

**Lesson Objective: Students will investigate the formation of a particular fashion, high-heels, and the cross-cultural history of wearing high-heel shoes by men**

Homira Pashai 2-22-2020

### **Studies on Persianate Manuscripts, Arts, and Literature**

Pictures courtesy of Museum fur Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Royal Collection Trust, Bata Shoe Museum, and The Hermitage Museum.

#### **High-Heel Shoes of Persian Cavalry**

High-heel shoes were first used by Persian cavalry during the tenth century due to the fact that the heels helped the soldiers to keep their boots in the stirrups. Among the evidence that shows the use of high-heels by Persian cavalry, a dish from Nishapur, Iran, belonging to the Samanid era (847-1005 C.E.), highlights the history of wearing high-heel boots in Persia. Thus, Persian equestrian soldiers were the first to recognize that high-heel shoes would help them stay in their stirrups and have riding stability while using their bows and arrows.





By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Persian cavalry of the Safavids still used one-inch heels as part of their attire. Little by little, high-heeled shoes became a symbol of social status, wealth, and refined fashionable taste. In 1599, Shah Abbas I of Safavids sent his first envoy to Europe, which resulted in a wave of interest in Persian culture among the Europeans. “Persia-Mania” became fashionable, and European nobilities adapted the Persian mode of dress. Thus, using Persian high-heels for men became a symbol of virility and prowess.

Under the influence of the Persian high-heel, Louis XIV passed the edict of 1670, indicating only the nobility had permission to wear heels. Red heels soon became his favorite, and only people who were allowed to wear red heels at his court were the ones who were in his good graces.

Persian high-heel also was added to the fashion of Early Modern English society in 1666 when King Charles II (1660-1685) reacted to the French influence on his court's style by imposing the Persian model of the dress. High heels were worn by the knight of the Order of Garter until the mid-twentieth century.



Portrait of Louis XIV, 18th Century, After Hyacinthe Rigaud (Collection: The J. Paul Getty Museum)



White shammy leather shoes with red heels, knots of silver lace and ribbon were part of the Garter costume from the mid-17th century. ©



Portrait of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar, 1772-1834 C.E.



Can you trace the history of *Xerse* opera by Francesco Cavalli in 1654 and connect the influence of it on the European fashion of the 17<sup>th</sup> century? (The *Xerse* was made into another opera by Giovanni Bononcini in 1694, and later in 1738 by George Frideric Handel as *Serse*)

Do you know how exactly something becomes fashionable?

Can you trace the history of a specific fashion during a particular era and write two-three paragraphs about it?

What elements would you have considered if you were to design a shoe, scarf, etc.? Please share with the class by the use of detailed drawings or the use of posters and pictures.

Terms:

Equestrian  
Samanid era  
Abbas I of Safavid  
Louis XIV  
Edict  
King Charles II  
Order of Garter