

# RENAISSANCE FOOTWEAR AS A MARK OF SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

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## Abstract

Research into individual archaeological shoe finds allows us to make assumptions concerning the differentiation of shoes according to social strata during the Renaissance period. A more complex and higher-quality shoe construction is a characteristic feature of shoes worn by people of a higher social standing.

Key words: Renaissance, footwear, markers, social differentiation, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Vilnius, Europe.

## Introduction

At all times, clothing, or even individual elements of it, has been important in that it reveals the wearer's functional title, and his or her social status and financial situation. Different types of footwear are an inevitable necessity for people living at our latitude, and an indispensable part of the costume of people representing any social stratum. During the Renaissance epoch, shoes continued the aesthetic tradition of the clothes of the Middle Ages. They constituted an important and noticeable element of a costume, first and foremost of men's costume. Museums keep certain luxurious historical shoes that were once worn by persons of the highest social status: kings, dukes or priests (the specialised Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Louvre Museum, and others). Some shoes are directly related to historical personalities. For example, shoes once worn by Sigismund Augustus, the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, are on display at the Museum of the Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow. However, the absolute majority of shoes were not so luxurious, and have not been preserved through the ages. We can learn more about this only by an analysis of archaeological finds. Regrettably, attributing them to a certain social stratum is a very difficult task.

The Renaissance was a period of economic and cultural growth, with man as a creation of nature at the focus of its attention. Renaissance growth was especially driven by the discovery of the New World and the fabulous riches that began pouring in. Without any doubt, this had a major impact on the material standing of people, and deepened social exclusion. However, it was exactly these processes that simultaneously promoted the development of a more refined aesthetic

taste. They essentially changed the style of dress, too. The structure of Renaissance society is complicated. Within that structure, different social strata occupied certain niches; however, they were not strictly differentiated. A person's financial standing was of no less importance than noble origins, and also helped to acquire a corresponding hierarchical status. With initial capital available, and under certain circumstances, artisans, financiers and merchants could amass fabulous riches; or just as easily become impoverished. During the Renaissance epoch, financial leverage and image were very important in society life.

People's clothing as depicted in works of art or portraits of identified persons help us to determine their social and financial standing quite easily. Similarly, the shoes that the people portrayed are wearing without any doubt belong to those people, and are part of their image. However, whatever is depicted in drawings and paintings does not necessarily reflect everyday life. The luxurious and smart shoes worn by people of a high social standing, as depicted in iconography, were intended more for show, whereas the shoes for everyday and practical wear were more modest and not so luxurious. Historical data cannot provide detailed information about such shoes, because they were worn out and have not been preserved. Neither does it contain information on the more detailed shoe structure, the materials used, or the quality in general; all these aspects are important for making judgments about the value of shoes. This additional information can only be obtained by analysing individual archaeological finds. Such finds are an important source of information. If and when this information is supplemented with fine art material, attempts can be made to make judgments about the differences between the shoes worn by people of different social strata.

The purpose of this work is to identify characteristic features of shoes from the Renaissance epoch that can be interpreted as characteristic features of shoes worn by people from different social strata, on the basis of archaeological material from Lithuania, supplemented with data from iconographic and written sources.

### A review of the historiography

The range of problems discussed here has not been extensively researched in Lithuania. When identifying differences between shoes in terms of social strata, the process is usually limited to information obtained from art and written sources.

Researchers into Lithuanian historical costume distinguish the shoes of the rich and the shoes of the poor on the basis of outward features, that is, the exterior. As the art historian Marija Matuškaitė (2007) claims, during the Renaissance period, different types of clothing were supplemented with matching footwear, which reflected social differentiation very distinctly. The majority of Lithuanian feudal lords and warriors would wear boots. Luxurious shoes made of cordwain or morocco were also worn; apparently, such shoes were sometimes decorated with a relief pattern or embroidery, just as in Russian lands. Footwear made of yellow morocco was especially prized. The shoes of ordinary noblemen or townfolk were made of natural (probably brown) or black leather (Matuškaitė 2007, p.89).

On the basis of iconographic material, in a painting dating from the second quarter of the 16th century, Sigismund the Old is portrayed wearing dark shoes with a broadened fore part (LDK 2010, p.42). The best illustration of luxurious shoes from the Renaissance period in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is the low-cut shoes worn by Sigismund Augustus during his coronation as King of Poland in 1530. These are shoes with a broadened fore part on a cork platform and covered with purple velvet, and also decorated with a cross formed of gold lace in the fore part (Drażkowska 2011, p.169). Rūta Guzevičiūtė (2006), a researcher into historic costume, also notes the luxurious shoes of the people from the highest stratum. For example, Stephen Bathory was wearing shoes made of gilded leather during his ceremonial arrival in 1576 in Krakow, where he was crowned King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania (Guzevičiūtė 2006, p.77). In iconography, he is also portrayed wearing low yellow shoes with a heel (Guzevičiūtė 2006, p.81).

Written sources also provide information on shoes worn by people of high social standing. The inventory list of the assets of Andrius Bobravskis, the prefect of Kaunas, compiled after his death, mentions textile lined with fox fur (Guzevičiūtė 2006, p.98). Other inventories also mention shoes made of yellow saffiano leather (Guzevičiūtė 2006, p.165ff) and red shoes (Guzevičiūtė 2006, p.209).

There are mentions of shoes worn by people from the lowest social stratum. Differences in shoes worn by Vilnius dwellers in the 16th century in terms of property differentiation are mentioned in the 'Atlas of Cities of the World' by G. Braun and F. Hogenberg in 1578. The text beside the map of Vilnius says that '... the poor wear more modest shoes, whereas richer people wear shoes embroidered with gold and silk' (Vilnius, 1983, p.79). There are obvious differences between the clothing and, accordingly, the footwear, worn by the noblemen and the peasants portrayed in the map of Vilnius. The noblemen are wearing shoes, whereas the peasants are wearing puttees and primitive shoes (Plate VI.1). Further information on peasants' footwear is contained in A. Guagnini's *Sarmatiae Europae descriptio* from 1578, which mentions that peasants '... weave their shoes either from linden bast or animal skin stripped off together with the bristle; they call the footwear primitive shoes or sabots' (Gvanjino žinios 1983, p.67).

Despite these distinct differences, red shoes, which traditionally should be attributed to people of a high social status, are also mentioned as a part of the clothing of peasant women. Furthermore, in the 16th century, peasants wore shoes too, which were part of their costume (Guzevičiūtė 2006, pp.180 and 212). Consequently, the question is whether it is possible to tell the difference between shoes worn by people of higher and lower social status, and what characteristic features might allow us to do this.

This subject has been researched in great detail by north and West European scientists in the course of their analysis of archaeological finds, namely Medieval shoes. Arne J. Larsen analysed the leather footwear found during archaeological excavations of Bryggen (Bergen, Norway), a Medieval merchant quarter. On the basis of the historical context, it is claimed that in the late 13th century an artisan (a blacksmith) would spend a 12th of his average monthly earnings for a high-quality pair of man's shoes, and an 18th of his monthly earnings for a pair of woman's shoes. Consequently, the conclusion was drawn that shoes were expensive, but that a skilled artisan could nevertheless afford them

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(Larsen 1992, p.77). However, there were poor people who could also never afford to buy shoes. In view of Norway's natural conditions, this problem would be solved by involving religion. It was proclaimed that those who donated shoes to people who were so poor that they could not afford them would be blessed, and their good deed would be recalled on the day of the Last Judgment. This idea was implemented. According to the wills of some merchants, after their deaths, 100 or even 200 pairs of men's and women's shoes had to be distributed among the poor (Larsen 1992, p.79ff). Consequently, the shoes of the rich were worn by people from the lowest social stratum too. Larsen singled out shoe decoration as a possible characteristic feature of shoes of different social strata; however, the probability that decorated shoes might have been bought by a person from a lower stratum was not excluded. Shoes would be taken care of and worn only on special occasions. Research into archaeological finds did not provide more information on this issue. The differences were further analysed by employing iconographic material. Following the assessment of its data, Larsen attributed shoes with decorative ornaments and runic inscriptions to members of a very high social stratum. She also believes that shoe decorations might have been ordered separately (Larsen 1992, p.83).

Shoes are reviewed to some extent from the point of view of different social strata in a study on the leather industry of the Anglo-Saxons and Medieval York. It is noted that shoes would be repaired several times before they were discarded; this means that shoes were highly valued. The study claims that members of the richer merchants' class also wore decorated shoes; such shoes were not an exceptional feature of the shoes worn by people of the highest rank. In the authors' opinion, it was not only ornamental decoration that could determine the final price of a product, but also the kind of animal hide it was made from. For example, a pair of shoes made from deer hide must have been more expensive compared to mass-produced shoes made of cow hide. Nevertheless, the authors adhere to the opinion that a product that takes longer to produce costs more (Mould *et al.* 2003).

In a study on shoes in Medieval London, ornamented articles are also attributed to a higher social stratum. It has been noted that models that are visually very much alike do not always reflect the wearer's social standing. An example from Norway is given, where shoes found during archaeological excavations and attributed to a member, without any doubt, of a high social stratum are very like shoes found in London. The shoes could not be attributed to any social stratum on the basis of

their shape alone. The authors take the view that in the 14th century shoes were not expensive. They would cost a day's earnings of a skilled artisan (Grew, de Neergaard 2004, p.119ff).

Discussing shoes in the context of changing Medieval society, Per Lindqvist notes that the emergence of new models in the late 16th century and the decline in decorative elements of shoes during that period should be related to the ever-deepening class differentiation of society. Specific models were increasingly becoming an attribute of a certain social stratum or group of people (Lindqvist 2004, p.56).

In neighbouring countries, Latvia, Belarus and Russia, shoe differentiation from the point of view of different social strata has not been researched, or only aspects pertaining to shoes of certain social strata have been discussed. Quite often, differences in shoe shapes are interpreted as characteristic features of nations' ethnic traditions (Oiateva 1970, p.118), or a result of regional, cultural and trade ties, or of processes related to the resettlement of the population to new territories (Bebre 1987, p.30; Kurbatov 1999, p.115; 2004, p.64ff, p.71ff; 2010a, p.225ff). It is traditionally accentuated that shoes worn by dukes, noblemen and their entourage were luxurious and were made of saffiano (light coloured) leather, whereas the most luxurious shoes were decorated with pearls (Iziumova 1959, p.213). The footwear worn by people from the lower social stratum was plainer. Some attempts to relate social standing and shoes were made during the discussion concerning archaeological footwear finds in the former town of Pustozersk in Russian territory beyond the Arctic Circle. This outpost was established in 1499, and also served as a place of exile. It was noted that the diversity of the 16th-century footwear finds was poor (three main types were identified). In the author's opinion, this might be explained by the small number of local artisans. Mention is made of only one shoemaker living there in 1574. It is also claimed that 'there exists a temptation' to relate the three different types of footwear to the military contingent, the artisans and the exiles in the outpost (Kurbatov 2003, p.230). In another article on soldiers' shoes, Aleksandr V. Kurbatov notes that boots made of thick leather and not profiled for the left or the right leg can be seen as an exceptional feature of soldiers' shoes (Kurbatov 2010b, p.424ff).

Polish researchers noted a long time ago that, based on archaeological finds and iconographic material, smart shoes far from always indicated a higher social stratum. In Henryk Wiklak's opinion, during the Middle Ages, both the privileged and the lower classes wore shoes of

the same model, the only difference being the quality of the leather and the manufacturing (1969, p.512). In Medieval West European countries, where shoes with extended toes were extremely popular, one could determine a person's social standing by the length of the toe. Written sources mention that measures were taken to regulate the length of shoes by government decree. The first such decree was adopted in Paris in 1212. An order by Charles the Brave, the Duke of Burgundy, promulgated in the middle of the 13th century, defines clearly the permissible length of the toe. For ordinary townfolk, the length was set at 0.5 feet, for rich town dwellers one foot, for an ordinary knight 1.5 feet, for a nobleman two feet, and for a duke 2.5 feet (Turnau 1975, p.36).

We can claim that normally the shoes of people of a higher social stratum were aesthetically attractive, of a unique leather colour, and of high quality. And vice versa, the shoes of the poor were plain, usually without decorative elements, and black or brown in colour. Primitive shoes, birch bark shoes, paws or woven shoes are all types of footwear known from various written and artistic sources, and unanimously attributed to the lower social strata. This claim is also supported by ethnographic material, examples of this kind of footwear kept in museums, and their context. In R. Guzevičiūtė's opinion, people from different social strata would wear very different clothing. The clothing of people from the lowest social strata was quite similar throughout the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whereas the dress of the nobility was quite different from the clothing of the poor, in terms of both its aesthetic/designatory function and its cost as a prestigious high-value article. Clothing served as a means of identification among a group of people, an estate or an entire nation, whereas estate-related differences in clothing were laid down by law (Guzevičiūtė 2006, p.140).

In essence, it is agreed that silk-embroidered, ornamentally perforated shoes of light and bright colours, decorated with threaded strings and imprints in the leather, were more expensive. Only people with a substantial income, that is to say, members of a higher or the highest social stratum, could afford such shoes. Such differences between shoes can also be noticed in West European Renaissance art. The most informative visual material portraying people of different social strata is the work of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. In his painting *The Tower of Babel* (1563), red and yellow shoes, as opposed to the black footwear of the artisans building the Tower of Babel, clearly accentuate the standing of the characters portrayed (Vöhringer 2007, p.75ff) (Plate VI.2). Almost uniform shoes worn by peasants

are also depicted in other works by this painter, for example, *The Peasant Wedding* (1566–1567) (*Pa-saulio dailė* 1997, p.71), *The Blind Leading the Blind* (1565) (Vöhringer 2007, p.106), and others.

When comparing archaeological and visual material, it is not always possible to determine with great certainty whether shoes should be attributed to a certain social stratum, just as it is impossible to identify the material used for making shoes, or the exact construction of the shoes, on the basis of visual material. We can assume that shoes made of leather other than from cattle (which was the most widely used for making shoes) must have been more expensive. On the identification of the animal hide of 63 shoe finds from London dated to the 13th to the mid-15th century, it turned out that approximately one third (17 pieces) of them were made of sheep, goat or deer hide. Cow hide was identified in 46 finds (the hide type of three finds was not identified). Sheep/goat/deer and cow hide was identified both in ornamented and non-ornamented shoes (Grew, de Neergaard 2004, p.126ff). Consequently, there was no direct dependence between the use of the hide of various animals for making shoes and the decoration. In this case, the identification of the animal hide did not turn out to be useful in identifying shoes attributed to a higher social stratum.

In order to identify characteristic features of shoes attributed to different social strata, it is important to answer the following questions:

1. What features traced first and foremost in archaeological finds are/can be significant for identifying shoes attributed to different social strata?
2. What determined the shoe price? And is the price important for making judgments about a link between the shoes and a certain social stratum?
3. Are there shoe models typical of different social strata?

In answering these questions, comprehensive information obtained through direct research into individual finds is as important as iconographic material, or material from historical sources. It is important not only to identify the type or ornamentation of the shoes, but also the construction of the article, the use of material, the type and thickness of the animal hide, the sewing-up of the parts, and traces of repairs and wear. Unfortunately, researchers usually limit themselves to information on the general view of the shoe model; not always are all the drawings of the parts that make up an individual article provided; there is some uncertainty about the method used for joining parts, or traces of mending,

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and so on. Sometimes, information about the type of animal hide used for making the shoes is collected by analysing scraps only; a certain number of leather fragments (from a few pieces to, let us say, 100 pieces) are selected at random for the purpose (Wojtasik 1960, p.183ff; Wiklak 1969, p.477). In other cases, general information about the animal hide is given without relating it to individual articles (Kurbatov 2003, p.229).

During the analysis of leather finds from archaeological excavations of the site of a building at Åbo Akademi in Turku (southwest Finland), it was ascertained that of the 845 finds, only two uppers were made of sheep/goat skin. Judging by their sizes, these were children's shoes. The rest of the shoes were made of cow hide. Of all the finds analysed, two fragments of pig skin and one fragment of seal skin were also found (Harjula 1987, p.129).

The animal hide was also identified during the analysis of Medieval leather finds from London. However, researchers encountered a problem related to the identification of the animal hide. They were not able to tell the difference between sheep and goat on the basis of the morphological view of the surface of the hide; therefore, the entry in the database is 'sheep/goat'. Furthermore, it is noted that the hide might also be deer hide (Grew, de Neergaard 2004, p.44). This makes the interpretation of the research data more difficult. On the basis of the modern use of hide for the production of various articles, sheep hide is weak, tensile, spongy and non-waterproof. Goat hide as a raw material for making shoes is much more valuable. Even today, the hide of these animals is prized as a material for making high-quality men's and ladies' shoes. There are fewer glands and less fat in goat hide than in sheep hide; therefore, the gland layer is denser and reticular, and thus very strong; whereas due to other properties of the dermis, goat hide is soft. The outer layer of goat hide is harder and stronger than that of sheep hide (Balčiūnienė *et al.* 1999, p.39ff). The physical properties of tanned sheep and goat leather lead us to the assumption that it was exactly goat hide and not sheep hide that might have been widely used for making shoes. According to data contained in written sources, sheep hide was used for making sheep pelts, whereas tanned leather was made from goat hide. For example, a complaint concerning a robbery lodged by an inhabitant of Upytė in 1586 mentions three sheep pelts and a billy goat hide among the losses sustained (Baliulis, Meilus 2001, p.552ff). The registers of the Vilnius customs house, dating back to 1616, also mention goat, elk, horse, ox/cow hides and sheep pelts (Baliulis, Meilus 2001, p.553ff). Sheep pelts were widely used for making clothes. The piece

of clothing mentioned most often in written sources is a *kozhuikh*, a sheepskin coat worn by both noblemen and peasants (Guzevičiūtė 2006, pp.142, 176, 182, 209). Consequently, the properties of sheepskin made the hide more suitable for making sheep pelts rather than tanned leather. However, some data indicates that, for instance, Stockholm shoemakers were prohibited to use horse, seal and sheep hide for making shoes. They were allowed to use only cow or goat hide for the purpose (Harjula 1987, p.129). The reasons why this prohibition was imposed are not known. It might have served as a means of making sure that no low-quality shoes were produced. Nevertheless, it should be assumed that in Medieval London shoes were made of goat (maybe deer) and not sheep hide. Additional cytological analysis would make it possible to identify more precisely and tell the skins of these animals apart.

Olaf Goubitz was the first researcher to suggest the most informative graphic documentation of archaeological leather finds (Goubitz 1984, pp.187-196; 1987, pp.1-28). However, material classification and typologisation, without aiming at a deeper analysis of the finds, remained the priority of his further works. Goubitz' set of methods for the fixation of finds had an immense influence on other researchers into archaeological shoes. By drawing shoe parts according to a certain method, we can analyse the construction of the article. The identification of the type of animal and other physical properties of the hide allows us to accumulate significant information that makes it possible to analyse an individual find from different points of view.

#### Shoes of different social strata in archaeological material from Lithuania

In my analysis of shoes from this point of view, I refer to publications published in Lithuania and the material of my doctoral thesis (2005).

The shoes from the period discussed here that have been researched in greatest detail come exclusively from Vilnius. Most information has been obtained by comparing shoe finds from the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (the Royal Palace) situated in Vilnius' Lower Castle (Puškorius, Kalėdienė 2005, pp.56-67) with shoe finds found at different sites in the Old Town of Vilnius (Vilnius city), that is, 3/5 Malūnų St (Puškorius, Vedrickienė 1999, pp.256-263) and 8 Gaono St (Puškorius 2005, p.51ff). It is supposed that the archaeological finds from the Royal Palace are related to people of a high or the highest social stand-



Fig. 1. Shoe cork platforms from the Royal Palace; first half of the 16th century (after LDK 2010, p.243).

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ing and their entourage, rather than to members of the lowest social stratum. On the other hand, finds from the neighbouring Vilnius city reflect mostly the lower social strata.

The complex of shoe finds from the Royal Palace discussed here consists of at least 148 single shoes. A total of 146 of them are similarly shaped low-cut shoes and one ankle shoe. The majority of the finds are dated to the first half of the 16th century; individual fragments of finds come from the second half of the 16th century (Puškorius, Kalėjienė 2005, pp.56, 66).

Five shoe models have been identified; four of them are low-cut shoes. The first and the second models of low-cut shoes are side-laced low-cut shoes. They are similar in appearance, and make up at least 137 articles from all the low-cut shoes. Some of them (at least 20) had a platform (Fig. 1). The thickest platform was as much as five centimetres thick. The low-cut shoes of the first model were made up of a one-piece upper, or had an insert. Goat or some other hide morphologically similar to goat hide was used for the uppers of all these shoes.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of its construction, the third model of low-cut shoes is very similar to the ones found during the archaeological excavations in Vilnius city. These low-cut shoes are slip-on low-cut shoes. The upper of the first (inv. no. 831) low-cut shoe was made up of a number of inner details, which reinforced the construction at different points. All the details of the upper that have survived intact (with the exception of the inner counter made of cow hide) are made of goat hide. It is a welted shoe. The other low-cut shoe<sup>2</sup> is of an externally similar construction; however, the upper consists of fewer details. In comparison with the first one, the second shoe has only one side reinforcement; it has no side-stays or toe case. All the parts of the upper are made of cow hide, with the exception of the counter-shape heel stiffener made of goat hide. Apparently, the thicker hide (two to 2.2 millimetres) was enough to form a sufficiently firm construction.

The complex includes the remains of several uppers of low-cut shoes made of cow hide. They stand out by their abundant decorative elements, such as inci-

<sup>1</sup> The animal hide of the second-model low-cut shoes could not be identified. Judging by the appearance of the leather surface (scarfskin), which is individual to every animal species, it might have been either sheep or goat hide. It must have been the same animal hide identification problem encountered by other researchers, who identified such hide as sheep/goat (Grew, de Neergaard 2004, p.44; Harjula 2008, p.129).

<sup>2</sup> One article consists of a few leather parts. All the parts were given inventory numbers before the joining pieces were found (Museum of the Palace of Grand Dukes of Lithuania, inv. no. 890, 1076, 1077, 1127, 1613).

sions, notches and openwork ornaments in the shape of a four-pointed star, a heart and a circle. The finds are dated to the second half of the 16th century (Puškorius, Kalėjienė 2005, pp.56-64). The upper of the only ankle shoe was also made of goat hide. A strand of silk thread was one in a stitch of the inner seam.<sup>3</sup> The even wear of the soles indicates that the shoes were worn mostly on an even surface (Puškorius, Kalėjienė 2005, p.66).

The complex of archaeological shoes from 3/5 Malūnų St consists of shoe pieces and cut-offs from approximately 40 to 42 single shoes. The complex includes approximately 15 low-cut shoes, 13 ankle shoes, and five boots. Some of the partially intact finds might have been indoor shoes (Puškorius 2005, p.46). The finds are dated to the second half of the 16th and the early 17th century (Puškorius 1999, pp.256-257; Vedrickienė, Puškorius 2000, p.153ff). Although three models of low-cut shoes and one model of ankle shoe were identified, and the remains of ankle shoes and indoor shoes were found within the complex of shoe finds at 3/5 Malūnų St, restored finds only (nos. 3, 5, 11, 13) were analysed additionally, that is, the type of animal hide was identified.<sup>4</sup> The uppers of the low-cut shoes are made of cow hide, whereas goat hide was used for the insoles. Low-cut shoes 5 and 13 were perforated decoratively with decoration in the shape of a rhombus, a circle and a stylised blossom of a flowering plant, and teeth (Figs. 2-3). The sets of the shoe bottom pieces are also of a more complex construction. The set of the bottom pieces of low-cut shoe 5 consists of 12 pieces, whereas low-cut shoe 13 is welted and with a wooden heel, which is covered by an envelope cover. Low-cut shoe 3 is not ornamented, with quarter-straps, and its joining method is a welt. For the upper of restored ankle shoe 11, the hides of different animals, cattle and goat, were used. Also, the heel part of the upper of these ankle shoes is unusually hard. Several layers of leather joined with birch bark were used for the inner counter. A heel-plate was attached with nails to the heel part of all the ankle shoes.

In the complex of archaeological leather finds from 8 Gaono St, no less than ten single shoes were identified, of which there are at least four low-cut shoes and one mule. Judging by their construction, the rest of the finds should be parts of ankle shoes or boots (Puškorius 2005, p.53ff). The leather finds are dated to the period

<sup>3</sup> The strand of silk thread was found during the restoration of the find (by Jurgita Kalėjienė), when the article on the finds discussed here had already been published.

<sup>4</sup> The research into the archaeological finds was carried out in 1998. At that time, there was no possibility to identify the type of animal hide of all the finds, or to carry out other analyses. Up to now, all the non-restored archaeological finds have been kept in a temporary conservation solution at the National Museum of Lithuania.

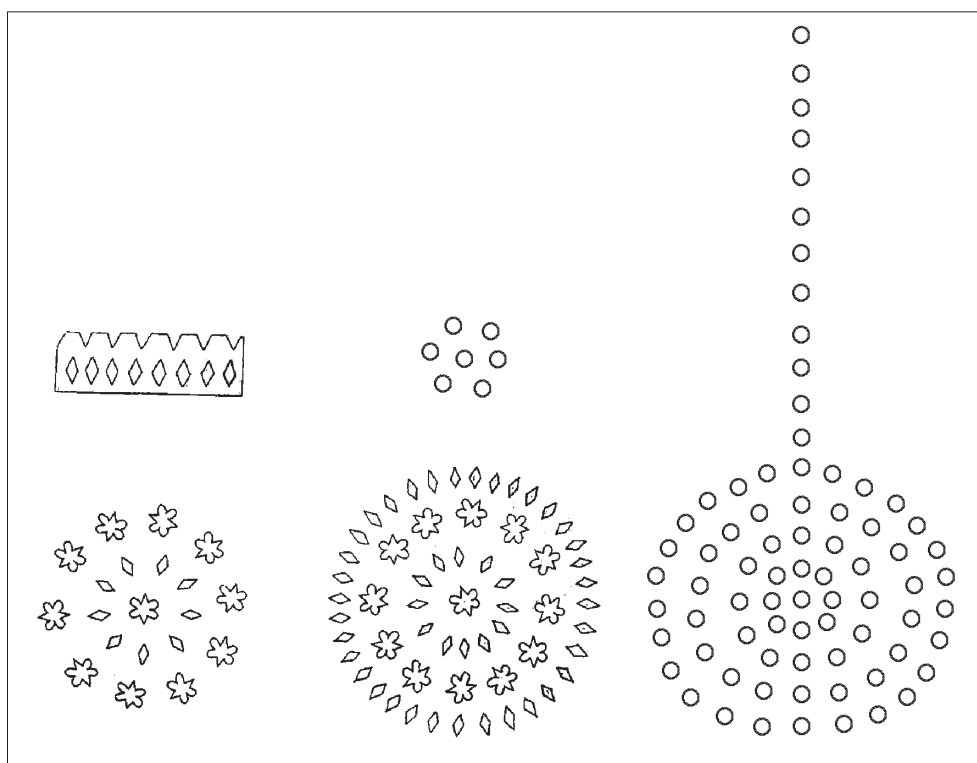


Fig. 2. Ornamental patterns of perforated shoes based on finds from 3/5 Malūņų St; late 16th to early 17th century (drawings by the author).

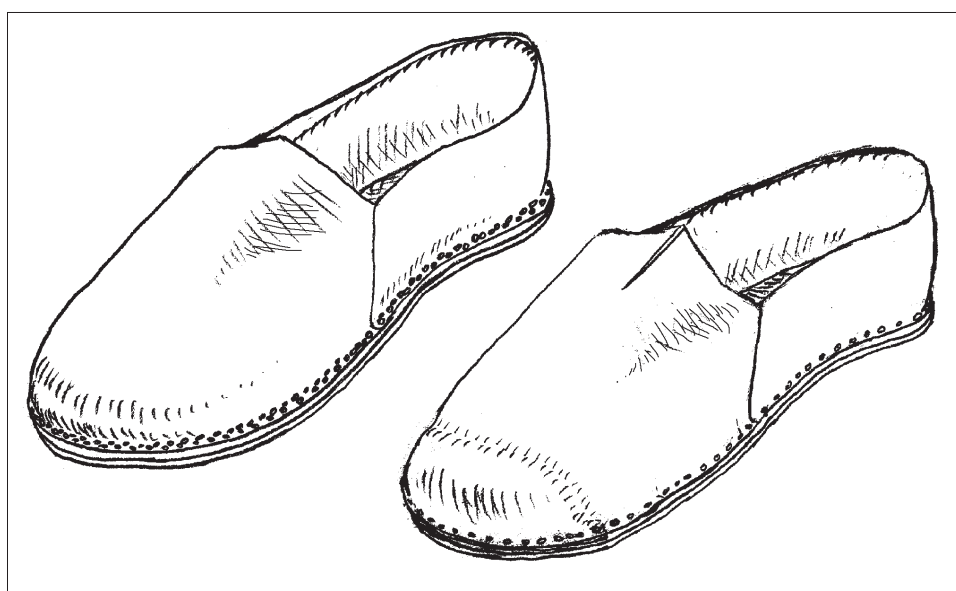


Fig. 3. Reconstructive shoe drawings based on finds from 8 Gaono St; late 16th to early 17th century (drawings by the author).

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Fig. 4. A reconstruction of a low-cut shoe from the first half of the 16th century, based on finds from the Royal Palace (by the author).



Fig. 5. Hans Holbein the Younger. *The Ambassadors*, 1533 (detail).

from the late 16th century to the early or first half of the 17th century (Girlevičius 2006, p.337).

Among the archaeological finds of leather shoes from 8 Gaono St, there are two low-cut shoes (sets 1–2) and a mule (set 3), which have survived nearly intact. The low-cut shoes are slip-on low-cut shoes. The construction of both low-cut shoes is similar; the uppers are made of cow hide. The remains of animal hair that had not been removed were noticed on the insole leather surface of the second low-cut shoe. This indicates that the piece was made from low-quality leather. The shoe upper is attached to the shoe sole with a closed seam (Fig. 2). Cow hide was used for the upper of the mule too. The remains of hair were also noticed on the insole leather surface. The joining method of the mule is a welt.

On the basis of data from the analysis of these archaeological finds, we can clearly notice differences in the materials used for making shoes. Nearly all the shoes from the Royal Palace were made of goat hide or the hide of another animal (but not cattle).<sup>5</sup> How-

<sup>5</sup> Although the animal hide of the largest group of finds, the low-cut shoes of the second model, could not be identified,

ever, the finds analysed from the city were made of either solely cow hide (8 Gaono St), or cow hide was used for making most of the shoe pieces (3/5 Malūnų St). Among the shoe models of the finds from 8 Gaono St that were similar to the shoes from the Royal Palace, no shoes with welt joinings were found. Here, the upper is joined to the shoe sole with a closed seam. However, shoes with a welt joining were found at the Royal Palace and 3/5 Malūnų St. Furthermore, in the analysed shoe finds from Malūnų St, some pieces were also made from goat hide. A low-cut shoe was found at the Royal Palace, the construction of which is nearly identical to the slip-on low-cut shoes found at 8 Gaono St; however, the joining of the former is welt-type, and the upper is made of goat hide. It is difficult so far to claim firmly that in Lithuania shoes with a welt joining were a characteristic feature of the shoes of people of a higher social standing. But there is historical data to support this claim. According to Rainer Atzbach, shoes of which the bottom part consisted of a sole only were worn by people of a lower social status. The author refers to a Bavarian law of 1626 that governed expendi-

it is without doubt not cow hide.



Fig. 6. An ankle shoe from the Royal Palace; first half of the 16th century (after LDK 2010, p.240).

ture. The law stipulated that people of a lower social standing were not allowed to wear shoes with a welt joining. With reference to this law, it is claimed that shoes with a welt joining indicated a person's social standing; furthermore, shoes with such a construction were more expensive. In R. Atzbach's opinion, the ostensible intention was to protect the poor from extra expense related to luxury items (2001, p.191ff).

Shoes decorated with perforated patterns and notches were found in the area of the Royal Palace and at 3/5 Malūnų St. The finds that were best preserved and ornamented in different ways were found at Malūnų St. Their construction is more complicated, the heel part is heightened, and the hides of different animals are matched in the same article. Decorating shoes with perforations and notches was a typical feature of the Spanish fashion in the second half of the 16th century: brightly coloured stockings had to be visible through slots in the shoes. From the last quarter of the 16th century, slip-on low-cut shoes were also decorated with notches and incisions (Goubitz 2001, p.281). Such decorated shoes are often depicted in visual material. For example, in a 1547 painting by François Clouet (Plate VI.4), Henry II, the King of France, is portrayed wearing white shoes decorated with incisions. In a portrait etching from Martynas Bielskis' chronicle, Sigismund Augustus (mid-16th century) is also portrayed wearing low-cut shoes decorated with incisions (Matušakaitė 2007:76, Fig. 51). People of a low social standing are

not portrayed in iconography wearing such shoes.

In general, shoes on a platform are rare archaeological finds. They are often depicted in 15th to 16th-century south European iconography relating to members of society enjoying a high social status. In Venice, such shoes were in fashion among courtesans. Some platforms were as much as half a metre high. Some historical examples of such shoes have been preserved (Idzelytė 2009, p.151). In Lithuania, shoes on a cork platform have been found only in the Royal Palace. The upper of this shoe model at the heel part was not sewn down to the sole. Thanks to this technical solution, it was more comfortable to wear the shoes, but it was still difficult to move freely.<sup>6</sup> No similar shoes could be found in published literature. The rather complicated construction of the shoes allows us to assume that these were model shoes, that

is, designed and manufactured to the needs of a specific customer (Fig. 4). The palace could afford it.

Shoes with a broadened toe part came into fashion in Germany in the first half of the 16th century. These shoes matched exactly the bulky Renaissance dress decorated with ribbons. Due to the shape of their fore part, the shoes were called 'the duck's bill' or 'the cow's mouth'. Most likely, the fashion for unusually shaped shoes was brought to Lithuania by Hansa merchants. In visual material, these shoes are depicted as shoes worn by people of a high social standing (Fig. 5; Plate VI.3). Individual finds of such shoes are sometimes found during archaeological excavations in Lithuania.<sup>7</sup> The only known find of this shoe type described in publications comes from the Royal Palace (Fig. 6). It is an ankle shoe found in the same complex together with the aforementioned low-cut shoes on a platform (Puškorius, Kalėdienė 2005, p.62ff; LDK 2010, p.240). A silk strand found in an inner seam stitch might have

<sup>6</sup> Daiva Luchtanienė, an archaeologist, assessed the comfort by wearing a reconstruction of this model of shoe in real life conditions. According to her, it is possible to walk only slowly and majestically in these shoes. It is extremely difficult to walk fast.

<sup>7</sup> Such shoes are known from archaeological excavations in Kaunas, Klaipėda and Vilnius; however, they have not been extensively researched, or described in publications, with the exception of the finds from 6 Kurpių St in Klaipėda (Genys, Žulkus 1982, p.51ff). Therefore, they are not discussed in the present article.

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come from the lining or the textile cover of the upper.<sup>8</sup> Shoes decorated with textile covers of the upper are smart, but they are not suitable for longer wear, because they get dirty quickly; furthermore, care must be taken so that the textile does not get torn. For example, during his inauguration as King of Poland, Sigismund Augustus was wearing low-cut shoes on a platform, with the broadened fore part covered with red velvet (Drażkowska 2011, p.169). Such shoes were intended only for ceremonies. It might be supposed that the previously mentioned ankle shoe from the Royal Palace also belonged to a person of a high social standing.

Consequently, on analysing these archaeological finds, we can suggest that the shoes from the Royal Palace, albeit in the cases of some models bearing a visual resemblance to similar finds from the city, are of a higher quality: that is, they are made of higher-quality leather and are of a better construction with welt joining. At the Royal Palace, models have even been found which have not been found elsewhere in the city, and which are also unique on a European level. Shoe decoration by means of ornamental perforation has been noted among the finds from the Royal Palace and Malūnų St. At the latter site, decorated shoes were of a more complex construction than non-decorated ones; they were made up of a larger number of pieces and had a heel. Furthermore, hides of different animals were matched in the shoes by making use of their different properties. In ankle shoe 11, the vamp was made of thick sheep hide, and its function was aesthetic rather than practical. The heel-plates of the shoes were also supposed to indicate the higher social standing of the wearer. Therefore, the finds from these complexes should be attributed to richer people with a higher social status. The shoes from the Royal Palace should be attributed to courtiers, those from 3/5 Malūnų St to rich town inhabitants, whereas the complex at 8 Gaono St should be attributed to poor town dwellers of a low social status. It should be noted that on assessing other archaeological types from the excavated site, the assumption is made that there was an inn at 8 Gaono St in the second half of the 16th century (Girlevičius 2005, p.189).

## Conclusions

1. Research into individual archaeological shoe finds allows us to make assumptions concerning the differentiation of shoes in terms of social strata during the Renaissance period. A more complex and higher-quality shoe construction is a characteristic

<sup>8</sup> Before discarding shoes, some parts would often be removed or cut off, such as the boot-tops, the metal decorative pieces and buckles, and the smart textile cover. These were then used for making other articles.

feature of shoes worn by people of a higher social standing.

2. More often than not, the shoes worn by people of a higher social status were made of goat/deer hide, or the hides of different animals were combined, depending on the specific properties of the different hides. Shoes worn by people of a lower social standing were made of cow hide of poorer quality; such shoes were not ornamented, and brown or black in colour.
3. Decorated, lightly coloured shoes with a welt joining should be attributed to people of a higher social stratum. However, people of a lower social stratum could buy shoes with decorative perforations too.
4. Shoes with a textile cover and a broadened fore part, as well as model shoes on a cork platform or heeled shoes, indicate a higher social status.

## Abbreviations

ATL – Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje (Archaeological Investigations in Lithuania), Vilnius  
 LDK – Lietuvos didžiųjų kunigaikščių rūmai Vilniaus Žemutinėje pilyje. Istorija ir rinkiniai. Albumas (The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius' Lower Castle. History and Collections); compilers: D. Avižinis, V. Dolinskas, Ė. Striškienė. Vilnius, 2010

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## III

FOOTMARKS  
OF THE  
EVERYDAY  
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SOCIETIES  
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URBAN  
SETTLEMENTS  
AND CITIES

# RENEŠANSO AVALYNĖ KAIP VISUOMENĖS SUSISLUOKSNIAVIMO POŽYMIŠ

## ARŪNAS PUŠKORIUS

### Santrauka

Renesanso epochoje avalynė buvo svarbi kostiumo dalis. Skirtingų socialinių sluoksnių žmonės avėjo skirtingą avalynę. Tai patvirtina ikonografija ir rašytiniai šaltiniai. Deja, istorinės šio laikotarpio avalynės radinių yra išlikę labai mažai. Todėl didžioji dalis šios avalynės rekonstruojama remiantis archeologine medžiaga. Dažniausiai vien pagal išorinius požymius archeologinių avalynės radinių neįmanoma priskirti kuriam nors socialiniam sluoksniui. Tik išsamūs ir įvairiausiai individualių avalynės radinių tyrimai, duomenis papildžius istorinių šaltinių informacija ir ikonografinė medžiaga, leidžia atskleisti skirtingų socialinių sluoksnių avalynės požymius.

Aptariama tema Lietuvoje beveik netyrinėta. Šio laikotarpio avalynės skirtumai mažai analizuoti Europoje ir kaimyniniuose kraštuose. Remiantis individualių Lietuvos archeologinių avalynės radinių iš skirtingų vietų tyrimų duomenimis (šiuo metu visa medžiaga yra tik iš Vilniaus) galima teigti, kad iš ožkos ar kitų gyvūnų (išskyrus galvijus) odos pagaminta, šviesi ar ryškesnės spalvos, sudėtingesnės konstrukcijos, rantinio tvirtinimo, praplatinta priekine dalimi, tekstile puošta ir modelinė avalynė turėtų būti skiriama aukštesnio socialinio statuso visuomenės atstovams. Tamsesnę, nedekoruotą, prastesnės kokybės galvijų odos ir paprastesnės konstrukcijos avalynę avėjo žemesnio socialinio sluoksnio gyventojai. Perforacija puošta avalynė taip pat yra aukštesnio socialinio statuso žmonių avalynės požymis, bet ji galėjo būti įperkama ir žemesnio socialinio sluoksnio atstovams.