

Handicraft

Shusha was one of the cities of Azerbaijan where various types of handicraft were more developed. There was a cotton-weaving mill, a dyeing workshop, a kalaghayi atelier, a hat making, coppersmith, painting, embroidery, shoe-making, tailoring, blacksmith workshops, pottery and other handicrafts.

One of the important types of handicraft in Shusha was the art of **stone carving**. The presence of rich stone deposits (quarries) in Shusha and its environs in the early twentieth century created conditions for the development of such areas as stone carving, stonework, sculpture, netting, carving. At that time, there were 104 stonemasons in Shusha. Craftsmen made various stone products: masonry, crown and column stone, ornamental stone, corner and gemstone, ceiling stone, minaret and dome stone, water stone, paving stone, pebble stone, salt stone, gate stones, millstones, tombstones and so on. As a result of the research, it was found that the stones produced in Shusha were in great demand in the Iranian market.



The **blacksmith's work**, one of the most important types of handicraft production in Azerbaijan, was also developed in Shusha.

There were craftsmen working in the fields of bladesmithing, blacksmithing, coppersmithing and jewellery.



Starting from the 18th century, one of the most smoothly developed types of handicraft in Shusha was **jewellery**. In the early twentieth century, this handicraft reached its peak in its development. At that time, the moulding method of jewellery was more widespread in Shusha. Shusha jewellers preferred to make various products from high carat gold and silver. Products made of gold and silver (rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, buckles, etc.) were sold at high prices in foreign markets. Shusha jewellers introduced Azerbaijan to foreign countries with their beautiful handicrafts.

Shusha craftsmen produced various types of handicrafts both to meet domestic demand and to be exported to other Azerbaijani khanates and foreign countries. Local craftsmen were also responsible for meeting the city's demand for handicrafts.

In the 19th century, Shusha had more than 2,000 craftsmen specializing in more than 50 types of crafts.

As the economic and household needs of the population of Shusha were not fully met by industrial products, a number of artisan workshops were still on operation. One of such types of handicrafts was the footwear manufacturing - **shoemaking**. In the early twentieth century, there was a decline in this field. The main reason for this was the establishment of shoe factories. Shoemakers used to make



Craftsmen from Shusha

boots, moccasins, slippers for the people of Shusha. Shusha craftsmen made bast shoes for the people living in the villages. The shoes were made of tanned cow, horse, buffalo and donkey skins. Shoemaker workshops also operated as shops. These workshops were open in the market square near the caravanserai and the mosque.



Carpet-bag

One of the types of handicrafts and small commodity production in Shusha was **fur-making**. Fur making was a kind of fur tanning. Two types of clothing (dress and shoulder covers) were made of fur.

The centre of the art of **hat-making** in Karabakh was the city of Shusha. Hat-making was an ancient craft of Shusha craftsmen and lasted for the twentieth century as well. "Girvenke", "Garabaghi", "Dairavi", "Bukhara", "Shirazi" hats were sold both in different markets of Azerbaijan and in Eastern countries. In the early 20th century, there were 30 hat-making workshops in Shusha, in which 84 hat-makers worked. It is no coincidence that the "Hat-makers" neighbourhood in Shusha kept its name until recently.

The economic activity of Shusha residents led to the emergence and development of the leather craft. Leather tanners built their workshops (tanneries) on running water on the outskirts of the city. Earlier, leather goods imported to Azerbaijan from Iran, Central Asia and Russia were later tanned by local tanners in Karabakh.

In the early 20th century, the **art of saddle** was further developed in Shusha. The reason for the development of this field of craft was due to the demand for livestock breeding. Saddles made in Shusha were called “Muslim saddles”. Saddles were made in different shapes and materials. Shusha craftsmen made tanned leather household utensils to meet the domestic needs of nomadic farmers. This type of handicraft has retained its vital importance for the twentieth century.

Due to its unique development, the **weaving** had a special place in Shusha. The main reason for the development of this type of craft was due to the fact that Shusha had abundant raw material resources. The favourable climate of Shusha contributed to the development of sheep breeding. And the development of sheep-breeding meant the production of abundant wool. Some of the wool processed in Shusha was exported to foreign countries as a commercial product, while the other part was used for local production, especially carpet weaving.

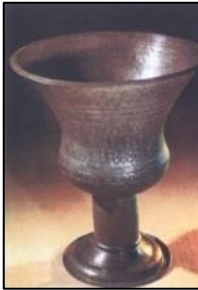
As early as the Middle Ages, **Shusha carpets** were famous for their production techniques, variety of colour shades and richness of artistic design. In the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century Shusha was the centre of carpet production and sales in Karabakh. Carpet weaving, previously produced to meet



Carpet, woven in Shusha

the needs of the household, has become a craft that makes products for the market since the 19th century. Shusha carpets “Malibeyli”, “Lampa”, “Flowers in the garden”, “Cloud”, “Flowers in crockery”, “Nelbekigul”, “Gulluyaylig”, “Munjug”, “Zarmakhmar” were known in the world markets. The mentioned carpets belong to the type of pile (loop) carpets. Besides, pileless carpet weaving was also developed in Shusha. Pileless carpets were made under palaz, fermesh, kilim,

varni, ladi and other names. Although this type of handicraft, which was widespread in Shusha, declined significantly as a result of factory production in the early twentieth century, the people have long maintained the tradition of carpet weaving.



Syrup bowl

Felt manufacturing was also developed in Shusha. Felt products, which were of great importance in the household, were produced in Shusha at the required level and fully met the needs of the local population.

One of the developed types of handicraft in Shusha was **dyeing**. In fact, this art, which is the final stage of the production of textiles and leather goods, served to decorate the finished products with artistic taste. The richness of the Karabakh territory with various species of dyeing plants had a

strong impact on the development of the art of dyeing here. Cultivation of boyagotu (dye plant), considered an indispensable raw material for the purchase of red colour and its various shades, was also developed in the Karabakh khanate. Some part of the 10,000



Craftsmen from Shusha during the Soviet period

poods (old unit of weight, approx. 16,38 kg) of dyes cultivated here were exported to foreign markets, while other part was used for local production. In Shusha, as in other parts of Azerbaijan, dyers were able to use plants to give their products up to 50 shades of colour. In the 60s and 70s of the 20th century, various types of handicraft were further developed in Shusha. Ancient types of craft such as wool processing, dyeing, carpet weaving, felt making, hat-making, coppersmithing, blacksmithing, shoemaking, winemaking, leather craft, tailoring, sericulture, blacksmithing, and stonemasonry operated in the city.

After the national leader Heydar Aliyev came to state power in 1969, special attention was paid to the socio-economic development of Shusha.

In the 1970s, new water and natural gas pipelines were laid to Shusha, a new hotel, a



Musical instruments workshop in Shusha

communication house, a factory of musical instruments, a new bakery, carpet, leather and kalaghayi ateliers were built and put into operation. These, in turn, gave impetus to the further development of handicraft. The only Oriental National Musical Instruments Factory, that produced musical instruments such as tar, kamancha, oud, drum, etc. in all over Azerbaijan operated in Shusha. The factory's

products were exported to Georgia, Kazakhstan, Dagestan, Central Asia and other Soviet republics, as well as India and the Middle East countries. More than 100 factory hands worked in the factory. In 1992, as a result of the occupation of Shusha by the Armenian army, types of handicraft were destroyed. Most of the Shusha carpets fell into the hands of the invaders. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the Armenians brought Shusha carpets to world markets under the name of Armenian carpets. Shusha craftsmen were dispersed in different regions of the republic. Shusha is already liberated. Handicraft enterprises of Shusha will resume their activities soon.