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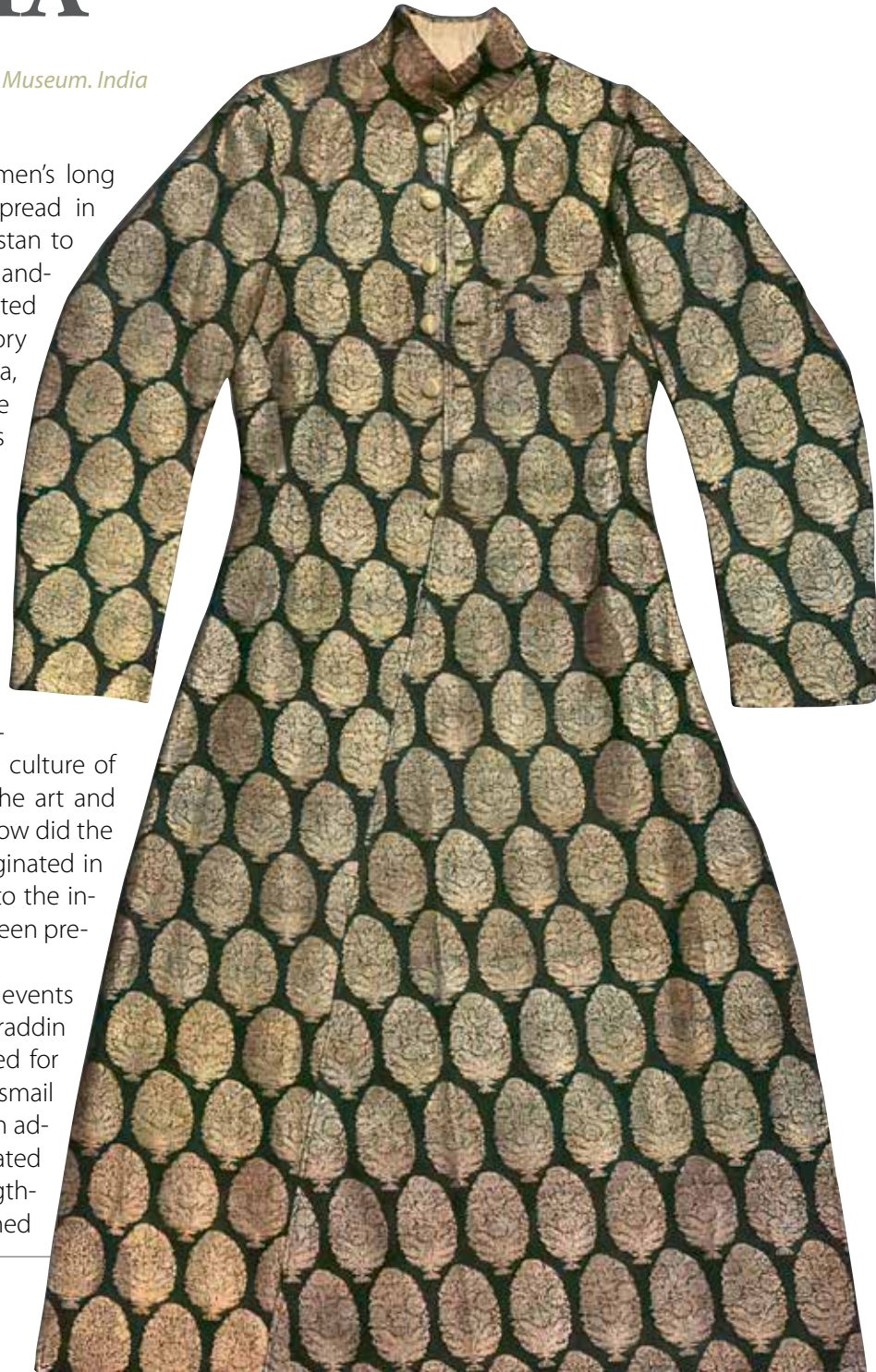
# SHIRVANI - MEN'S GARMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

*"Shirvani": 19th century Mehrangan Fort Museum. India*

A type of garment in the form of a men's long jacket with a lining is fairly widespread in South Asian countries from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka. It is called "shirvani", and only a handful of people know that its origins are connected with Shirvan, a historical region in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In Pakistan, India, Bengal and Sri Lanka, "Shirvani" is a costume of official events and weddings. "Shirvani" is invariable clothes of aristocracy, ceremonial clothes of high-ranking officials, wedding attire of groom and city dwellers. Modern Azerbaijanis have seen "Shirvani" in popular Indian films, but few were interested in the name of this long-sleeved jacket.

This is how Wikipedia defines "Shirvani": "The word Shervan refers to the clothing of the peoples of Shirvan in the South Caucasus region (part of modern Azerbaijan). The culture of this region had a significant influence on the art and culture of the Mughal imperial court..." But how did the "Shirvani" type of men's garment, which originated in Shirvan, come to South Asia and appealed to the inhabitants of the region so much that it has been preserved by peoples of the region?

We believe that this is connected with the events of the 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Back in 1511, Zahiraddin Babur, then a little known feudal lord, turned for help to the head of the Safavid state, Shah Ismail I (1501-1524) to fight his opponents. He even adopted Shiism, but later, in 1526, having created his own state, the Mughal state, and strengthened his positions on the throne, he abandoned



*Shirvani clothes are known to modern Azerbaijanis from Indian movies*



Shiism but retained his friendship with Safavids. Closer ties between Safavids and Mughals appeared during the reign of Babur's son, Padishah Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Humayun (1508-1556). Humayun received his name in honor of the fabulous bird Huma, which was supposed to bestow him with good fortune and fame. But it was not until he turned 18 and his father declared himself ruler of the new state that Humayun began to lead the life of a prince. He assumed the throne after Babur's death in 1530, but Sher-Khan, one of his father's generals, decided to seize power. Enlisting the support of the tribes of Afghanistan and Bengal, Sher-Khan was victorious. Humayun fled and had to seek asylum from Shah Tahmasib I (1524-1576) of the Safavid state. This was not a random decision. Humayun's mother, one of Babur's wives, Maham-beyim, was the daughter of the Shiite Sheikh Ahmad of Turbet-Jam, a descendant of Jarir ibn Abdullah (a supporter of Prophet Muhammad), which should have ensured special treatment of Humayun by the Safavids. Tahmasib I had his eye on Kandahar,

the gateway to India. Every year, about 14,000 camels loaded with goods passed through it. The arrival of Humayun as a fugitive was seen by the Shah as an excellent chance to take Kandahar. The diplomatic relations between Safavids and Mughals were reflected in detail in A. Farzaliyev and R. Mammadova's "Safavids and Great Moguls in Muslim diplomacy".

The Shah received Humayun very warmly. Tabriz was festively decorated and its inhabitants welcomed the Padishah. In Ardabil, Humayun bowed to the tomb of Sheikh Sefi ad-Din. Then the Shah gave a feast in his honor, presented the Shah's gifts, including a crown and belt sprinkled with precious stones, gold embroidered fabrics, military equipment and weapons, Arabian horses, etc. Humayun lived in the Safavid state for 15 years, gathering forces and means. The rulers and population of the state of Shirvanshahs, which had been liquidated by Shah shortly before, professed Sunnism. It had been the center of culture and art for centuries. And when Shah Tahmasib decided that the time had come to interfere in the affairs of the Mughals, Humayun already had many supporters from among the Shirvans ready to leave the Safavid state. In 1555, an elite military detachment consisting of 12,000 battle-hardened Safavid warriors led by Budak Khan Qajar and Shahverdi bey Ustajlu made a huge march, defeating Sher-Khan's



*Shirvani clothes. Pakistan, India. Modern works*

*Shah Tahmasib I and Padishah Humayun. Fresco in the Palace of Chikhilsutun. 17th century. Isfahan*



detachments and joining Humayun's supporters. The operation ended brilliantly: Humayun was restored to the Mughal throne and the Safavid state received Kandahar, which brought it a huge income.

Humayun appointed a number of Azerbaijanis to the highest positions in his country. Artist Mir Saeed Ali Tabrizi was appointed head of the padishah's library, effectively laying the foundations of Mughal miniature painting. Architect Agha Mirek Mirza Giyas built a number of structures, including Humayun's mausoleum in Delhi. Azerbaijani Bayram Khan Baharli was appointed commander of Humayun's army and later became vizier of his son Akbar at the beginning of his reign.

The successor of Humayun, Padishah Akbar (1556 - 1605), the son of Humayun and Hamida Banu Beyim, daughter of the Shiite sheikh Ali Akbar Jami, went down in history as a reformist ruler. Akbar, who spent his childhood in the Safavid state, maintained friendly relations with Shah Tahmasib, but after the death of the Shah during the period of internecine strife in the Safavid state, their relations deteriorated. However, when Shah Abbas I came to power, the relations were restored.

Bayram Khan Baharli's son Mirza Abdurrahim Khan Khanan was one of Akbar's cronies. The military leader and scientist, who spoke native Turkic, Arabic, Persian,



*"Chepken" (left) and "chukha" on 16th century Tabriz miniatures*

*Pakistan's founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah made "shirvani" a garment for ceremonial occasions.*



*“Chepken” (left) and “chukha”. 19th century. National Museum of History of Azerbaijan*



Sanxrit, Hindi and Portuguese, founded a literary salon at his house. The first prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 - 1964), in his writings, listed Abdurrahim Khan Khanan among “a brilliant galaxy of people devoted to him (Akbar) and his ideals”. In the time of Akbar, who patronized the development of culture and science and was characterized by tolerance, the migration of Azerbaijanis to the Mughal state intensified. S. B. Ashurbayli wrote about Azerbaijani emigrants in India. Researcher E. E. Mammadova noted that even Safavid princes Rustam Mirza and his brother Muzaffar Huseyn Mirza emigrated to the Mughals. A number of figures from the Nogtavism sect also came here. Nogtavism, which put reason as the basis of knowledge and creation, attracted enlightened figures, and its founder Mahmud Pasihani Gilani lived somewhere on the banks of the Araz. But in the Safavid state, the sect was declared heretical, as a result of which its followers, including the famous Budag bey Ustajlu, doctor Suleyman

Savaji and others, went to India. Sharif Ameli, a follower of Nogtavism, defeated Indian orthodox preachers in an open debate with Akbar, which impressed the Padishah and earned him a position in the central government. Poet Shehidi Shirvani and theologian Molla Mirzajan Shirvani enjoyed great popularity in India. Azerbaijani poets and scientists Mesihi, Saib Tebrizi, Ibrahim Ordubadi, Muhammad Sadiq Tebrizi (Sattar), Sharafaddin Tebrizi, Mirza Sahib Ordubadi, Mahmudbey Fusuni, Gasim Khan Tebrizi, Kelbeli Tebrizi (Mebdu), Lutfi Tebrizi, Abdulali Mehvi, Haji Muzaffar Tebrizi, Muhammad Huseynbey made a huge contribution to the development of culture in India. The list of Azerbaijanis could be continued. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote about the emigrants: “They have brought with themselves a well-regulated palace ceremony for which Iran was famous and influenced the lifestyle of the nobility.”

Thus, the emergence of “shirvani” garments, traditionally associated with the aristocracy, was not acci-

*"Chepken" (left) and "chukha" on 16th century Tabriz miniatures*

dental and was unambiguously linked to Azerbaijan. However, Indian social networks have published "researches" suggesting that "Shirvani clothes appeared in British India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a combination of Indo-Persian 'chapkan' and 'chogha' with the British surtuk." Authors of the "researches" prefer to dodge some logical questions: why clothes with unambiguously Turkic names of "chapkan" (Azerbaijani "chepken") and "chogha" (Azerbaijani "chukha") suddenly became Indo-Persian? Why didn't the new type of garment that appeared in "combination" with the British surtuk receive a British or local "Indo-Persian" name, but was called by the name of a distant region of Shirvan?

During the British colonial period, the local administration and aristocracy wore the "Shirvani" as a uniform, not as a new invention but as a symbol of a continuation of the traditions of statehood.

It remains to be added that the founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), wore a shirvani suit and a scribbled cap, actually making them a garment for ceremonial occasions. 🌟

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