



Burqa'

Date

Early twentieth century

Primary Maker

Artist not recorded

Medium

silk, coins, beads, wool

Description

Red embroidered headband supports orange silk veil which covers nose and cheeks. From lower edge of veil hang many silver coins (probably dowry). The burqo has been a popular face veil among Bedouin women for centuries, not only in Southern Palestine, but also in Syria and Arabia. This veil is a harnesslike affair, and in fact, in Classical Arabic the word also indicates a horse's headgear. The burqo' is composed of a headband ('aşbeh or 'iṣāba) and the veil itself, which is attached to the headband at the center of the forehead, descends over the nose, and hangs down the cheeks like two wings of an

inverted V. The lower corners of the veil on each side are attached by a chain of beads to the side of the headband above the ears, thus creating large loops for the eyes. This cloth part of the veil, which actually covers the face; burqo' face, ends just below the jaw. It could be of cotton, linen, or silk. A solid row of coins edges the veil from the bridge of the nose on down continuing to loop around the bottom in each direction. The coins are part of the wearer's bridal wealth just as we have already seen on the Bethlehem shaṭweh, the Ramallah smādeh, the Hebron wuqāyat ed-derāhim, and the Beit Dajan ṣaffeh. In the Khan Yunis area in the southern Gaza Strip, peasants wear loops of coins over their faces, but without the burqo' veil itself. Earlier in this century, Muslim women in some Palestinian towns (for example, Nablus in Samaria and Isdud in the Southeastern Coastal Plain) wore a veil called burqo'.¹¹⁸ The burqo' of the townswomen was similarly suspended of fabric which hung down as far as the waist or lower. This last type was similar to the burqo' of Egyptian women and was synonymous with the Turkish yashmaq. ¹¹⁹ FA. 72.25-3d Burqo (early twentieth century) (Fig. 40 and Plate 22) This face veil is from the Tayaha tribe of the Beer Sheba region. The headband is covered with silk cross stitch embroidery mainly in red which resembles the embroidery in the qabbeh of the Tayaha dress (FA. 72.25-3a). A piece of orange silk is suspended from the center front of the headband to cover the wearer's face. The lower corners of the fabric are attached to the sides of the headband by a string of glass beads. Two solid rows of silver coins, mostly Ottoman dated A.H. 1277 (a.d. 1860-61) and 1327 (1909-10), line the lower edge of the silk from the bridge of the nose on

down. Four long silver chains, which extend almost to the wearer's waist and end with a silver coin and two beads, hang from each side of the veil. A cord holds the headband in place on the head. It is made from either goat hair or wool and is dyed red. The coins provide the weight to keep the veil in place over the face. Diameter: 26 cm (Palestinian Costume and Jewelry, Yedida Kalfon Stillman, 1979 ISBN: 0-82630490-7).

Dimensions

20 7/8 x 13 in. (53 x 33 cm)