

Shoe making

Shoe making is one of the traditional and ancient crafts of the Tajik people still being practiced to this day. Prior to the 1920 it is known that there were shoe making workshops in every city where up to twenty or forty people used to work. These traditional workshops produced shoes for all purposes and for everyone e.g. men and women or children shoes, winter shoes for working in the field shoes for horse riding etc. The shoemakers also made *mahsi* – a type of knee-high slippers without hard sole worn to keep the feet warm during the winter and also

for religious purposes. *Mahsi* was made from very soft leather. Shoemakers were given names depending on the type of shoes they made such as *muzaduz*- shoemaker specialized in making boots or *kafshduz* – shoemaker specialized in making outdoor slippers.

Certainly the traditional shoes made for local market were also designed after the imported prototypes as witnessed by the names given to these shoes, such as Iraqi i.e. shoes from Iraq. Quality and type of shoes also depended on the social status and the wealth of the person



commissioning it or buying it. For example a *shippak* shoes, which is a type of women outdoor slipper were made using three layers of fine leather and had also a heel.

The basic traditional shoe making toolbox included a pair lasting pliers, shoemaker's knife, awl handle, welting awl blade, sleeking bone, spool of hemp thread and ball of thread wax.

One of the most common footwear worn in old days was *muki*, which was worn by men, women and children alike. This type of footwear was worn during the warm and dry season. It was light weight and ankle high made from un-tanned leather.

Second most common shoes were that of *choruk* or also commonly called *khomak*. In contrast with *muki* the *choruk* was worn during the humid, wet and cold days. It had flat sole and was made from un-tanned and unprocessed cow or sheep skin with the furry part from outside. Inside it a layer of linen grass was let for insulation purpose and foot wrap was used to add extra comfort. This form of footwear was mostly won by impoverished population. It was higher than ankle and had strips attached to it in order to tying it up on the foot, which was called *chorukband*. *Choruk* was not made by professional shoemakers but ordinary people would make it themselves.

Although making certain traditional footwear has discontinued due to the mass industrial productions, but still making boots and *mahsi* is continuing. In Khujand and Istaravshan there are two type of traditional boots made which has elaborate high heel used for horse-riding especially during the *buzkashi* game or horse polo.

Mahsi is a soft leather knee high slipper worn primarily in the cold and humid seasons and outdoors it is worn with rubber slippers called *kalush*. Similarly to boots it is handmade using special frame and can have decorations or be simple.

