

Giveh-weaving craft still alive in Ilam Province

Iranica Desk

From the very beginning of life, human beings realized that in order to avoid the dangers of nature, they should use footwear and this was actually one of their most basic stages of thinking about survival. *Giveh* is an Iranian traditional footwear made by craftspeople, using very simple and primitive tools. *Giveh-bafi* (*giveh-weaving*) has been common in the western province of Ilam for a long time. The production process of *giveh* is divided into three phases: 1. Making the sole, known as *ajideh*; 2. Weaving the upper part; 3. Sewing the upper part to the sole, chn.ir reported. These phases can be done either entirely by a craftsman, or separately by three skilled workers. In the past, the sole of *giveh* was made from the skins of animals, such as cows, which required much patience and skill. However, presently, most *givehs* are manufactured using ready-made plastic soles. For making *giveh*, cotton thread is used to prevent feet from sweating in the summer. Moreover, since some nomads live in areas which are rocky and hard to pass, they can wear *givehs* as a strong shoe. For weaving women's *givehs*, manufacturers use colorful silk threads to diversify them and create beautiful

designs.

Although manufacturing *giveh* still continues in parts of Ilam Province, due to the low final price of this footwear, getting involved in this field of handicraft production, which needs a lot of effort and time, is not economically viable, and this has created many problems for craftspeople.

Presently, a few people are engaged in *giveh-weaving* in the province, most of whom produce only custom-made shoes. They also sell part of their products in the local, provincial, and national exhibitions and some handicraft stores.

The craft of *giveh-bafi* displays a combination of male and female art, unlike embroidery, for example. Some craftspeople and experts believe that modern methods should be employed to preserve the art and prepare conditions for producers to sell their works to other parts of the country, and even export them to foreign countries.

Giveh is light, cool, durable and suitable for walking and daily use at work, university, and due to its beautiful and attractive designs, it is suitable for pairing with all kinds of fashionable clothes. Due to the presence of pores in the fabric, it has good ventilation, which prevents sweating and foot odor.

1000-year-old tower of Savadkuh in danger of destruction



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Lajim Tower in Iran, which dates back 1000 years, located in Lajim village in Savadkuh, Mazandaran Province, is damaged.

The most iconic part of this building, the dome of the tower, has reportedly been destroyed due to a tree growing nearby. Recently, published photos of this monument caused concern among fans.

The tower is 18 meters high, with a round shape. While the exterior design is simple, the stand of the dome is decorated with an archway and the entrance door is in the eastern part of the building.

This monument is prominent among historical works, mostly because of containing one Kufic and one Pahlavi epigraph. Based on the Kufic script epigraph found in the dome, the builder of the structure is Kia Esmaeil Abolfars Shahriar ibn Abbas, and it was erected in 1022 CE.

These two epigraphs indicate that kings not only paid attention to the art of the Islamic era, but also to the calligraphy common in that time.

This historical heritage is known as one of the two old sepulchral towers in Mazandaran, along with Rasket Tower, and was registered on Iran's National Heritage List on July 9, 1932.



Gorgan in ancient time

In antiquity, Hyrcania encompassed the eastern portion of modern Mazandaran; by the time of the Arab geographers, however, the border between Tabarestan, as Mazandaran was then called, and Jurjan or Gorgan passed not far to the west of Astarabad.

In terms of climatic conditions, the area between the Alborz, Gorgan, and the Caspian coast differs fundamentally from Khorasan; here, as in other Caspian regions of Persia, precipitation is very high, so that the region has lush vegetation.

James Baillie Fraser, a Scottish travel writer, who reached the banks of the Gorgan coming from Bojnurd

on the east, relates in glowing terms the impression that the change made on him.

The earthen walls and flat earthen roofs of Khorasani dwellings, whose color fully corresponds to that of the soil, were replaced by constructions that were built chiefly of wooden pales held together with clay, and which had wooden floors; household utensils were also made from wood. On the other hand, the humidity that condenses in the forests makes the climate of this region quite harmful to the health. Further-

more, the country is totally open to inroads by nomads from the north, against whom fortifications were built as early as Sassanid times.

The Arabs conquered Gorgan much later than Khorasan (in fact, only in 717 CE). Until the conquest of Gorgan, travel through Qumis was considered unsafe, and even the governors of Khorasan appointed by the caliph usually preferred to take the southern route through Fars and Kerman; only Qutayba b. Muslim, in 705, realized the journey through Rey and Qumis. In the time of the Arab geographers, Gorgan was the capital of the local dynasty of the Ziyarid dynasty, whose founder, Mardawij b. Ziyar (928-935 CE) conquered a part of Persia and was beginning to dream of a restoration of the throne of the Sassanids when he was killed by his slaves.

His successors had to submit to the mightier dynasties of the Buyids, the Ghaznavids and ul-

imately the Seljuks; in the second half of the eleventh century, the dynasty was annihilated by a sect of the Ismaeilis or Assassins.

The city of Gorgan thus no longer had any political importance after Mardavij, but it remained, judging from descriptions by the Arab geographers, the largest city of the Caspian regions.

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn al-Ishtakri, a 10th-century travel author and Islamic geographer, speaks with enthusiasm of the fertility in this land, where the growing of crops of warm as well as cold climates converged, where it snowed in winter but where nonetheless palms could grow.

Gorgan, together with Tabaristan, was also renowned for its silk.

The city of Gorgan, Jurjan in Arabic, straddled the river of the same name; the river divided it into two parts, Shahrestan and Bakrabad, which were linked by a bridge. Shahrestan was on the right bank, Bakrabad on the left.

As early as the tenth century, the city went into a decline caused by chronic wars between the Samanids and the Buyids, a struggle in which the Ziyarids kept submitting to whichever side was winning. To the epoch of the Ziyarids also pertains the tomb of Qabus bin Vushmgir, the Ziyarid ruler of Gorgan and Tabaristan, built in 1006-7, the edifice has been described by several geographers.

The harbor of Abaskun served as the port of Gorgan; it was probably situated at the estuary of the Gorgan river on the site of the present-day settlement of Giimushtep. Alongside Abaskun, Astarabad is also mentioned, not as the trading center that it is today, but as a manufacturing town; the inhabitants were renowned for their mastery in silk weaving. Today only woolen rugs were woven in Astarabad, but more widely known are other kinds of industry that did not exist there in the Middle Ages, in particular, soap boiling and the manufacture of gunpowder.

[Tomb of Qabus bin Vushmgir](http://tasnimnews.com)
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The above is a lightly edited version of chapter entitled 'Qumis and Gorgan', from a book entitled, 'An Historical Geography of Iran', written by W. Barthold and published by Princeton University Press, Princeton.