



## SHALWAR IN TURKISH CLOTHING CULTURE: SHALWAR EXAMPLES FROM KIRŞEHİR

## TÜRK GİYİM KÜLTÜRÜNDE ŞALVAR: KIRŞEHİR ŞALVAR ÖRNEKLERİ

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### Abstract

Culture is all of the unique, material and spiritual values that distinguish societies formed as a result of historical accumulation. Values such as customs and traditions nurtured by cultures have shaped the dress codes of societies. Turks, who have a rich culture, have their own traditional clothes. The aim of this study is to deal with the historical dimension of the shalwar which has always played an important role in the life of the Turkish nation with a long history, and which has a place among the traditional clothes.

Shalwars contain the cultural and spiritual values of the society. Since this cultural heritage is in danger of extinction in the future, it is important to research, document, preserve and keep alive the material cultural assets without losing these values completely.

In the study, a literature review was made on the definition, history, and current status of shalwar. Among the examples of shalwars which have survived to the present day and are few in boxes and museums, two shalwar samples in Kırşehir Province Museum were included in the study. The shalwars were examined through observation slips prepared according to their characteristics. Combining the information obtained with today's trends, one shalwar was sewn.<sup>1</sup> It is thought that this study will contribute to the survival of the shalwar, which is an important part of the Turkish clothing culture.

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<sup>1</sup> This study was produced from 17401108 (TÜBİTAK-D) Central Anatolian Traditional Clothing Culture Research (Yozgat-Kayseri-Kırşehir) Selçuk University BAP Project.

**Key words:** Turkish culture, Shalwar, Traditional clothing, Kırşehir Region Shalwars

### Özet

Kültür, tarihsel bir birikim sonucu oluşan toplumları birbirinden ayıran, kendine özgü, maddi ve manevi değerlerin tümüdür. Kültürlerin beslediği örf, adet ve gelenek gibi değerler toplumların giyim kuşamlarını şekillendirmiştir. Zengin bir kültüre sahip olan Türkler kendine özgü geleneksel giysilere sahiptir. Bu çalışmada amaç, köklü bir geçmişe sahip Türk milletinin her zaman hayatında önemli rol oynayan, geleneksel giysiler arasında yerini almış olan şalvarın tarihsel boyutu ile ele alınmasıdır.

Şalvarlar, toplumun kültürel ve manevi değerlerini üzerlerinde barındırmaktadır. Gelecekte bu kültür mirasının yok olma tehlikesi ile karşı karşıya olması, bu değerlerini tamamen kaybetmeden, maddi kültür varlıklarının araştırılması, belgelenmesi, korunması ve gelecek kuşaklara aktarılması, yaşatılması önem arz etmektedir.

Çalışmada şalvarın tanımı, tarihçesi, bugünkü durumu ile ilgili literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Sahaya çıkılarak, sandıklarda ve müzelerde az sayıda kalmış olan, günümüze ulaşan şalvar örneklerinden, Kırşehir İli Müzesinde bulunan 2 adet şalvar örneği çalışma kapsama alınmıştır. Şalvarlar özelliklerine göre hazırlanmış gözlem formları aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. Edinilen bilgiler ile günümüz trendleri birleştirilerek 1 adet şalvar dikilmiştir.<sup>2</sup> Bu çalışmanın Türk giyim kültürünün önemli bir parçası olan şalvarın yaşatılmasına katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türk kültürü, şalvar, geleneksel giyim, Kırşehir yöresi şalvarı

### Introduction

It is stated in *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* written by Mahmud Kashgari in the 11th century that the shalwar is named as "um" and the waistband of shalwar is named as "ilersük" (Atalay, 1985, p.36-152). The name shalwar used today comes from the Persian word "sirval". Although the shalwars sewn with wide nets change in shape, they are one of the traditional clothes used by the Turks throughout history (Balcı, 2018, p.58). The shalwar is a wide top pants with loose mesh, worn by men and women (Komsuoğlu, et al., 1985, p.213). The typical feature of the

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<sup>2</sup> Bu çalışma 17401108 (TÜBİTAK-D) Orta Anadolu Geleneksel Giyim Kültürü Araştırması (Yozgat-Kayseri-Kırşehir) Selçuk Üniversitesi BAP projesinden üretilmiştir.

shalwar is that the mesh part is dropped, and it is expanded with drape and gathers (Üstün, Yurdakul, (2007) p.1402).

The waist of the shalwar is tied with the waistband. Since shalwar is a type of clothing that covers the lower part of the body and is worn over underwear, the waistband of the shalwar is cut wider than the waistband of the underwear to distinguish, and this waistband is called shalwar-band. There are some shalwarbands with ends of one hand span width. The ends of the shalwarband are embroidered with gold and silver wires and silk threads. This embroidered part, which can be seen after the waist band is tied, is hung as an ornament in front of the shalwar under the belt wrapped around the waist by some men (Koçu, 1967, p. 215). The legs are made in the width of the foot.

The shalwars taking place in traditional clothing vary according to the living conditions, socio-economic status and social position of the person. There are types of shalwar sewn in narrow, loose, long, straight and bias cuts. In addition to the shalwar made of various fabrics such as wool, silk, and cotton according to the place of wearing, samples made of leather in the Hun period were also identified (Çaylı, Ölmez, 2012, p.116). Loose leather road trousers (shalwars) are worn while riding a horse (Önge, 1995, p.16). Men's shalwars are made of woolen fabrics, cashmere, shawl, and broadcloth, while women's shalwars are cut and sewed from fustian, silk, kutnu, seraser, atlas, citari, satin and embroidered fabrics (Koçu, 1967, p.215). In terms of color, mostly yellow, green, blue, red, purple colors are preferred (Çaylı, Ölmez, 2012, p.116).

## **1. METHOD**

The study is based on survey model. Literature on traditional Turkish clothes were searched, information and pictures about shalwar were arranged in line with the purpose.

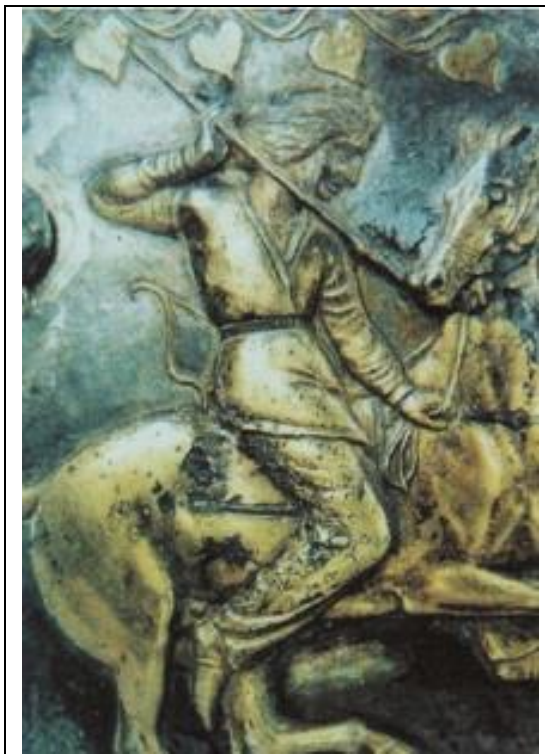
Shalwar study was conducted with the field study method. 2 samples of shalwars in Kırşehir Province Museum selected by Judgmental sampling method were included in the study. The shalwars were examined through observation slips prepared according to their characteristics. Detailed photographs were taken to reveal the model, cut and ornamentation features of the clothes. 1\1 patterns of shalwars were studied. In the light of the characteristics of the shalwar, observation slips and the information obtained from the patterns, 1

shalwar was designed and sewed in accordance with today's trends. The pattern feature in the shalwar was used exactly, the fabric type was updated.

## **2. HISTORY OF SHALWAR IN TURKISH CULTURE**

### **2.1. Shalwar in Pre-İslamic Turkish Culture**

Within the different cultural structures of the world nations, the unique, deep-rooted and rich national culture of the Turkish nation is of great importance. Our ancestors from Central Asia made Central Asia the center of great civilizations. In addition to historical richness, it reflects the fine taste of the Turkish nation with its clothing values. Traditional items such as dressing are an important phenomenon reflecting traditional values in Turkish society. Traditional clothing, which has a great place in cultural assets, is the product of culture as a whole, and since it is directly related to human beings, it shows the way of life of the human being. People have created clothing according to their civilization level and shaped their clothes according to their customs, traditions and living conditions (Ayhan, 2013, p.2). Trousers and shalwars are very suitable clothing for people living in cold climates and for equestrian tribes. There are human figures on the vase found in the cairn, which is thought to belong to the Scythian aristocrats. Short caftan, tight trousers with ornamented bands on the sides and short boots on their feet are seen in the figures (*Photo 1*). In the other figures, the trousers are in the style of loose cut shalwar (Salman, 2013, p. 48). Rich Scythians' dresses are decorated with gold ornaments (Tarhan, 2002, s. 909).

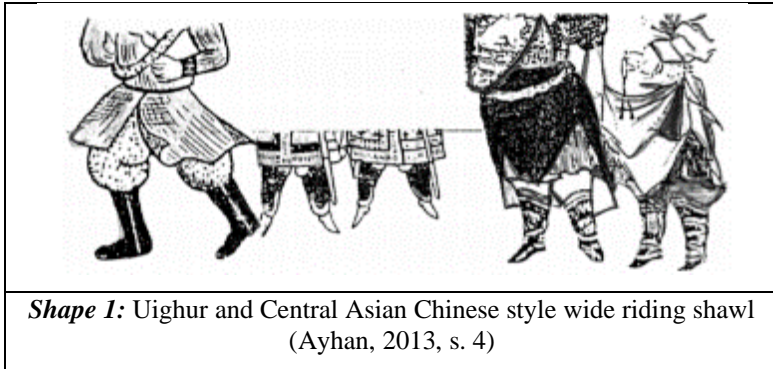


**Photo 1:** Horseman in Scythian vase  
(Salman, 2013, s. 49)

Huns in Central Asia are known as their nomadic lifestyle and the Turkish society on horseback. Horse is indispensable for Turks who hunt and fight on horseback (Diyarberbekirli, 1972, p.33). It is understood from the cairn remainings of B.C. IV. unearthed in 1974 that they adopt their clothes suitable for riding as cavalry trousers with wide crotch, narrow cuffs, and short caftan and leather boots below the knee (Aslanapa, 1999, p.5; Şahin, 2020, p.289). In addition, in Chinese written sources (325-298 BC), it is stated in the reform movements of Emperor Wu-ling that the first important principles of reforming are war tools and war clothes. Among these principles, the Chinese were asked to ride horses like the Huns instead of driving during the war, to use a tight-fitting jacket and tight cavalry trousers instead of long and loose clothes, and to wear leather long cavalry boots instead of shoes. The Chinese continued to use these clothes in daily life during and after the war (Photo 2) (Diyarberbekirli, 1972, p.11).



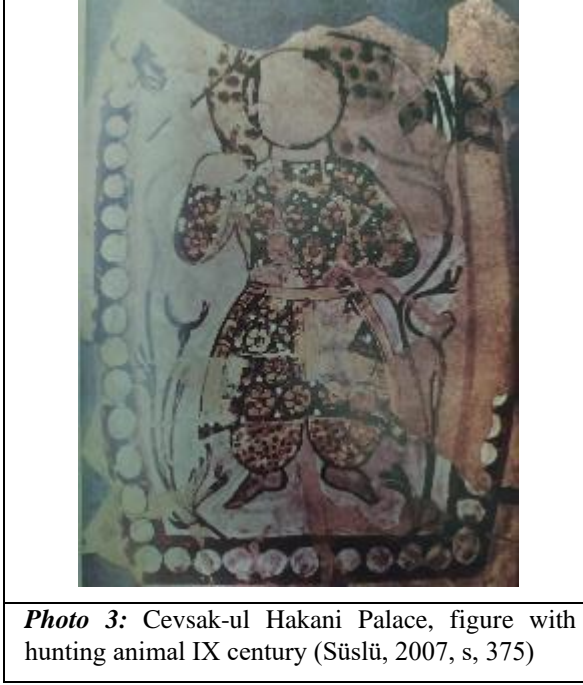
During the Gokturk period, Balbals also provided valuable information in terms of the history of clothing. The long caftan length in Balbals does not make it possible to identify the clothes below (Önge, 1995, p.12;). Information on clothing of the VIII-IX century Uyghur period is learned from Sorçuk temple of the frescoes and from the miniatures and fabrics and temple frescoes in decoration around Murtuk. Foundations are depicted on the frescoes. The Turkish physical structure, clothes, colors of clothes, patterns, pattern features and jewelry used can be understood from the frescoes. Uyghurs are seen wearing caftan, long dress and riding type shalwar like Gokturks (Shape 1) (Ertürk, 2018, p.21).



## **2.2. Shalwar in Post-Islamic Turkish Culture**

Karakhanids, who gave the first examples of Turkish Islamic arts, have many remarkable works in the field of architecture. They don't have many works in the figurative field, or they haven't survived. It is learned from the metal artifacts that the Karakhanids wore caftan. There is no information about the shalwars since the caftan lengths are made long. Information about the clothing of the Ghaznavids is learned from the figures on the wall of the Lesger-i Bazar Palace, the figured marble reliefs and miniatures in the Gazne Palace (*Photo 3*). In the miniature of the hil'at dressing ceremony depicted in Cami'üt Tevarih, it is seen that long sleeved inner shirt, short sleeved caftan and long loosed shalwar were worn (Salman, 2013, p.253).

Information about clothes of the Seljuk period can be obtained from written sources, and human-figured ornaments on tiles, ceramics, miniature, metal, wood, plaster and stone works (Bedük, Harmankaya, 2010, p.681; Atasoy, 1971, p.111). In the Seljuk Period, besides daily clothes such as caftan, mintan (a vest or short jacket), cardigan, three skirts, and loose robe, clothes suitable for the conditions of warriors from Central Asia were also worn. The types of shalwar clothing are diversified as shalwar, leg feather and jodhpurs (Karagöz, 2017, p. 132). Leg feather is the short type of the shalwar and its wide legs are contracted on the kneecap, it was usually seen on soldiers. Jodhpurs are the name given to the narrow one of the shalwar from the kneecap to the ankle and it is usually seen on men. It is stated that the edges of the Kadi and Clerk shalwars are embroidered with silk (*Photo 4*). Women's shalwars are looser, men's are narrower and the waist is tied with a waistband (Süslü, 2007, p.148; Komsuoğlu, et al., 1985, p.213).



**Photo 3:** Cevsak-ul Hakani Palace, figure with hunting animal IX century (Süslü, 2007, s, 375)

Many of the fabrics, carpets and clothes, which are the indicators of woven products during the Seljuks and later Beyliks, are exhibited in Topkapı Palace and the traditional continuity in these products can be clearly followed (Karagöz, 2017,p.131). In the Ottomans, clothing is an expression of social life. Miniatures, engravings, travel books and memories of strangers provide important information about clothes. Lady Montagu XXVIII, telling her observations of the Ottoman Empire in the early 18th century in her letter, described the Ottoman clothing on her as follows: “*I have a very large shalwar. This shalwar is very thin, rose pink and made of brocaded damsika. My slippers are made of white leather, and they are brocaded; A wholly embroidered tulle shirt made of white silk is hanging over the shalwar. Entari (loose robe) is like a jacket tailored to the body. Fur from white Damascus fabric length to my feet, a house garment that Turkish women sometimes wear, sometimes take off, and a headgear called kalpak is worn on the head.*” (Arıĝ, 2007, p.145).





**Photo 4:** While Varka and Gülşah were saying goodbye, XIII century (Mahir, 2005, s, 216)

In the Ottomans, women dressed in three layers and formed a suit. The first was underwear, shalwar and shirt. The second was outerwear consisting of loose robe, shalwar, caftan, and bolero. The third one was the top clothing consisting of abaya and outer caftans to go out (Koç, Koca, 2009, p. 2171). Sultans used a shirt or inner dress on top, a shalwar under them, and a short or long robe in their daily lives. The shalwar that was never out of date was worn at home among the public (Ariğ, 2007, p.145-148). Women wore underwear (shirt), salta, fermene or cepken over their shalwars, they wrapped waistcloth around their waist and wore belts on them (*Photo 5*). Shalwar was most worn under two skirt robes and three-skirt robes. A waistcloth was wrapped over the three skirts and a belt was attached. Ease of use, functionality and aesthetic form were created by attaching the ends of the skirts to the waist (Balci, 2018, p.60; Apak, et al., 1997, p.97).



**Photo 5:** Portrait of Dâder Banû  
1720 (Mahir, 2005, s, 242)

Until the end of the XVIII century, navy clothes of the Ottoman period were formed as uniforms for viziers and high-ranking officers, in the form of robe, caftan, waistband on caftan, shalwar at the bottom, and robe at the top (Atabey, tarihsiz, p.3).

After Selim III founded the Nizam-ı Cedid army in 1793, he had separate clothes designed for the new army. It was stated that the soldiers would wear red, tight jackets, blue shalwar, fez with yemeni, while the officers would have longer jackets, and their front and sleeves would be with silver thread (Begiç, 2016, p.293). On the clothing reform, Sultan II. Mahmud demanded that fez be worn instead of head turban; and shalwar, cepken setre, trousers should be worn (Arıç, 2007, p.150).

Enver Pasha started the preparations for the establishment of the First Women Workers' Battalion in October 1916, and in the directive issued, the clothes of women workers were determined and it was stipulated that women workers wear a long dress in the style of shalwar, jacket, headscarf, and a surcoat (Arıç, 2007, p.152).

Men's clothing changed with the reforms, and women's clothing turned their faces towards adopting the western style of clothing, so the clothing style changed starting from the palace. Greek tailors in Anatolia, big fashion companies serving wealthy families in Istanbul followed the fashion trends in Europe and adapted them to the lifestyle

of Ottoman women with some changes. Thus, the transition became easier (Koca, Koç, 2009, p.2185).

### **3. SHALWAR CLOTHING IN ANATOLIA**

For the first time in the world, the ancestors of the Turks, the Scythians and Huns, were among those who wore the garment that covered the lower part of the body in a way that included two legs separately (Türkoğlu, 2002, p.152). Until the last period of the Ottoman Empire, the shalwar continued to be worn with different fabrics, forms and features according to the position of the person who would wear it.

Shalwar is mostly worn by women in Anatolia today and has an important place in traditional clothing. The width of the shalwars, the crotch widths and the lows of the crotch diversify it and reveal up to 90 varieties in different shapes and lengths (Eroğlu, 2009, p.171). In terms of molds, shalwars are collected under 4 types. Today, it is still used in rural areas in accordance with geographical conditions and vegetation with names such as long, with or without cuff, semi-open crotch and open crotch. It is worn on special occasions to keep the tradition alive. The shalwars without cuff are made by sewing fabrics of various widths together and are in the form of a bag (Balçı, 2018, p.58). A straight opening is made for foot on the right and left. It is tied to the waist with waistband. The hangings formed when tied to the waist are lifted from the front and sides and placed on the waist and gains an aesthetic appearance. The shalwars with cuff are formed by sewing the crotch part later, and they are narrower than the shalwars without cuff. Shalwar types vary from region to region.

Shalwars can be made in narrow, loose, shirred, long, ankle-tied, knee-tied, straight, bias cuts depending on the economic situation of the society. While daily used shalwars are sewn from fabrics such as duvetine, printed, Altıparmak, and fustian; on special occasions, they are sewn from kutnu, velvet, silk, atlas or satin fabrics for wearing. The pocket is opened from the side seams. Inner site is lined with american fabric or colored calico fabric (Kartal, Ölmez, 2014, p.81).

#### **3.1. Kırşehir Region Shalwar Examples**

Since societies have distinctive ethnic groups and living conditions, there are some differences in dressing between regions. While this situation appears as a variety in terms of ornamentation,

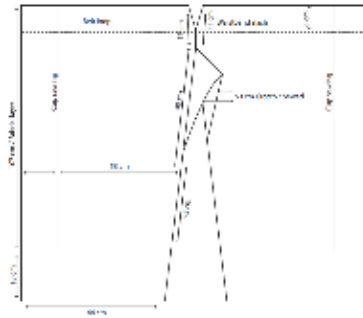
material and form used in clothing, the different cut and decoration details in the clothes give information about that region.

Two shalwars, which were considered within the scope of the research, were studied in the form of observation form and document analysis (*Photo 6-7*). Type of clothing, dating, material, color, model and cut, ornamentation were examined under the headings of sewing techniques. Within the scope of the study, detailed photographs of the clothes were taken, their measurements were taken and 1/1 scale patterns were made. The document study was completed by examining the inventories. The application was carried out in July 2018.

**Example 1. Kırşehir Museum, Shalwar with Inventory Number 2012/14.**



**Photo 6:** Shalwar General View (Inventory Number 2012/14)



**Shape 2:** Shalwar Technical Drawing (Inventory Number 2012/14).

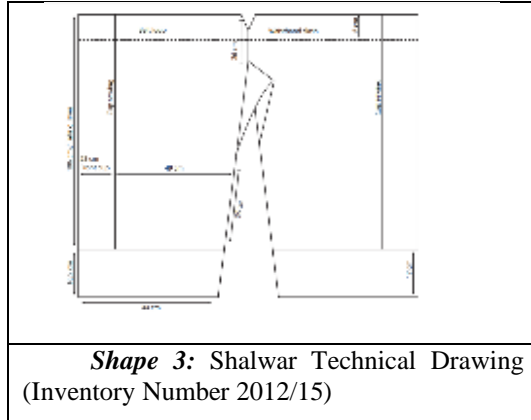
The shalwar dating back to the 20th century is a work of the Ottoman period. The shalwar was designed with red flowered fabric on a black background, long up to the ankles. It is in the type of long, tailless or semi-open crotch model with cuffs. The mesh part of the shalwar is on the knee. A mesh was formed with the fabric cut in a square shape. 4 lengths of fabric with a width of 60 cm were sewn side by side to create a shalwar width (*Shape 2*). Sides are fabric layer. The cream color fabric used in the lining was used on the legs and the length was extended. The leg was folded 3 cm and a slash was made on the side. The fabric used in rubber or waistband was passed through these slashes, the leg was shrunk and tied under the knee. (The part with the hood cloth is not seen when looking across the shalwar) The place of the waistband in the waist area was made by folding from the lining inside. Hand sewing stitching and machine stitching were used from sewing techniques (*Photo 6*).

**Example 2. Kırşehir Museum, Salwar with Inventory Number 2012/15**

The Ottoman period shalwar dates back to the 20th century. The mesh part of the shalwar, which is designed long up to the ankles and made of cotton fabric with branched flowers on a dark blue background, is on the knee. The shalwar model with cuff was applied. A mesh was formed with the fabric cut in the form of diamonds. The width of the shalwar was formed by sewing four lengths of fabric side by side (*Shape 3*). The cream color fabric used in the lining was used on the legs and slashes were made on the sides. (The rubber or a fabric used in the waistband was passed through the slashes, cuffs were shrunk and brought to the level of the knee.

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The part with the hood cloth is not seen when looking across the shalwar). Sides are fabric layer. The place of the waistband in waist area is made of lining inside, and of its own fabric on the surface of the shalwar. Hand sewing stitching technique was used. There are stains, rips on the shalwar lining (*Photo 7*).

### 3.2. An Example Inspired by Kırşehir Region Shalwar

When Kırşehir region's shalwars are examined, it is noteworthy that they are very long in addition to their width. Considering that the cream-colored part of the shalwar is tied at the knee and left loose, the application was made by choosing a loose fabric in accordance with today's trends, and the pattern feature of the shalwar was exactly used. The shalwar was tied at the knee and the mesh was not noticed between the cuffs falling down and looked like a skirt (*Photo 8*).



*Photo 8: Modern Dress Design*

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Shalwar, which is among the traditional clothes in Turkish clothing culture, has an important place in terms of our deep-rooted history. The Huns and Scythians found the shalwar due to their living conditions, and it spread to all nations from the Turks because the Turks were the first to use it. The Chinese got to know these clothes during the wars with the Huns and they continued to use them due to their ergonomic structure. The shalwars were used as traditional clothing for both men and women, and for centuries until the trousers became widespread, they were used in different widths and different lengths.

When the cavalry trousers worn during the ride with narrow cuffs are examined, it is seen that the mesh structure is the same as the shalwar.

The nets (loose and bias) of the shalwars are draped and shirred, allowing comfortable movement in the shalwar. By applying this in tight cavalry trousers, they formed the mesh of the trousers. In the 18th century, it was used in this way until the curves began to be given in the molds and the mesh of trousers were formed.

It is seen that the shalwar differs according to regions, traditions, gender and age groups, with its width, different heights in the mesh, pattern, fabric and decoration features. These differences enrich our traditional clothing culture. In addition, since it provides variety to original designs, it can be used today with original designs.

Along with the Republic period, the modernization efforts became more effective with the dress revolution, causing the salwar to gradually disappear in the cities and be used in the rural areas only instead. As can be understood from the foreign letters of the Ottoman period, it was the focal point of western societies for centuries with its rich clothing culture. Salwar, an important part of traditional clothing that attracts the attention of Western societies, has been taken as a source of inspiration by European fashion designers. Designs are made to suit the trends of the day for both men and women. Shalwars have taken their place with different designs all over the world and continue to do so. Other pieces of traditional clothing that spread from the ancestors of the Turks to the world should also be examined like the shalwars and introduced to the world with modern lines. It is thought that this study will be an example for the studies to be performed in this field for the employees of the history of clothing, fashion designers, fashion and ready-to-wear sector employees.

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