

## “Giveh” Handicraft in Iran: An Anthropological Study Approach

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### Abstract

Giveh is footwear worn by men and women appropriate for warm weather and in mountainous areas of Iran. The traditional shoe soles are built with unique material pieces of cloth and are covered with hand-woven cotton or silk. As a unique type of footwear and clothing, Giveh is an integral part of garments. Every country is expected to be a part of preservation and restoration of the culture and to introduce a new generation of useful features as written sources found on the cloth. The aim of the present study is to identify the reasons for the boom in the industry with respect to the components and characteristics of anthropological study considering the manufacturing process of Giveh. It also tries to shed light on the craft and art of the indigenous people, i.e., the way they made the shoes with existing materials and environmental situation around them.

**Keywords:** Giveh; Cover Fabric; Production Process; Giveh Production Industry

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### 1. Introduction

Various ethnic groups live in Iran with their own customs and their own fashion. In the tradition, there exist different ethnic groups. In the meantime, traditional Giveh became the shoes of various ethnic groups in mountainous areas in temperate warm and dry climates with the raw material easily available to them. Some of these ethnic groups include Qashqai, Bakhtiari, the Kurds and the Lurs is, Khorasan, South Khorasan, Fars, Isfahan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kerman, Bushehr, Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Kohgiluyeh-Boyer Ahmad, Hamedan, Kurdistan, who wear Giveh and who have spread it around other areas. Besides, tourists who come from other countries to Iran usually buy different brands of these shoes from shoemakers as souvenirs.

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Giveh shoes are soft, light and resistant, which have been used in the olden days, the most frequent consumers of which were rustics and farmers. Often, farmers and ranchers used it because of the lightness and good resistance. Since early days, humans have considered the preparation and use of this foot wear to protect their feet against the ground and rough terrain. Although no one knows for sure how these foot wears have reached their current stage of the development, it is certain that the inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau, in a certain period of history, had access to the technique and texture of Giveh and still continue its production. Needless to say that all human inventions have been made according to the needs and possibilities, and, of course, there is no exception that Giveh footwear has consistent unique features for the arid and mountainous nature of the country. The style, in which the foot does not sweat and the raw materials and production methods can be found in various regions, as well as having a unique feature for the right and left foot, distinguishes Giveh from other footwear's worldwide (Begay, and Qambar, 2012: 60).

The profession of knitting Giveh footwear has a thousand years of history; some Giveh weaving tools have been obtained from Oramanyh, dating back to thousands of years ago (Mahmoudi, and Rahimi, 2011: 16). Some researchers believe that the Giveh timeline dates back to the time of Siavash and his mother who went to Turkestan and were wandering for seven years and as the need for their march arose, they made some shoes that were durable, light in weight and cool, which were later called Giveh (Karimi, and Habibi, 2010: 124). Alblkhy, the famous historian in 1105 AD, also refers to the Ghandyjan shoemaker-weaving industry in the Gulf; In 340 AD, the famous journalist Mostowfi stated that Giveh weaving business was at the peak of its perfection during his time (Wolf, 1993: 205).

## **2. Methodology**

The aim of this anthropology study is to add to the readers' knowledge of the manufacturing processes and profession of making Giveh. This study has been carried out to realize this objective, and because of the lack of library resources, a field study was conducted for detailed comparisons of the types of Giveh that shoemakers had collected and categorized. In order to understand the identity of the craft, the manufacturing methods and materials used in the construction industry and the workman of Giveh handicraft need to be studied. The weavers and soles makers were interviewed regarding Giveh making procedures in different provinces of Iran. From the beginning of the process until the end, lots of photos were also taken. Giveh making procedure was carefully examined for the types of beds, and how to prepare a detailed study was also determined. In the cities which were once important centers of today's Giveh industry, just a few people working in this profession could be found, many of whom were often at the age of about 80. This seemingly small industry includes four professions, namely, leather, knitting, crochet in making soles and Giveh embroidery.

## **3. Findings**

Giveh can be decomposed and divided into two parts, i.e., the soles and the upper section.

### **3.1. Upper section making procedure**

The upper portion of Giveh is strongly woven and has a special procedure. Giveh shoe is woven with a long needle which has a smooth and rounded tip which is not sharp. Generally, three types of textures (or weaves) are there for weaving the upper section which is the plain weave or the original weave and plaited weave, grid weave, and double edged weave which is among decorative weaves.

The mesh textured fabric is used for processing the upper section of Giveh which is in the form of a net or the diamond-shaped designs usually used in this procedure (Afshar qhochany, and Nikouei, 2009: 56) (Fig 1).



**Fig 1** (a) start procedures texture



(b) Mesh texture

Generally, the upper section making procedure is divided into two categories:

A. The upper section woven with cotton yarns which are of two kinds: (a) First the sole of Giveh is made and then the surrounding upper section is stitched; this is the main product of the West of Iran such as Kermanshah and Kurdistan (Fig 2).



**Fig 2** Kermanshahi Giveh

B. The sole and the upper section of Giveh are later made separately; the two parts are then connected together by the third person. This product is mainly of the south and central west region, which is a more elegant type found in Fars province (Fig 3).



**Fig 3** a) Giveh in Fars Province



(b) Upper section; hand-woven with needle and thread

2. The upper section woven with silk thread: The silk woven upper section procedure is about half a century old. By using colored silk threads, the upper section is woven with geometric designs, and these weave are made using weaving hooks. Some Giveh shoes are woven with covers for toes which are used as slippers for domestic purposes, specially observed in the central Kermanshah region (Fig 4).



**Fig 4** Giveh upper section silk woven

### 3.2. Giveh soles divided into four categories

A. Fabric soles Giveh: This type of Giveh shoes have different names in different areas such as flat soles or fabric soles. The soles are made by compressing pieces of cotton fabrics or manufactured linen, which gives popularity to this flat type of Giveh shoes; later, different types of flat soles were made (Fig 5).



**Fig 5** Fabric soles Giveh

B. Giveh soles with embroidered Ejide work: Usually, in this type of soles, a few thin pieces of goat skin layer are used. The layers are stacked together; glue is applied in between each layer and the next layer is placed on it. When the required layer is reached then it is hammed by hand on the glued layers. The different patterns are embroidered on the leather in such a way that holes are created while stitching. The presence of these holes in the sole, caused by the stitching, allows the air to flow and the foot to sweat (Fig 6).



**Fig 6** Giveh soles with embroidery Ejide

C. Giveh with leather soles: Usually tanned buffalo leather is used for the soles of Giveh. This leather can be cut according to the foot size and later the embroidery work is carried on the Giveh shoes. The Giveh sole leather comes in different colors (Fig 7).



**Fig 7** Giveh leather soles

D. Rubber sole Giveh shoes: Rubber is used for the soles of Giveh because of its low price. The rubber sole is hot, and hence it is more suitable for winter wear. These are of two types; one is the lap-flat rubber, which is lighter, more flexible and more commonly used by the farmers and the villagers. The other is the under-surface rubber, which is heavier, has a rough surface, and is mostly used by ranchers in the mountain and in the desert (Fig 8).



**Fig 8** Rubber sole for Giveh shoes



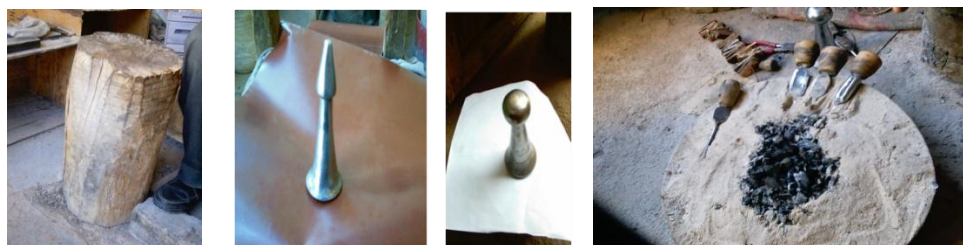
**Fig 9** Type of Giveh soles

### 3.3. Production process of Giveh shoes

Three people are usually involved in the making of Giveh. The upper section weavers are the ones who weave the upper section of Giveh with cotton threads and needles; this is usually done by women. Sole makers are the ones who use pieces of cotton fabric to make the soles of Giveh, while the third person does the Giveh stitching by which the soles and the upper section are stitched together. The material used in manufacturing Giveh shoes is completely natural, and no synthetic materials are used.

### 3.4. Making the sole of Giveh

The necessary tools which are required consist of anvil, awl and hand punch. For making Giveh at different stages, different awls with different thicknesses and lengths are used; they are called by different names in different geographical areas (Fig 10).



**Fig 10** Tools used for making Giveh

**Materials used:** The materials used for making Giveh are natural and available which include raw skin strips of cow or camel, silk threads, pieces of fabric that are used for making undergarment, and cotton and linen which are not made of synthetic fibers. Different types of colors are also used for dyeing the fabric pieces of Giveh soles. Giveh sole laying is an important and



difficult job; the person laying the sole must act carefully and must have the necessary skills. Giveh sole is made of pieces of fabric or linen which are cut into strips with the width of three centimeters and the length of twelve centimeters (Fig 11).



**Fig 11** Thin wick fabrics for Giveh

Each of these pieces is known as a thin wick. For each pair of Giveh (normal size) about three wicks are required. The wicks are laid in batches on the anvil, and holes are made in the center with an awl. Some are made of leather strips that are used at the heel and behind the sole of the Giveh. Figure 11 shows the strips of cow or camel skin leather where the hole strips pass through the wicks at the heels and behind the sole. In each wick, six holes are made and the leather strips are passed through these holes and completely stretched so that the wicks are completely close to each other. In order for the wicks not to separate from each other, the junction meeting the upper section and the sole are winded with fifty layers of cotton yarn which is made of goat hair around the Giveh sole (flake). After the completion of dry rolling operation, it is then cut in the form of soles (Fig 12).



**Fig 12** Making Giveh Fabric soles

After the upper section weaving and sole preparation are completed, they then need to be stitched together. The Giveh maker first washes the upper section and does the lining work. Later, the tanned leather strips of skin are trimmed, and triangular pieces are made ready. With precision and special skills, the upper section is joined to the sole. In some places, the upper section is woven all-round the sole (Fig 13).



**Fig 13** Connection to soles to the surface

### 3.5. An anthropological study of Givéh

The warm and dry areas and rugged mountainous passages in Iran, the type of animal husbandry and agriculture-based livelihoods and the need for excessive movement in spring, summer and autumn which are the working seasons, require comfortable, resistant, cool as well as cheap footwear for the tribal, rural and semi-urban communities. Handicraft work of Givéh is a combination of art and industry where each has its special place. Today, humans, with help of industrial advances, meet their needs and this phenomenon has been coordinated with the wants of the consumers. However, the arising industrialization, gradual issues and challenges for humans, along with emotional, social and economic events caused lots of changes for the traditional communities. Meanwhile, Givéh gradually fell from the booming industries due to global mechanization. In fact, this industry only exists in communities that have a vast historical and cultural background. In the areas with handicraft production, people transfer their skills and experiences in craft production to the next generations.

The economic importance of Givéh weaving profession like any other crafts is for revenue income, which does not require expensive raw materials, and the employment possibility in most towns and rural areas with these industrial characteristics. In addition, the handicraft of a country is an attraction for domestic and foreign tourism, especially as a boost for the cultural and art tourism. The revenue resulting from this process can have a very beneficial effect on the economic development of the country (Partoy, 2008: 87).

### 4. Reasons for the decline of this industry

Although Givéh has unique and special features, its making profession has encountered fatal barriers for survival. Intense production development stages, severe competition in fashion trend and the emergence of various designs are the main cause for the stagnation in its present day industry. In the past, manufacturers of handicrafts used to take the responsibility and enthusiastically dealt with the product design. Today, clothes, footwear and industrial designers are very active in the field of design and have so many creative ideas that have stopped Givéh profession flourishing. Industrial production and modern lifestyles of Givéh and other crafts have faced profound challenges, to the extent that even the richest and most prestigious handicrafts have faced fundamental difficulties, causing many to lose or abandon their careers. These problems can be classified into four main groups namely (a) the design, (b) supply and packaging. (c) marketing and advertising, and (d) peripheral problems (Wahhabi, and Omarayi, 2008: 9).

### 5. Conclusion

Use of Givéh traditionally covers most regions of Iran, it is adaptable to different climates, and it is still one of the most common garments among other traditional crafts. As previously stated, Givéh has different types, yet what comes to mind upon hearing the word is the same type of fabric soles with fine-woven needle knitting. Women have been usually responsible for the knitting of the upper section of Givéh, while laying of Givéh soles and joining them to the upper section have been done by men. The proper planning and division of work in the industry to both women and men in employment were seemingly important among the makers. Further, according to the modern life style, innovation and competition in the fashion arena for the right design have created new plans to again introduce these kinds of shoes to help fashion arena. Givéh has original features to meet the

taste of people of this era besides its potential to enhance employment, innovation, economic aspects and revival of the industry.

## 6. Suggestions for future research

- In modern life, people spend most of their time outdoors, so comfortable footwear styles such as Giveh are necessary and can be a source of inspiration for the design of shoes.
- Promotion of technical and vocational training centers needs to be considered in future studies.
- Entrepreneurship and employment for young people in the profession also need to be emphasized in follow-up research projects.

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