

Original Research Article

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طراز اسلامی یا تراز ساسانی، کلاوس- تابلینون مسیحی

## Islamic Tiraz or Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos-Tablion

### Abstract

**Problem Definition:** Islamic Ornamental Textiles (Islamic Tiraz) or Sassanid Designed Textiles (Sassanid Tiraz), Christian Clavos- Tablion are weavings that, in the past, belonged to certain spiritual and courtiers, especially Islamic caliphs, Sassanid kings, and Christian emperors, because of their social and political prestige. The design and making of the Islamic Ornamental Textiles show the influence and continuity of Sassanid and Christian art, which has not been researched for its historical attribution. The present research addresses two questions: «What are the points of similarity and difference between Islamic Tiraz or Sassanid Tiraz and Christian Clavos-Tablion?» and «Which design of the Sassanid style and Clavos-Tablion has influenced the Islamic Tiraz?»

**Objective:** This research aims to describe and recognize Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos- Tablion, as evidence to influence the Islamic Tiraz.

**Research Method:** The current research method is descriptive-historical. The data has been collected through library and museum websites. First, the Islamic, Sassanid, and Christian textiles are described based on historical and visual sources, and then according to the shapes, motifs, and designs, the influence of the Islamic Tiraz has been determined and qualitatively analyzed in the evaluation section of the research.

**Results:** In terms of structure and decorative elements, the Islamic Tiraz continues the tradition of Sassanid and Christian textile weaving. They first followed the Sassanid style in terms of the type of textile, production method, and design, and then, in the final path of their transformation and change, they modeled themselves on the Christian Clavos-Tablion forms, with the difference that the early Islamic scripts were placed in the Islamic Tiraz instead of the Christian elements. Like Sassanid Tiraz and Tablion, the Islamic Tiraz has prime material and spiritual importance, and like the Christian Tablion, it is a modified form of the Christian Coptic Clavos decorative strips.

### Keywords

Islamic Tiraz, Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos-Tablion, Sassanid Fabric, Christian Fabric

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**Introduction**

According to the writings of Islamic and Christian historians, the history of the Islamic Ornamental Textiles (Islamic Tiraz) in terms of the type of decoration and the work method goes back to the Sassanid and Coptic eras of Egypt. No necessary research studies have been done to prove its historical attribution so far, while there are examples from the Sassanid and Coptic eras that can identify the influence of Islamic styles. It is clear that the motifs and designs used in Islamic Tiraz are still based on Sassanid and Christian motifs; However, what differentiates the designs from their similar examples compared to Sassanid and Christian era fabrics is the removal of Sassanid kings' images and Hellenistic- Christian pictorial elements, which have been replaced by designs and patterns with Islamic content and inscriptions with Thuluth, Naskh, and Kufic Scripts. Tiraz (Islamic Ornamental or Sasanid Designed Textiles) and Tablion are exquisite fabrics with detailed decorations that were made for the Sassanid, Christian, and Islamic nobles and courts, and were used in different forms in rituals, religious, and political ceremonies. In this way, Islamic Tiraz was initially produced under the influence of the Sassanid tradition of weaving. Later, in its development path, Sassanid Tiraz was used to decorate the neck, wrist, arm, chest, and edges of clothes by imitating the band shapes of Coptic Christian textiles. Their text generally included a prayer along with the name of the caliph, ruler, minister, orderer, the place of weaving, and the date of making, which are woven or embroidered. In fact, Islam Tirz is a fabric that is produced with calligraphic inscriptions in Arabic, strip shapes, and decorative motifs, and because of the material value of using gold and silk, it was given as a garment or a gift by the Caliph to high-ranking political and social people. Also, the Christian Tabilion is a piece of silk with gold threads, jeweled and embroidered with Christian symbols, which was sewn as a square or trapezoid on the upper part of the dress and the right shoulder, and because of its material and spiritual value, it belonged to Christian emperors, queens, and some court and government officials. This fabric model is derived from the Coptic decorative strips, which are called Clavos, in terms of implementation method and basic structure. The spiritual validity of the Islamic Tiraz and the Tablion was so great that they were used as grave coverings, shrouds, and a cloth for keeping the mouth and eyes of the dead closed. According to historical documents, the Christian emperors were accompanied by the Tablion from the moment of birth to death. The most important is the Sassanid Tiraz, which had a serious impact on Christian and Islamic handwoven. The word Tiraz is a Persian word that means embroidery on precious fabrics that were prepared in the past by order of the Sassanid kings and were ordered to be donated and commissioned by the court. What is discussed in the present research is the recognition of Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos-Tablion as important influential elements in the change and transformation of Islamic style and tracing the opinions of Islamic art writers who mentioned Sassanid- Christian weavings as a model of Islamic Tiraz. The historical- descriptive study shows that these effects have happened not only in the Islamic Tiraz but also in connection with the three types of fabric mentioned in different historical periods in such a way that the Tablion was first made based on the Sasanid Tiraz and later influenced by the decorative bands (Clavos) of Egypt. They even used the form and decorations of the Islamic Tiraz in the decoration of their traditional and religious Christian weavings. The Islamic Tiraz based on the Sasanid Tiraz and different Coptic decoration created a new form of Islamic era weavings, which are considered an important indicator of the art of the early Islamic period.

### **Research Method**

The present research method is descriptive-historical, and for this purpose, it first describes Sassanid Tiraz, Tablion- Clavos, and Islamic Tiraz through sources to determine the nature of keywords, forms of design, role, and function, as well as the reasons for their importance in the world of Islam, Christianity, and the Sassanid period. Accordingly, historical and visual sources are cited to determine the influence of Tablion- Clavos on the Islamic Tiraz, so that the main goals of this research are realized: The first is to identify the effective factors of this impact and the second is to define and conceptualize the Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Tablion- Clavos textiles, which are a witness of the influence of the Islamic Tiraz and have not been discussed in Persian sources so far. The statistical community has 29 images of Islamic Tiraz and Sassanid Tiraz, Tablion- Clavos available in the National Museum of Iran and some foreign museums. In collecting the research materials and selecting the images, several issues have been considered: recognizing the similarities and differences of these textiles through the change of shapes, the variety of motifs and designs- the social and political applications of these three hand weaves, as the common and different characteristics of describing the historical background of weaving centers and their designs and motifs. In the end, the qualitative description criterion of the present research, in the evaluation section, is based on the differences, and similarities related to the function, social status, motifs, and designs obtained, so that using the most specific common roles obtained in the final table of this research, the influential decorative elements in the Islamic Tiraz can be identified.

### **Research Background**

Based on the investigation, studies have been conducted in this direction, which is: The article entitled «Fabric motifs in Sassanid empire based on Hamza Esfahani's arabic report on the paintings of the book of Kings of Bani Sasan» by «Kashmiri» (2018), for the first time, deals with the issue of proportion and motif modeling of Sassanid clothing and their changed names. This research is suitable for identifying the names of Sasanid textiles under Islamic Tiraz. The master's thesis entitled «Study of Tiraz fabrics in Islamic civilization with an emphasis on the Fatimid period of Egypt» by «Rahro Esfahani» (2015) adopts a descriptive-analytical approach in the Tiraz of Fatimid Egypt in changing the forms of Islamic textiles and is suitable as a source for a review of the Tiraz of the Islamic era. The book entitled «History of fabrics and textiles of Iran» by «Talebpour» (2014) is a proper source for the historical knowledge of the centers, techniques, and forms of textiles in Iran from the past to the end of the Islamic era. The article entitled «Tiraz in Islamic Civilization» by «Hemmati Golian» (2010), is the first book about the history of Islamic Tiraz and explains its importance from different aspects. The article entitled «Comparative study of Sassanid and Egyptian-Coptic fabrics» by «Jafarpour and Mahmoudi» (2008), with a historical-comparative description of similar examples, explains the points related to the influence of these fabrics in the Sassanid and Coptic eras of Egypt. The book entitled «Survey of Iranian Art» by «Pope and Ackerman» (2008) is a suitable source of Iranian textiles in the section on images, examples are mentioned, and in terms of etymology, the location, type of motifs, and designs are analytically described. The books entitled «Looking at the weaving of the Islamic Era» by «Rouhfahr» (2001) and «Sassanid textiles and motifs» by «Riyazi» (2003) describe Iranian textiles from the prehistoric to the Islamic period, relying on archaeological and historical sources. The books of «Ibn Khaldun» (1996) and «The History of Prophets, Kings» by «Esfahani» (1967) describe the Islamic Tiraz and characteristics of Sassanid fabrics. The book «History of Prophets, Kings» is an

important document in terms of background, material, and spiritual value, techniques, and centers of Islamic weaving influenced by the Sassanid period and interests researchers in traditional textiles. One of the most important sources that can be cited for the influence of the Tabloid on Islamic Tiraz is the article entitled «A Poem is a Robe and a Castle: Inscribing verses on textiles and Architecture in the Alhambra» by «Bush» (2008), which points to the influence of Tablion-Clavos on Islamic Tiraz. In the book entitled «Byzantine Dress», by «Ball» (2005), the general clothing of the court is described and the decorations and different the Christian periods are examined. The website of «King Baudouin Foundation<sup>1</sup>» describes the types of Tablion-Clavos bands. This is remarkable in terms of comparative comparison and recognition of the elements influencing Tablion. In the background of the mentioned sources, the historical topic of Islamic Tiraz has been discussed in the same way and only the books entitled «Survey of Iranian Art» by Pope and Ackerman, «Sassanid Textiles and Patterns» by «Riazi» have an analytical view and historical rooting concerning the comparison, knowing Sassanid textiles from the past to after Islam. In this regard, one of the turning points of this article, which makes it different from other sources, is the novelty of the topic to understand Sassanid Tiraz, Tablion-Clavos, as a sign of the influence on the Islamic Tiraz. No article or book in Persian, etc., as review, comparison, and description has been found. In addition, the author of the article refers to these two fabrics, especially based on the perception of Latin sources, in which he briefly mentioned the use of Clavos- Tablion and their history in Christian and Coptic clothing.

### **Tiraz, fabric of the Sassanid period**

In all sources of textile weaving in Iran, Christianity, and Islam, «the word Tiraz is considered a Persian word and it means to decorate or sew with a needle» (Baker, 2006, 60) or some kind of «embroidery method for weaving and writing poetry» (Bush, 2008, 3). In fact, the term Tiraz is taken from the Persian word and means decoration on fabrics and clothes. «Its root is in the Talmud, which appeared as Tiraz, and Hai Gaon<sup>2</sup> in Baghdad considers it to have the same root as Persian. According to «Al-Azhar»: «The Persian word Tiraz has been translated into Arabic» (Stillman, 2003, 22). Tiraz in Moein's culture is «Nagarjameh (illustrative cloths)» (Moein, 2002, 1059) and for the first time «Ibn Khaledun» reported about the fabric of «Nagarjameh, which was found to be the same Islamic Tiraz style {and origin} from Iran» (Talebpour, 2014, 72-14). Also, the Islamic encyclopedia writes: «Tiraz is derived from Persian and means embroidery» (Grohman, 1934, 782). The author of «Montahi al-Arb» «considered the word Islamic Tiraz to mean Sassanid style Tiraz, which is translated as (Nagarjameh (illustrative cloths))» (Talebpour, 2014, 14). In the «Anandraj» dictionary, «the word Tiraz refers to the science of garments and means silk thread» (Hemmati Golian, 2010). According to the same definitions, Tiraz is a type of fabric that was at a high level in terms of construction and functionality and was produced in Sassanid Iran and the word (Negar) on the garment shows a special style and decorative method in which silk and gold threads were used. Concerning Sassanid fabrics, the word Tiraz indicates the Iranian identity and authenticity of these fabrics for several reasons: First, the validity of Sassanid cloths, which were offered according to the custom of Khalat and gifts, and its tradition was transferred to the Islamic period; The second is the Sassanid fabric manufacturing centers, which became the main places of silk fabric production in the Islamic era; The third is the naming of the design and patterns of Islamic Tiraz, which are mentioned in historical sources by adapting the motifs of Sassanid kings' costumes. To assign the name Tiraz to Sassanid textiles, one should refer to historical evidence. For example, according to «Ferrier», «Sassanid fabric was produced in the cities

of Iran and Baghdad, from Sasanian spheres of influence. The name of Tiraz belongs to a city in the north of Afghanistan, which was famous worldwide because of the fabric of Tiraz and all Khorasan textiles were woven in the cities of Sogdia, Samarkand, Bukhara and sent to other regions» (Ferrier, 1995, 154). An example is S. T. Jas robe of 4<sup>th</sup> century A.H., Khorasan texture found in the «Louvre» Museum in France, which was obtained from the «Saint-Jose-Padoucale» church in France, and the name «Amir Abu Mansour Bakhtkin Amir Samani» is written on it in Kufic script (Fig 1). The cities of the Sassanid Tiraz later turned into centers of Islamic Tiraz and continued to operate in Baghdad (Abbasid period), Bukhara, Fars, Bam, Fasa, Shushtar, Genaveh, Shush, Tabaristan, Mavara al-Nahr, Ray, Khorasan. Continuity and exploitation of the design and texture of Sassanid Tiraz can be seen from the sample of the Central Asian artifact (Fig 2) because «a range of Caucasian clothes shows the influence of Sassanid art and the wearing of clothes of that period in this region» (Muthesius, 1992). The motifs woven in the hem of this silk dress include roses and animals typical of Sassanid Iranian textiles.



**Fig 1.** Islamic Tiraz, symmetrical elephant pattern, Kufic script, unknown size, Sassanid style. Source: Louvre Museum.



**Fig 2.** Kaftan, Central Asia, Sassanid style, 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, 191/8×144/8×11 1/8 cm. Source: Metropolitan Museum.

Tiraz weaving of Iranian origin was done before the rule of «Abd al-Malik bin Marwan» and «the main center of silk was Harir in Shush Khuzestan, where 60 pieces of Sassanid fabric are still available» (Mousavi & Ayat Alahi, 2011). Shush, Shushtar, Gundeshapur and later Ray were the biggest cloth weaving centers, and one reason for the prosperity of these centers was «the presence of Roman artists who were brought to Iran as captives by Sassanid Shapur II after the attack on Rome and settled in the mentioned cities» (Rouhfar, 2001, 4). Concerning the importance of Sassanid weaving centers, it is stated: «Shapur II Sassanid brought many weavers from Diyar Bakr and Syria to Iran and Shush and Shushtar to develop all kinds of silk and gold fabrics» (Talebpour, 2014, 51; Wulff, 2005, 156; Grishman, 1971, 226). According to Syriac sources, it was a Roman captive named «Possi, the head of the workshop of the Shapur Palace in Shush» (Farboud & Pourjafar, 2007; Riazi, 2003, 39), who was skilled in silk weaving, and under the orders of Sassanid Shapur, he opened the silk weaving workshop. It seems that the biggest Sassanid Tiraz weaving centers such as Baghdad were noticed during the Umayyad period to the extent that «Akerman» provides detailed explanations about «attributing the pattern and design of Sassanid fabrics to the cities of Khuzestan, Baghdad» (Talebpour, 2014, 8; Pope and Akerman, 2018, 861-893). The main research of the Sassanid period has been done on motifs and designs, which shows that Sassanid textiles were valuable goods, and in terms of raw materials, ideas, and artistic effects of designs and patterns, they played a valuable role in the cultural exchange between Sassanid Iran, Christianity, and after Islam. The study of Sassanid fabrics is because of the purchase of Byzantine churches, and currently, the pieces obtained from the excavations of Turkestan, Caucasus, Egypt, and Shuswin's treasure show that most of them were exported from Sassanid silk weaving workshops. Fabrics that are woven or embroidered with silk and gold thread have given special use to Sassanid Tiraz. This usage



was revealed in the tradition of donating luxurious clothes and fabrics, and its history goes back to the Sassanid period of Iran. Among the examples of this claim, the historical report refers to the «giving of royal robes in the court of many Sassanid princes who gave silk clothes to their courtiers and the permission to wear these clothes was granted to certain persons whom the king wanted to honor or assign as a government official» (Kashmiri, 2018; Jalili, 2013, 4). In this regard, «Taq-e Bostan of Kermanshah has illustrated the scene of conferment of office, in which over 25 unique designs and motifs are used» (Pope & Ackerman, 2008, 874; Grishman, 1971, 226). The arrangement of these motifs indicates the decoration of the Tiraz the special position and rank of each person and the social class system of the Sassanid court. Regarding the «donation of royal robes in the court of many Sassanid princes» (Ibn Khaldoun, 1996, 452; Thaalabi, 1989, 357 & 379), it is narrated: «Khosrow Anushirvan gave his chosen Amir a robe of decorated silk and he was called Amir» (Esfahani, 1967, 56). According to «Baker», «Tiraz was used to describe royal clothes and robes» (Baker, 2006, 60) and it could have been translated to the word «jame» which was colored out of context. It seems that the use of names, nicknames, and special motifs on clothes has been common since the Sassanid period because «the kings of Iran ordered to design their faces, pictures or some shapes on the fabric» (Talebpour, 2014, 58). Also, according to a narration, «Tiraz was a kind of embroidery and was worn by the ruler or a high-ranking person» (Grohman, 1934, 782). Tiraz means «the weaving workshop» and it was also used for brocade fabric (Hemmati Golian, 2010). With these definitions, Tiraz could be the embroidered cloth in an open and long-form on the robe of honor, which visually showed the hereditary power of Sassanid. Another feature of the Sassanid era was the use of embroidery with gold, silk, and metal threads, which shows that precious threads were used in the weaving of brocade fabrics, the clothes of the clergy and the royal family, and the kings' clothes were made of braid sewing textiles (Wulff, 2005, 157-158). Sassanid textile weaving was famous for centuries for «the spread of silk weaving and free pattern in the Middle East, and the use of Sassanid motifs caused the use of gold and silver threads, and this invention was called gold embroidery, silver embroidery, and sometimes they were executed as crochet» (Wulff, 2005, 156-157; Christensen, 1989, 124), if braid sewing, «The embroidery of Sassanid kings' clothing, narrated by Hamza Esfahani<sup>3</sup> has been mentioned» (Ziyapour, 1964, 257-266). From the fixed motifs of Sassanid Tiraz, ram, goat, peacock, duck, rooster, boar, ale (falcon), horse, leopard, snake, cow, lion, elephant, flower and plant, pomegranate flower, multi-lobe plants, lotus, palm leaf, hair, lotus, tree of life; the abstract and geometric pattern of the medallions of tangents, circles, horsemen, seated kings, archers, hunters, assemblies, and minstrels; mythological Simurgh pattern, the winged horse, paired designs of lion, cow, and goddess according to the Symmetric principle, pearl and line pattern, Sassanid floating bands, a row of animal movement, repeated pattern of crowns with crescent and royal ball, which are prominent motifs on coins, dishes, can be seen from the Sassanid period (Fig 3-8). But only designs such as «Simurgh in the Sassanid Tiraz of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. and medallions and symmetrical pairs, the images of the kings in circular and tangential frames prevailed, which permeated the textile art of Christianity and Islam» (Jafarpour & Mahmoudi, 2008; Talebpour, 2014) (Fig 9-13).

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Islamic Tiraz or Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos-Tablion  
Volume 12 Issue 32 Summer 2023 Pages 47-63

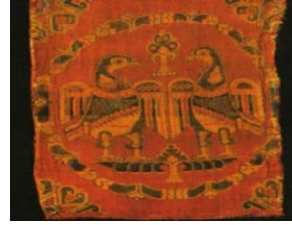
53



**Fig 3.** Sassanid Tiraz- horse, pearls, strips, flower and plant in medallion- 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Central Asia- 17.5 cm.  
Source: Metropolitan Museum.



**Fig 4.** Sassanid Tiraz- Simurgh motif in medallion and pomegranate flower- 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- unknown size.  
Source: Victoria Albert Museum, London..



**Fig 5.** Sassanid Tiraz- Iran or Iraq- 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Symmetrical pair of roosters in medallion- Sassanid style- 11×48/5 cm.  
Source: David Museum.



**Fig 6.** Sassanid Tiraz- king, lotus, pomegranate flower, hunting ground- medallion, 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Unknown size.  
Source: Medieval Museum of Paris<sup>4</sup>.  
Source: Sabri, 2019, 41.



**Fig 7.** Gold silk Tiraz- Central Asia- Sassanid style- lion, medallion symmetrical winged cow, lotus flower- 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- 124×48/8 cm.  
Source: David Museum.  
<https://clevelandart.org/art/1989.50>.



**Fig 8.** Byzantine silk- Sassanid style- Discovered from Charlemagne shrine of Aachen- 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Unknown size.  
Source: Medieval Museum of Paris.



**Fig 9.** Byzantine woven silk- Sassanid style- from the royal tomb of Denmark- Aleh (falcon), Islamic or Greek inscription, 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- 195×230 cm.  
Source: Hedeager Krag, 2016.



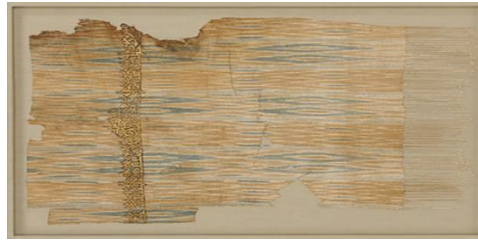
**Fig 10.** Byzantine silk- medallion, elephant- lion, tree of life- Sassanid style- Islamic calligraphy- 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- 255×268 cm.  
Source: Museum of Leon, Spain.



**Fig 11.** Silk- Egypt or Iran- 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Sassanid style- Tree of life, winged horses, parrot and Kufic inscription- 23/5×36/8 cm.  
Source: Cleveland Museum.



**Fig 12.** Byzantine silk- Sassanid style- medallion, rooster, symmetrical winged lion, tree of life, Arabic or Greek writing, unknown size- 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.  
Source:<https://study.com/academy/lesson/byzantine-textiles-characteristics->



**Fig 13.** Islamic Tiraz - Yemeni shawl- Ikat (Vashi)- gold embroidery, Kufic letters, 4<sup>th</sup> century A.H., dimensions 40×58 cm. Source: Metropolitan Museum.

Islamic authors refer to jeweled, painted, and needlework clothes, for which they assign the name «Tiraz»; this implies that the fabric called Vashi means painting, dyeing, and needlework. «Vashi is known as a soft and silky fabric from a city in Turkestan» (Minavi, 2008, 756). Also, it is known as the striped Movashi fabric (Ikat) which Jahiz and Thaalabi called Yemeni cloth and was produced in Ray. The colorful striped Vashi clothes of the Islamic period reflect the example of Sassanid fabrics, and the example is the famous Yemeni-style Ikat shawl, which is embroidered with golden threads in the Sassanid style (Fig 13). The tradition of using the hem decoration of Islamic Tiraz of silk fabrics is an imitation of the decoration style of Coptic Clavos strips. Hamze Esfahani writes about this: Monochrome striped Vashi fabric was more common in the sewing of Sassanid costumes than colored samples. Also, based on the Arabic report of Hamze Esfahani, the influence of Sassanid fabrics shows a constant element of the design and motifs of Islamic Tiraz, which can be traced back to the Sassanid Tiraz. For example, clothes with the names Belawn, Mowashah, Vashi Belzahab, Vashi Modanar, and Vashi Belawn. The author describes each of these clothes: Belawn is a single-color fabric without a motif; Mowashah is a fabric embroidered with precious stones, and Vashi Belzahab is the Sassanid jeweled textile; Vashi Modanar is woven with round frames {medallions}; Vashi Belawn is a Sassanid monochrome striped fabric (Kashmiri, 2018).

### Christian Clavos-Tablion

Clavos is the background of Tablion and its roots reach the traditional Egyptian Coptic textiles, because of the similarity construction, type of decoration, and the use of common designs and motifs, Tablion and Clavos have been considered the same because in the evolution of special decorations, the way of using Clavos changed over time to appear in different Tablion. Clavos is a decorative band of Roman (Byzantine) period simple clothing that was sewn on the shoulder and back of the dress and according to Latin sewing culture, «Clavos is translated as nail or rivet, a kind of weapon of war, claw, rudder, purple stripe on the tunic; However, the root of Clavos means (declawed- closed). They have also interpreted Clavos as a stripe on the tunic and considered its etymological content to be a knot, which decorated Coptic clothes as a band or shoulder band» (Bender Jorgensen, 2007). In fact, the decoration of Coptic textiles has evolved into three forms: Square shapes with the name of Tabulae or Tabulation in the Greek language, which was called Tablion; circular or sphere-like shapes called Orbiculi in the Greek language; band shape or Clavos,



## PAYKAREH

Journal of Art Faculty, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz  
Islamic Tiraz or Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos-Tablion  
Volume 12 Issue 32 Summer 2023 Pages 47-63

55

which is called Clavi or nail in Greek language<sup>5</sup>. This band was used in «a round form along the collar and a single or double band was used to decorate the sleeves, or it was woven or embroidered on the front and back of the dress» (Janssen, 2013. 229) (Fig 14).



**Fig 14.** Clavos- Egypt-6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.-influenced by Coptic, late Roman style- size 41/08×11/24 cm.  
Source: Washington Textile Museum.



**Fig 15.** Coptic Clavos- Egypt-Byzantium- 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Greek, Roman style- 201×119 cm.  
Source: Metropolitan Museum.

It seems that the origin of the Clavos goes back to the robes of the ancient Greek senators, who «distinguished themselves from others with it and was installed on the shoulder of the dress and played an important role in determining their social status» (Bender Jorgensen, 2007). Another purpose of using Clavos is to decorate clothes, hats, and shoes with common red and purple colors (Bradley, 2013). Also, «Clavos has been mentioned as a napkin to the extent that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., it was also used to describe the striped cover of a couch and a tablecloth» (Bender Jorgensen, 2007). Using Clavos continued as vertical strips of Roman tunics with different colors (See Figure 15) and was revived until the Islamic period, especially the Fatimid period of Egypt, with simple backgrounds and calligraphy inscriptions. Egyptian art was influenced by ancient Egyptian artistic cultural backgrounds from Iran, Greece, Rome, and Christianity, and the most important part of Egyptian art belongs to «Coptic art» (Jafarpour & Mahmoudi, 2008). Coptic decorations are related to religious symbols, which changed their nature first with Greek, and Sassanid scripts and motifs, and later with Arabic script. «Scientific research has shown that some findings of Egyptian tombs are of Iranian and Syrian origin, and their filigree technique is derived from the influence of Eastern Mediterranean art. Also, with the arrival of Islam, Coptic textiles with Alzvi motifs and Arabic style were produced, and naturalistic styles with Greek, Roman, and Christian themes were used. Moreover, Egyptian Islamic costumes were prepared, which gave a new shape and identity to Coptic art» (Janssen, 2013; Jafarpour & Mahmoudi, 2008) (Fig 16-18).



**Fig 16.** Silk embroidered with gold and silver- Byzantine period- Symbols of the Christian Gospels, Greek inscription with Islamic style- 1477 A.D.- 102×188 cm Source: Sullivan, 2021, 147.



**Fig 17.** Coptic Clavos- 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- abstract and geometric motifs influenced by Islamic Tiraz- 33×35 cm. Source: Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeological Anthropology.



**Fig 18.** Tablion, Clavos- Egyptian Coptic- winged lion influenced by Sassanid- 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- 19/5×50 cm. Source: Mariemont Royal Museum. <https://coptictextilesft.collectionkbf.be/clavus-cabled-fringed-tunic-line-wild-animals>.

Also, Tablion<sup>6</sup> is a rectangular or trapezoidal piece of cloth that was embroidered on the ceremonial dress (Clamis/Clavis)<sup>7</sup> of emperors and courtiers during the Byzantine Empire or was part of the official dress of the Byzantine courts, and among the women, only Byzantine queens were allowed to wear it (Fig 19&20).



**Fig 19.** Tablion- Queen Ariane's relief- Byzantine period- 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Embroidery and jewelry of the emperor's face. Source: National Museum of France./



**Fig 20.** Tablion- Clothes of Byzantine Emperor and Queen- 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Clavos, Tablion. Source: Houston, 1931, 7.

The Tablion appeared in the Byzantine court from the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and «it was originally a Greek term derived from the word Tabula and has its roots in one of the triple forms of Egyptian Coptic textiles» (Grotowski, 2010, 282). The Tablion was an integral part of the Byzantine emperor's clothing and was «generally sewn with gold threads and worn by the emperor from birth to death» (Ball, 2005, 30). The motivation for using the Tablion was to show the wealth, and power of the Christian world, and was the symbol of the supernatural protection of the emperor to the extent that in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, it was considered a symbol of nobility and social status of individuals or military and official rank, which was granted by the emperor and was used on the right side of Byzantine men's clothes as a piece of embroidered and diamond-shaped decorative fabric. Sometimes red and gold-embroidered Tablions were placed in front of Byzantine emperor's clothes. An example of Tablion can be seen in the church's mosaic of San Vitale in Ravenna on the dress of Emperor Justinian and his companions (Fig 21).



**Fig 21.** Tablion on the cloak of Emperor Justinian, 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Source: Mosaic of San Vitale Church- Ravenna, Italy.



**Fig 22.** Tablion- 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Egypt- Pomegranate and geometric patterns influenced by Greece and Rome- Unknown size. Source: Coptic textiles of the Royal Baudouin Foundation.

Regarding the function of Tablion, in the book «Cultural Studies» (899 A.D.), the term Tablion refers to the box of the emperor's personal clothes that was carried by the servants during the march. «Houston» says about this: «The Tablion was one feature of the court dress from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and was made of silk and gold, and jewels were embroidered on it. From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantine emperors wore Tablion with rich embroidery and geometric designs, rich in jewels, woven from silk and gold threads, and its use was common only for the nobility and the emperor» (Houston, 1931, 136). In fact, since Justinian brought silk to Constantinople in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>8</sup>, the custom of using Tablion, which was sometimes called Clavos, increased. The main motifs used on the Tablions since the beginning of their use, including the motif of a lion, Mega in Emperor Justinian's dress, scepter, sphere, the emperor's orb and roll, rose buds, ducks, octagonal circles, floral motifs, the motif of the emperor, the motif of the symbol of the emperor's power, Pearls in medallions and ivy leaves, crosses and scrolls and vines, circular decorations, abstract gold, brown, and gold palm motifs and the Greek Dionysus image, L, H, and swastika motifs and circular designs, Christian symbols with Roman influences, double spiral motifs, Geometric, circular, palm and mythic motifs, the bust of the emperor wearing the consul's dress on the queen's Tablion, symmetrical pair of birds with jewel embroidery, motifs taken from Sassanid Iranian art, vases and Iranian sun or Fravashi motifs. «From the time of Justinian, the Tablion came as a wide strip, imitating the decorative strips of Greek clothing, which in its new form was placed on the Chlamys in a rectangular shape and contrasting color, and its history of use dates back to the ancient Greek period, which was a sign of the court» (Glenys & Cleland, 2007, 186) (Fig 22).

**Islamic Tiraz**

Tiraz is a type of Islamic fabric which, according to the historical narrative, «was used for the first time by Hisham (106-126 A.H.)» (Baker, 2006, 60-61). It was also said: «Tiraz is probably influenced by Christian Tablion. A piece of decorative cloth that was sewn or installed in Roman and Byzantine clothing to show rank or status» (Bush, 2008, 3). In fact, it seems that «the first use of the Islamic Tiraz was for burial ceremonies» (Walker, 2004, 72), which was used in the ancient tradition of the ancient Egyptians in burial ceremonies, and was later wrapped around the head of the dead by the Fatimids of Egypt and covered their eyes (Ekhtiar & Cohen, 2015). Islamic Tiraz was used in «decoration on the chest, the hem of the dress, on the arm of the officer's dress (See Figure 23), and it was embossed on the dress, in the opposite color of the fabric, so that it would be more visible» (Chitsaz,



**Fig 23.** Plaster statue, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century A.H.- Seljuq period, Kufic inscription on the arm of the sleeve: عليك (م)، مؤمنين (مضطرب است) برتو، (مهريان) الملك فرمانروایی، (از آن خداست) 144/1 cm. Source: Metropolitan Museum.

2000, 32-75). According to the Persian word Tirazidan (Tiraz), it seems that the technique of embroidery and weaving with gold and silk threads is the main characteristic of Islamic Tiraz-weaving and can be evaluated as historical documents because most of their calligraphic texts express the name, title, social status of political people and the place of construction, which gave a special characteristic to the Islamic Tiraz. One of these features is the name of the cities of Shushtar and Shush, which were still one of the most important centers of weaving, to the extent that, in «Tarikh Yamini», Shushtr Tiraz as the most important Umayyad and Abbasid Tiraz is introduced: «After the conquest of Hamadan, Azad al-Dulaw sent a thousand Tiraz cloths to Bukhara on the behalf of Malik Mansour, governor of Amir al-Mu'minin, to Shah Samani» (Ehsanpour & Farboud, 2011). In fact, «Shushtar was the center of brocade production (Diba) in the Islamic era» (Shayestefar, 2008) and Diba was another name for weaving, and perhaps one of the important reasons for Muslim Sultans to pay attention to it is the production of special designs; Because «the Tiraz-weaving workshops (Khalifa workshop: Private (Khaseh)- (Commercial or government workshop: Public (Amme)» under the management and control of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs «operated in the form of small and large workshops and they were called Khaseh (private and special)» (Baker, 2006, 60; Ekhtiar & Cohen, 2015. 48). Because of the presence of gold, silver, and silk threads, the private (Khase) and public (Amme) Tiraz were controlled by the government, and what separated the Islamic Tiraz from other weaves was the presence of calligraphy strips that were produced in Dar Al Tiraz (Tiraz-weaving house). The high prestige of these centers had caused «Al-Mu'azuddin, the first Fatimid caliph of Egypt, to build a place called Jameh Khana and leave large quantities of cloth that were woven in Dar al-Tiraz» (Rahro Esfahani, 2015). To understand the characteristics of the Islamic Tiraz, it is necessary to mention points such as the historical value, the elegance of the texture and the innovation in the writing's execution, the evolution and the change of the motifs and the main designs influenced by the Sassanid, Coptic culture, which has caused the change like the Islamic Tiraz; because by the middle of the first century A.H., an Islamic style different from the Sassanid and Coptic Tiraz was created with calligraphic inscriptions and an emphasis on script and abstract motifs, and this difference created a kind of distinction for the styles of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, in using Kufic, Thuluth, and Naskh scripts instead of human motifs and images of Sassanid kings and Christian motifs. «Before the Umayyad caliphate, it was used in the style of the Greek script, but with the succession of Abd al-Malik bin Marwan, the Arabic script took its place» (Mackie, 2015). There are two examples of the Museum of Archeology and Art of the Islamic Era of the National Museum of Iran with Sassanid motifs (Fig 24, 25 & 26) in which medallions, bergamot, winged lions, and other elements were used, and were probably used for the shroud or covering of the coffin of the elders. «The text of the inscription with the design of the two-headed winged falcon named Saeed bin Abu Khaimeh Harithi dated 393 A.H. coincides with the period of Baha al-Dawlah Daylami» (Rouhfar, 2001, 20-21).



## PAYKAREH

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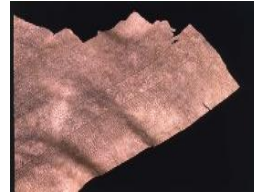
59



**Fig 24.** Islamic Tiraz- Ray city- 4<sup>th</sup> century A.H.- Al Buyeh period- Sassanid style- Motifs: a double-headed falcon with open wings, a decorative band with Kufic script- Kufic script on the wings: «من كبرت همته كثر قيمه», the one who has a great effort is valuable.- Kufic in the upper frame: «من طاب اصله زكى فعله», the one who is original, his actions are good.- 44×35 cm. Source: National Museum of Iran- work number 8559.



**Fig 25.** Islamic Tiraz- Ray city- 5<sup>th</sup> century A.H.- Sassanid style- Symmetrical winged lions and tree of life, rooster and peacock in tangent medallion- 23×40 cm. Source: National Museum of Iran, work number 8560.



**Fig 26.** Islamic Tarz- Ray city- Al Buyeh period- 4<sup>th</sup> century AH.- Sassanid, Coptic style- circle and square frames, Kufic script, geometric and bird pattern- 68×183 cm. Source: National Museum of Iran, work number 8558.



**Fig 27.** Islamic Tiraz- gold woven silk- pattern influenced by Sassanid style, symmetrical rooster, lotus flower and pomegranate in the medallion- 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.- Discovery of Central Asia- size 63/5×228 cm. Source: David Museum.

One characteristic of Islamic Tiraz is the use of plant motifs and religious concepts with inscriptions and Sassanid designs and patterns (rooster, symmetrical falcon) and Coptic, which were executed with tapestry, embroidery, and painting (Fig 27). There are examples from the region of Khorasan (Abbasid period, Sassanid style) and Egypt (Fatimid period) (Fig 29 & 28) on which Kufic script and the text of prayers and wishes for health and Sassanid motifs are woven and embroidered.



**Fig 28.** Islamic Tiraz- Fatimid Egypt- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.H.- tapestry texture- Sassanid style- Kufic script, lion, camel, Chalipa influenced by ancient Iranian motifs- 20/3×30/5 cm. Source: Metropolitan Museum.



**Fig 29.** Islamic Tiraz- 6<sup>th</sup> century A.H.- Sassanid style- Egypt- symmetrical dove, two-headed falcon with open wings in medallion and tree of life, circular band with Kufic script- Unknown size. Source: Preserved in the David Museum.







### **Discussion and Analysis of Findings**

In this section, the questions of the present research are answered, which include the points of similarity, the difference between Islamic Tiraz with Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos-Tablion, as well as the recognition of the design and the influential roles of the Sassanid Tiraz and the Clavos-Tablion on the Islamic Tiraz.

**1. Similarity:** Islamic Tiraz, Sassanid Tiraz, Clavos-Tablion Christian, in terms of social status, all three are symbols of wealth and power of three eras, and it is a sign of Khalat, a gift from the king, caliph, emperor, and the main centers of their production since Islam. The cities of Shush, Shushtar, Baghdad, Fars, Khorasan, Central Asia, Egypt, Syria, and the Mediterranean. Also, the production method, the texture, the motifs, and the designs are very similar; they have used the method of embroidery, and needlework along with the texture of the fabric, and motifs of roosters, birds, peacocks, pigeons in pairs, the tree of life, pomegranates, lotuses, multi-lobed flowers in circular frames, medallions tangent to each other have been observed in their decoration.

**2. Difference:** Fundamental differences can be seen as Islamic Tiraz, Sassanid Tiraz, Clavos-Tablion; in the Islamic Tiraz, single bands with inscriptions on the hem and with Arabic expressions of prayers for the caliph, the vizier, the orderer, along with the date of manufacture, the place of production, and the customer were used, and their special texture is tapestry, printing, painting, embroidery installed on the fabric. In the Islamic period, Islamic Tiraz was a symbol of the socio-political valuing of caliphs over others, and in this sense, it has removed the exclusive use of Tiraz from private to public. One of the most important differences in style is the removal of human and non-Islamic motifs and the creation of the same pattern on the hems of the clothes, which gave a new shape to Islamic clothing. Also, there are different things in the Sassanid Tiraz compared to the other two fabrics, including the absence of inscriptions, the absence of phrases in praise of the kings, the name of the orderer, the date of manufacture, the place of production, printing or painting, and they used the Sassanid style of weaving and embroidery and needlework for decoration. Sassanid Tiraz was a symbol of royal power that had political value and was given to royal relatives (social rank) and one of its common motifs is especially the image of Sassanid kings. These differences apply to the Christian Clavos-Tablion and, for example, the size of the Tablion is larger than the Clavos or decorative strips of Islamic Tiraz, and they are attached to the clothes of the emperor and government officials. Clavos strips were woven for people of high social class and its history goes back to the Greco-Roman period to the Byzantine period. In Clavos, as in Sassanid Tiraz, phrases related to the orderer and praise of people were not used, but the names of saints and Christian and political symbols were sewn on it. The Weaving technique of the Tabloins is in the Sassanid style, but the needlework on them is in the Coptic style. Also, in contrast to the Islamic Tiraz, the Clavos-Tablion textiles were considered a symbol of the emperor's supernatural power and his protection during the Christian era. In Table 1, some impressive motifs and designs of Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos-Tablion are introduced based on images.

**Table 1.** Designs and motifs of the Sassanid Tiraz, Christian Clavos- Tablion influencing the Islamic Tiraz. Source: Author.

Sassanid Tiraz: Pigeon, falcon, rooster, camel, tree of life, medallion, lotus flower, horse and winged lion, bergamot, pomegranate flower, pearl motif, chalipa		
Clavos; Tablion: Striped design, rhombus- circle- square frame, geometric motifs, movement of running animals.		
		
Symmetrical rooster, medallion, inscription in Kufic script used in Christian textiles, pigeon, tree of life, Sassanid needlework.	Tree of life, pigeon, bird of paradise, falcon, medallion, winged horse, Sassanid needlework.	Winged lion, pomegranate flower, bergamot, tree of life, pearl motif, rooster, peacock, Sassanid texture.
		
Open-winged falcon, medallion, strip inscription, flower, Sassanid needlework.	Symmetrical pigeon, parrot, circle, rhombus, square, striped margins, Kufic inscription, medallion, Sassanid texture.	Winged lion in a row, chalipa, abstract flower and leaf, striped margins, medallion, Kufic inscription, embroidery, Sassanid needlework.

**Conclusion**

The secret of the stability of the Islamic Tiraz sewing method and implementing textures, the continuity of motifs and decorative designs of the past, is the support of the rulers of the Islamic period from the cultural-artistic backgrounds of the Sassanid and Coptic eras, which continued to work vigorously for centuries. The management of the Islamic caliphs over the textile production workshops belonging to the Sassanid era and later the Christian era caused the tradition of political and social value of royal textiles to be preserved from the past and turned into a symbol of glory and power. The results of the present research showed that the Islamic Tiraz is Christian in terms of structure and decorative elements that continue the tradition of Sassanid textile weaving; they first followed the Sassanid Tiraz regarding the type of texture, the method of construction, and design, and then in the final path of their transformation and change, they adopted the shapes of Clavos-Tablion forms with the difference that Islamic scripts were placed in the Islamic Tiraz instead of Christian elements and Sassanid human motifs. Like the Sassanid Tiraz and the Islamic Tiraz, the Christian Tablion has had high material and spiritual importance, which is a modified form of the Coptic- Christian Clavos decorative strips, and Coptic Clavos has a lot of contribution in designing and developing the decorative forms of Islamic Tiraz textiles with calligraphy inscriptions; the influence of the Islamic style in using the common plant, animal, and mythological motifs can be attributed to Sassanid art and their change from unified forms to Coptic Clavos strips, which were used with single calligraphic motifs on the hem of the textiles and created a special and new form of Islamic Tiraz and gave it a new identity.

**Appendix**

1. King Baudouin Foundation <https://coptictextilesft.collectionkbf.be/iconography>.
2. «Hai Gaon» (939-1038 AD) wrote in Arabic language with «Ben Sharira» and served in the Talmud Academy.

3. The book of history entitled «Sunni Muluk al-Ard and al-Anbiya سنن ملوك الارض و الانبياء» (280 A.H.) explains: In 303 A.H., in the city of Estakhr, Pars, I saw a large book about the sciences and news of the monarchs and the buildings and plans of the Iranians. That picture was of 27 kings of Iran and the Sassanid dynasty, and each of them was depicted as young or old with ornaments, crowns, beards, and faces.
4. Musee Du Moyen-Age, Paris
5. Marlamallett.com/Coptic-1.htm
6. ταβλίον
7. The main official clothing of the court and civilians was Christian and it started from the time of Constantine I and it was the most important element of the Byzantine coronation, which was made in purple color and with the design of Ale and golden or purple colors (Ball, 2005, 30).
8. Justinian was in pursuit of silk and accepted the offer of two Christian monks to smuggle silk eggs. It is also said that an Iranian taught the use of silk cocoons to the Romans (Wulff, 2014, 160).

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