wrapped around the head, equestrian pants and boots	No
	Fetneh & her maidservant, watching Bahram hunting	Fetneh & her maidservant	Outdoor	Fetneh, wearing a crown and scarf freely around her head, and sumptuous clothes. Her maidservant, wearing a similar but simpler dress without a crown	No

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Table 5. Stage Features of "Bahram in the White Dome" Rug. Source: Authors.

Stage	Scene Description	Central Performer	Setting	Front & Personal Front	Matching with Backstage Reality
	Conversation between the Seventh Clime princess and Bahram on Friday in the White Dome attributed to Venus	The Seventh Clime princess	Indoor	A coronet and a shirt-dress with the upper part of the underneath clothing being well-embellished, in addition to loose and wrinkled pants	No
	Maidservant of Seventh Clime princess, ready for service	Maidservant of Seventh Clime princess	Indoor	A triangular scarf is on the head and tied under the neck. The hair is center-parted in the style of Qajar women, and part of it is visible from under the scarf. She is wearing a dress with a floral skirt and simple clothing overall.	Yes

Conclusion

The study of the status of the central performers, the performance setting, the frontstage, and the performers' personal front in two rugs can be summarized as follows: In both pictorial rugs, "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" and "Bahram in the White Dome", the central performers' clothing corresponds to that of the Sassanid period (historical context of the story), and only one of the characters (maidservant in "Bahram in the White Dome" rug) follows the Qajar clothing pattern. The designer of the pictorial rug, namely, "Bahram Gur in Haft Gonbad (Seven Domes)" has tried to implement designs close to the Sassanid women's clothing based on the story's historical context, which has finally caused the backstage reality to be avoided. Still, the elements in the rug scene, including the arrangement of the reception utensil and even the shape of the chairs, are reminiscent of Qajar palaces indoors. The "Bahram in the White Dome" rug also depicts a performance far from the reality of the indoor status of Qajar princesses. Still, the maidservant has a performance that corresponds to the backstage reality. The samples show that the women's image was sometimes displayed following the ideal and free environment, in the riddles, as the central performer and executor (one of the main terms of Goffman's theory). At the same time, they did not have an active presence and freedom in the community. Finally, it was concluded that in the studied pictorial rugs, which are both urban textured and have utilized literary themes, the performer intentionally intends to arrange a representation of powerful women belonging to other classes of society and move upward through the strata of society to show the unrealistic position and false image of women in the society.

Appendix

1. "Goffman is particularly interested in examining situations in which the implementation of the proposed performance is difficult; Like when a person does not have a clue what to expect in a confrontation; Or when his claim to a special self is questioned by the situation or other performers" (Goffman, 2019, p.2).
2. Chaqchour: Women's baggy pants covering from the soles of their feet to their waist, and in the past, women wore them when going to bazaars. They were also called Chaqshour, Chakhjir, and Dolagh (Amid, 1988, p.523).

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