

TRADITIONAL AZERBAIJANI SHOES

A shoemaker's shop in Shusha. Late 19th century



Traditional shoes, which stood out for their considerable diversity, were still common in the territory of Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 19th century. Footwear, like other items of clothing, was primarily of practical value, i.e. protected the feet from cold, damage and bites. At the same time, it had a remarkable value and reflected the social class and financial situation of the carrier.

It should be noted that women's and men's footwear was basically identical. The entire rural population wore the simplest shoes - charikhs made from a single piece of rawhide. Charikhs covered the foot at a low height; on the edge, they were tied with a leather strap or a woolen cord, forming a loop. A woolen cord or strap was threaded through these loops to lace and fix the charikhs on the foot. Charikhs were made either from cattle rawhide treated by peasants themselves or from leather treated in a more advanced way - ashilanmish gon. The latter were more expensive and were worn by wealthy peasants, and those from rawhide (cheap) – by the poor. Charikhs were worn over woolen socks or puttees (patava, dolag) of cotton fabric. Poor peasants wore them on everyday occasions and on holidays. There were several types of charikhs - takburun, shirazi, gizgaytaran, shatiri, gushburun, shirvani, kalmani, shirmai and others. Charikhs were tied with two types of laces - either woven wool laces (tokhunma bag) or twisted laces (eshma bag). The length of each of them reached 130-150 cm depending on the type of socks. If socks were put on up to the knee, then long laces were used.

Urban residents from the poorer sections of the popu-



Women's shoes. Azerbaijan, 19th century. National History Museum of Azerbaijan (NHMA)

lation wore chusts (empty) - shoes reminiscent of mocasins on rawhide soles. In the countryside in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, chusts were also common. Wealthy people in villages and towns also wore boots with a pointed nose and a small heel.

In mountainous areas, people wore a kind of shoes that had a limited habitat. For example, in the mountainous areas of the Nakhchivan zone, boots with a single-back top, which was fixed on the foot with the help of straps, were common. This footwear, known by the term "lapchin", was sewn from both leather and felt. Shoes made of felt, which resembled boots, were worn in the mountainous villages of the Zagatala zone.

Representatives of wealthier sectors wore boots or low shoes "mas" (or "mast") of soft goat skin without soles. The mas was usually worn with shoes or chusts. During fieldwork, we saw this kind of shoes in the elderly in the Zagatala zone. Informants reported that they were usually worn by representatives of the Muslim clergy. According to references in literature, it can be assumed that this type of footwear was more widespread in the 19th century, but probably only in the northern regions of Azerbaijan.

Another type of shoes was light slippers sewn mainly from black morocco. They had no heels, so they were worn mostly at home.

In urban areas, men and women wore shoes without backs on a small heel and platform sole. Typically, these shoes were sewn from leather of dark colors. These shoes, known under the term "bashmag", are mostly typical for Azerbaijan. The most common type of footwear for both sexes, especially in the cities, were leather bashmags on heels (pollu bashmag, makhmari bashmag) without the back and with a turned-up nose. They were commissioned to shoemakers (bashmagchi) in the cities. These

Women's shoes. Azerbaijan, 19th century. NHMA



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shoes were made of morocco, velvet or leather imported from Iran. They were worn by men (mardana bashmag) and women (zanana bashmag). Women's shoes were different in that they could be made out of leather of bright colors - red, green or velvet. Weekend shoes could be decorated with embroidery thread (gulabatin), beads or stamped pendants. The heel of the shoe was also decorated with embroidery. For women from very wealthy families, specially commissioned gold or silver plates, samples of which are available in the collection of the Museum of History of Azerbaijan, were placed on the heel of the shoe.

In Baku and Absheron, there were men's lightweight summer chusts without spikes called Dubandi sewn from Russian leather (meshin). They were tied with two cords and were considered casual shoes.

Shoes in the form of socks knitted from coarse woolen thread with thick soles knitted from ropes were found in the mountain villages of the Zagatala and Guba-Khachmaz zones. And then these shoes were sewn with thick felt. The tip of this shoe was also sharp and hooked upwards. This footwear was known under the

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term "Shatal".

At the end of the 19th century, along with European-style clothes, European shoes also become common among the wealthier sectors of the population in the cities. Local shoemakers begin to sew shoes similar to European ones, as well as low shoes with lacing. At the beginning of the 20th century, galoshes become widespread. If in the city these shoes were worn more in winter during snow or rainy weather, in the countryside and small towns they become everyday footwear, particularly for women. Galoshes become significantly widespread in the 1930s and 1940s.

At the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, local shoes are ousted by European shoes. The latter began

Men's shoes. Azerbaijan, 19th century. NHMA





Charikhs – traditional footwear of Azerbaijani peasants. 19th century. NHMA

to spread in the cities among the local bourgeoisie, and then in the countryside. As a result, the number of bashmagchis fell sharply by the end of the 19th century. All kinds of traditional shoes were gradually supplanted by factory-made shoes in the first half of the 20th century, but the process became especially accelerated after the Second World War. 🌟

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