

Leather making

People from the dawn of civilizations needed sturdy clothing and for this purpose used leather obtained from various domesticated and wild animals for making shoes and garments. Thus the leather production as one of the most ancient crafts has a long historical development history.

In Tajikistan leather making was widespread in ancient cities and town such as Khujand, Hisar, Panjakent, Istaravshan, Kulob and so on where to this there are place names survived as «charmgaron» where the leather producing workshops existed. In these areas leather was produced from cow, horse, camel, goat and sheepskin, including wild animals hunted by the local populace. The leather was used for making warm winter clothing, shoes and other wearable accessories. It was also employed for making horse and donkey equipment. Those involved in leather making craft were divided into three groups each named after the products they made such *muzaduzon*- those making boots; *mahsiduzon*- those making sock-like leather soft footwear and *kafshduzon*- a slipper style or ankle high shoes.

In our days the leather making process is in the following manner: an animal skin such as cow is soaked into water for one or two days. Afterward it is taken out from water and the hide is shaved and cleaned. It is then soaked in another large container where lime and sodium acid is added; this is usually 20 or 30 liters of mixture and 20 liters of fresh water. This container is usually buried in the ground so it makes it easy to fetch out a wet and heavy skin.

The skin is kept in this mixture for two days and after it is taken out its obverse side (the hairy side) is shaved and peeled and it goes back to the mixture container for another 48 hours. When it is taken out salt is applied on both sides of the skin and left for four days. When it is semi-dried it is shaved and polished. Afterwards it is soaked in salt and sulfate mixed water for another day. After passing one day sugar, chromic acid is added and the skin is kept for one hour. Then the skin is taken out washed and kept in water another day and rinsed off from all the different mixtures it has been soaked into. Finally the skin is tanned and left to dry in the sun.

After it is dried it is put on the equipment called *peshkor* and polished with the tool called *chom*. This process is mainly for softening the leather and afterwards it is pulled straight into for sides and left to dry as a flat sheet. Another mixture made from milk, sugar and negrozine acid, which is used to apply on the leather to make it soft and give a shiny color. Before the chemical tanning techniques evolved leather tanning was done by natural colors, such as from almond bush tree.

