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HISTORY

OF SHUSHA CITY OF AZERBAIJAN REPUBLIC

HISTORIA DE LA CIUDAD SHUSHA DE LA REPÚBLICA DE AZERBAIYÁN

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ABSTRACT

Shusha city is one of the rare and unique pearls of the ancient urban culture of Azerbaijan. The city of Shusha, a miracle of the creative genius of the Azerbaijani people, has a rich and glorious historical past. Shusha, a symbol of the historical traditions of the people to whom it belongs, was created in one of the oldest settlements included in the sphere of the ancient Khojaly-Gadabey culture (second half of the second millennium – beginning of the first millennium BC) and became a permanent settlement. Ancient settlements around Shusha, including the Shusha Cave on the famous Jidir-duzu plain, prove that this area is one of the oldest human habitation sites on the territory of Azerbaijan. Shusha is an extremely sacred place for the Azerbaijani people, as dear as a shrine. However, in our opinion, it is not as well known internationally because, due to the Armenian occupation, the activity in the city declined. This is very evident when comparing historical tourism data. Nevertheless, since the city's recovery, the government of Azerbaijan has been working to restore its former glory. With this in mind, and to spread and better understand its significance, the aim of this work is to analyze the most important elements that made Shusha one of the most important cities in Azerbaijan.

Keywords: Azerbaijan history and culture, Karabakh region, Shusha city.

RESUMEN

La ciudad de Shusha es una de las perlas raras y únicas de la antigua cultura urbana de Azerbaiyán. La ciudad de Shusha, un milagro del genio creativo del pueblo azerbaiyano, tiene un pasado histórico rico y glorioso. Shusha, símbolo de las tradiciones históricas del pueblo al que pertenece, fue creada en uno de los asentamientos más antiguos incluidos en el ámbito de la antigua cultura Khojaly-Gadabey (segunda mitad del segundo milenio – principios del primer milenio antes de Cristo) y se convirtió en un asentamiento permanente. Los antiguos asentamientos alrededor de Shusha, incluida la cueva de Shusha en la famosa llanura de Jidir-duzu, demuestran que esta zona es uno de los asentamientos humanos más antiguos del territorio de Azerbaiyán. Shusha es un lugar sumamente sagrado para el pueblo azerbaiyano, tan querido como un santuario. Sin embargo, en opinión del autor, no es tan conocida internacionalmente porque, debido a la ocupación armenia, la actividad en la ciudad decayó. Esto es muy evidente al comparar datos históricos del turismo. Sin embargo, desde la recuperación de la ciudad, el gobierno de Azerbaiyán ha estado trabajando para restaurar su antigua gloria. Teniendo esto en cuenta, y para difundir y comprender mejor su significado, el objetivo de este trabajo es analizar los elementos más importantes que hicieron de Shusha una de las ciudades más importantes de Azerbaiyán.

Palabras clave: Historia y cultura de Azerbaiyán, Región de Karabaj, Ciudad de Shusha.

INTRODUCTION

History is a social science whose object of study is the past of human beings. Its study is important since it allows us to understand the past to make sense of the present and plan for the future. History teaches us lessons and presents past events with a view toward the present and future (Roberts et al., 2023). The study of history helps us understand how society has evolved over time; it allows us to analyze social, political, economic, and cultural changes and understand how they have influenced current society (Kahane, 2021). The cultural heritage of different civilizations is understood through history, which in turn helps us build our own identity. Learning history equips us with tools to make informed decisions understanding the causes and effects of past events, giving us a broader perspective. In this sense, understanding history helps us to prevent the repetition of past mistakes. Thus, studying history is relevant since it provides us with learned lessons, helps us make informed decisions, and enables us to build our identity as individuals and as a society (Benzie & Poore, 2021).

As many other countries, Azerbaijan has a rich history and culture. Azerbaijani culture is a blend of Turkish, Persian, Arab, and European influences. For example, the country's music is renowned for its traditional instruments such as the tar, kamancha, and balaban, while Azerbaijani dance is highly appreciated for its elegant movements and vibrant rhythm. The architectural heritage of Azerbaijan is impressive, featuring historical mosques, palaces, and caravanserais that reflect its Islamic architecture. Notable sites include the Palace of the Khansarai, the historic center of Baku, the Dzhuma Mosque, and the Imam Gei building. These structures showcase the intricate and beautiful designs that have been preserved throughout the centuries. Azerbaijan is also known for its natural resources, being one of the world's leading producers of oil and natural gas although it has been highlighted that the country's economy heavily relies on these resources. In addition to its economic wealth, Azerbaijan's natural beauty, including the mountains of the Caucasus and the coastline along the Caspian Sea, attracts enthusiasts of hiking, mountaineering, skiing, and water sports. The hospitality and cuisine of Azerbaijan are also notable. Azerbaijanis are known for their warmth and friendliness towards visitors. The country's cuisine is diverse and delicious, featuring traditional dishes like pilaf, dolma, and kebab. These elements make Azerbaijan a fascinating country to explore and discover (Allworth et al., 2024; Mammadov, 2023).

Several important cities in Azerbaijan contribute to its cultural and economic vibrancy. Baku, the capital, is famous for its modern architecture and historic old town.

Other significant cities, such as Ganja, Sumqayit, and Mingachevir, serve as cultural, economic, and tourist hubs, each offering unique attractions and experiences. However, in spite of the beauty of the cities mentioned before, the country has other not as well-known cities but with great relevance as well, as the case of Shusha. Its strategic location, Islamic architectural heritage, and historical significance make it a notable place in Azerbaijan (Nevins, 2020).

Perhaps that is why the development of the city of Shusha has always been the focus of national leader Heydar Aliyev. In the 1970s, on Heydar Aliyev's initiative, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan adopted two decisions on the preservation and restoration of historical monuments in Shusha. The first was the decision "On measures for the further development of the Shusha resort complex," adopted on November 4th, 1976, and the second was "On declaring Shusha a historical and architectural reserve," dated August 10th, 1977. As a result of measures taken since then, the ancient historical monuments of Shusha have been restored, preserved, and passed on to future generations. The national leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, in one of his speeches, expressed deep affection for Shusha, the crown of Karabakh: "Shusha is a dear city, dear land, dear fortress, dear monument not only for the people of Shusha but also for all Azerbaijanis, for every citizen who loves their Motherland and nation" (Mahmudov & Mustafayev, 2012, p.95). Considering the above, the aim of this work is to analyze the most important elements that made Shusha one of the most important cities in Azerbaijan.

DEVELOPMENT

The city of Shusha, referred to as Shushi in Armenian, is located in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Positioned at an elevation of 1420 meters above sea level, it lies just 10 kilometers south of Khankendi, on the A 317 highway that links Khankendi (Stepanakert) with Goris in Armenia. Shusha is set on a rocky plateau and is recognized for its historical and cultural importance. The city was occupied by Armenians during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It must be noted with regret that our Shusha, for centuries called an "impregnable fortress," has become the victim of treachery, perfidy, and indifference. In a short space of time, everything related to the centuries-old material and spiritual culture of the Azerbaijani people in the town of Shusha and the Shusha region was destroyed. Residents of the town of Shusha and the Shusha region became refugees, internally displaced persons, and unemployed people in their home, in their own country. However, no one can erase the historical memory of the Azerbaijani

people, who do not accept the loss of an essential, integral part of the country and are determined to restore justice.

But in 2020, Azerbaijan regained control of Shusha after 28 years of Armenian occupation. This victory held significant importance for Azerbaijan and is seen as a pivotal moment in the conflict. In fact, in July 2023, Azerbaijan's President, Ilham Aliyev, issued an order designating November 8th as Shusha City Day, which is commemorated annually with great solemnity. Under the leadership of Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev, the Azerbaijani Army won a glorious victory in the 44-day war. During his visit to Karabakh on November 16, 2020, President Ilham Aliyev, speaking about this great victory, said:

Fizuli, Hadrut, Jabrail, Zangilan, Gubadly, Shusha, and more than 300 settlements as a whole were liberated from occupation. Commenting on the results of the war, some say that Azerbaijan has liberated seven districts. This is not so. We have liberated seven districts, the city of Shusha, the settlement of Sugovushan, the settlement of Talish, the former Hadrut district, and a great part of the former Martuni district, and we have restored historical justice. Thus, Azerbaijan has achieved historical accomplishments while restoring its territorial integrity. I want to say once again, the Second Karabakh war is our historical victory. There has never been an analogous victory in the centuries-old history of Azerbaijan. Thus, we are taking complex measures to return former IDPs (internally displaced persons). Residential buildings, infrastructure, jobs, agricultural opportunities, industrial parks - we will do these things in a planned way. This is only a list of things to be done in the liberated areas this year (2022), and I am sure that all the plans will be realized. We will achieve what we want... Today, restoration and reconstruction works are being carried out in Karabakh at a great speed, and the future of the region is being built to the highest standards. In the near future, we will turn Karabakh into a paradise and live in these lands forever (Mammadov, 2022, p. 193).

The city boasts a rich history and is famous for its Islamic architecture, featuring mosques, palaces, and historical caravanserais, which are very significant in Azerbaijan (Ucar & Kurban, 2023). The town of Shusha in the Azerbaijan Republic is one of the great centers that has given humanity pearls of material and spiritual culture. It is a famous center of the Karabakh region of our country, with a temperate climate, rich flora and fauna, and abundant wealth. According to statistical data from 1992, the Shusha region covered 289 sq/km of area and had a population of 24,165 people. Shusha is located 410 km west of Baku, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It is situated on the Karabakh ridge of the Lesser Caucasus, at

an altitude of 1400 m above sea level. Until the Armenian occupation (May 8, 1992), Shusha was a resort town (Mammadov, 2016, p. 30).

There are different considerations about the history of Shusha's emergence and the etymology of the word "Shusha". In scientific literature, the opinion that the fortress of Shusha appeared in the 1750s is common. The fortress was erected by the founder of the Karabakh khannate, Panahali Khan Javanshir (1748-1763) (Mahmudov & Mustafayev, 2012, p. 21). However, recent research indicates that Shusha existed since ancient times. During the reign of Panahali Khan, Shusha was beautified and defensive walls were built. The town of Shusha was the capital for some time and was called "Panahabad".

Research has revealed that for centuries the town had other names as well – "Shushakend" ("the village of Shusha"), "Gala" ("Fortress"), "Shehri-Shusha" ("town of Shusha"). Favorable natural conditions, climate, and ground and underground resources had a positive impact on the economic, political, and cultural development of the region (Zeynalov, 1981, p. 63).

In the town of Shusha, blacksmithing, dyeing, copersmithing, tailoring, hatmaking, shoemaking, furriery, braiding, tanning, saddlery (saddle making), and jewelry making developed, along with other fields of handicraft. In the 19th century, Shusha was the center of production and sale of Karabakh carpets. It produced such world-famous carpets as "Malibeyli", "Lempe" ("Ceiling"), "Bakhchadaguller" ("Flowers in the garden"), "Bulud" ("Cloud"), "Sakhsida Guller" ("Flowers in faience"), "Nelbekigul" ("Rose-saucer"), "Gulluyaylyg" ("Shawl / Kerchief with flowers"), "Munjug" ("Beads"), "Zerimekhmer" ("Golden Velvet"), and other products of carpet weaving (Agakishiyev, 1970).

In the middle of the 19th century, blacksmiths (112), bricklayers (104), shoemakers (84), hatters (84), and others were distinguished among the craftsmen of Shusha (Akhundova, Poladova, 1967, p.17). It is no coincidence that these craftsmen lived in separate, specific quarters of the town, and therefore, quarters of Shusha were given the names of different professions ("Papagchilar" – "hatters", "Demirchiler" – "Blacksmiths", "Boyagchilar", "Dyers", "Bashmagchilar", "Shoemakers", etc.). Domestic and foreign trade was developing in the town of Shusha. The town had stable trade relations with the cities of Tabriz, Tehran, Istanbul, Isfahan, and Moscow (Ahmadov, 1966).

During the reign of Ibrahimkhalil Khan (1763-1806), Shusha was considerably beautified. In 1783-1784, by Ibrahimkhalil Khan's decree, firm defensive walls were built around the town of Shusha (Huseynov, 2015, p. 19).

In 1751 and 1797, Shusha was attacked by the armies of the Zand dynasty and Agamhammad Shah, founder of the Qajar dynasty (1795-1925). However, the aggressors met with persistent, severe resistance from the dwellers of the town-fortress. At the beginning of the 19th century, another aggression by Russian troops against Azerbaijan began, and in 1805, the Kurekchay Treaty was signed between the Russian Empire and the Karabakh khanate (Dalili, 1977, p. 32).

Under the terms of the treaty, the ruler of Karabakh, Ibrahimkhalil Khan, accepted the "protectorate of the Russian Empire". The capital of the khanate, Shusha, was also "under the patronage" of the Russian Emperor Alexander I (1801-1825). The Russian Emperor and the Qajar Shah strove to conquer the northern territories of Azerbaijan. The deepening of the conflict between the warring parties led to war. In 1804-1813, a war began between the Qajar and Russian empires, which ended with the conclusion of the Gulistan peace treaty. Shusha town, as part of the Karabakh khanate, was annexed to the Russian Empire. In 1822, the Karabakh khanate was abolished; Shusha became the center of a new military district of the Russian Empire. A Russian military commandant had already become the ruler of Shusha (Mammadov, 2016, p. 946).

In 1826, the Qajar-Russian war began for occupation of the territories of still independent khanates of Azerbaijan. In the same year, armies of Abbas Mirza Qajar faced sharp resistance from the defenders of Shusha and retreated. In 1828, the Russian-Qajar war ended with the signing of the Turkmenchay treaty (Chingizoglu, 2009, p. 21). Russia, which won this war, conquered the rest of the Northern Azerbaijani territories. Territories of southern khanates of Azerbaijan were annexed to the state of Qajar. In this complicated situation, "the Russian patronage" was replaced by the inclusion of the town of Shusha and the entire territory of the Karabakh khanate into the Russian Empire.

On January 1st, 1841, on the grounds of the administrative reform by the Imperial Government of Russia from April 10th, 1840, the Shusha uyezd was established as part of the Caspian province (region). The uyezd center was the town of Shusha. Shusha uyezd became a part of the Baku gubernia (province) by decision of the Government of the Russian Empire in 1846, and the official circles of the empire included the uyezd into the Ganja gubernia in 1867 (Mammadov, 2004, p. 102). At this historic period, the Shusha uyezd covered the following areas: Mehri, Kebirli, Zangazur, Javanshir, Chilabord, and Varand. By the decree of the Imperial Government of Russia from December 10th, 1867, Zangazur and Javanshir were taken from the Shusha uyezd and became independent uyezds. Shusha

uyezd was ruled by the following persons and authorities: chief of the uyezd, his deputies, the treasurer, the area assessors, and town police. There also functioned a court in the uyezd.

According to official data of 1897, in the investigated period, the area of Shusha uyezd covered 4,911 sq/km and had 140,740 dwellers. The developed fields of industry in the Shusha uyezd were agriculture, cattle-breeding, silkworm breeding, viticulture, and horticulture. Especially developed sectors of the uyezd's economy were carpet weaving, cloth and rope (twine) production, and weaving.

Shusha is one of the ancient populated areas. The results of archaeological investigations and examples of material culture found there suggest that this land has been inhabited by humans since the Paleolithic era. The length of Shusha caves, located high above sea level in the valley of the Zarisli (Dashalti) river near the town of Shusha, is 120 m, and the width is 20 m. At the entrance of the Shusha cave, fragments of wide-walled stone fortifications, fortress, and walls dated to the Middle Ages had been found. During archaeological excavations and explorations in this cave, two coarse choppers (large knives for cutting meat) made of stone dated to the Paleolithic era and microlithic knives dated to the Mesolithic era had been revealed. Moreover, pottery dated to the Eneolithic period (V-IV millennia B.C.) and fragments of ceramic ware dated to the Bronze, Iron, and Middle Ages were found in the cave (Hasanov & Jafarov, 1976, p. 27). These findings prove Shusha to be the oldest settlement.

The Shusha region was created in 1930. In 1963, the Shusha region was abolished, and its territory was included in the Khankendi region. In 1965, the Shusha region was restored (Dalili, 1977, p.33). The Shusha region included one town, 30 villages, and other settlements. The town of Shusha is located in the eastern part of the Lesser Caucasus, at latitude between 39°21' and 40°24' north and longitude between 46°18' and 47°21' east of Greenwich (Zeynalov, 1980).

According to official data from 1988, 19,000 people lived in Shusha. On average, 63.3 people lived per sq/km in Shusha. According to this index, Shusha outnumbered the regional figure almost two times (on every sq/km of the territory of the former NKAR lived on average 34.5 people). The largest settlements of the Shusha region are the town of Shusha and the villages of Malibeyli and Dashalti (Mammadov, 2016, p. 948). Our investigations show that as a result of the deportation of Azerbaijanis, the number of residents in the Shusha region was considerably reduced in the last 50 years. The "Caucasian calendar" notes that in 1917, more than 43,000 people lived

in Shusha, while in 1988 this figure was reduced to 19,000 (Mammadov, 2016, p. 33).

Shusha is surrounded by a 500 m deep and 250 m wide rocky, steep (precipitous), deep gorge from the north, north-east, and north-west. On the southern edge of the town rises Kirs' peak. From this peak, Shusha resembles a "copper pot (boiler)". Surrounded by huge steep rocks, Shusha was considered an "impregnable fortress". The prominent Azerbaijani writer, playwright, and publisher of the satirical magazine "Mullah Nasreddin" (1906-1932), public figure Jalil Mammadguluzadeh (1866-1932) wrote about Shusha:

In the evenings, the western side of the town of Shusha resembles paradise. And people who have been in Switzerland identify Shusha with that country. There is a resemblance between the 'Chinese dachas (cottages)' and 'Khan Sarayi' ('Khan's Palace'). And I would have the courage to say that the western side of the town of Shusha, fascinating in the evenings, gladdens the soul of a man; such a rare luck doesn't come to people in every country of the world". The highest peak of Shusha is Mount Big Kirs, which is 2725 m high. The pass of Kecheldag ("Bald Mountain") is also located on the territory of Shusha. The average height of Shusha is 1358 m above sea level. The river Gargar, which originates from the Karabakh mountain range, has a total length of 111 km and flows through the territory of Shusha. The rivers Dashalti and Khelfeli also flow through the territory of Shusha, passing through deep gorges. (Nuriyev, 1986, p. 40).

The main lands of Shusha covered with forests are located on the eastern side of the town. These are turfy mountain-meadow, grey mountain-forest, and brown mountain-forest lands. 20% of the town's lands (58 sq/km) are forests (Dalili, 1977, p. 32). In these forests grow mainly beech, and in some place's oak, lime-tree, walnut, hornbeam (hornbeam tree), pear, cherry plum, dogwood (Cornelian cherries), and other trees. Alpine spots are covered with subalpine and alpine meadows. The difference between Shusha forests and those of Guba and Lankaran is the absence of evergreen forest cover. This is due to the density of forests in Shusha. Even in some sources, the word "Karabakh" is explained as "garameshelik" ("dark, thick, black forest"). Forests of Shusha are thick; even in mid-summer, the sun's rays do not penetrate deep into the forest. And the lack of solar energy has led to weakness of epiphytes and lack of forest cover in the evergreen forests of Shusha. Forests have been cut down in low mountain and foothill areas of Shusha (Karimli, 1993, p. 76). In the place of these forests, xerophytic bushes (shrubbery) have grown. Subalpine meadows are the best pastures and haying plots. On these meadows, individual trees

grow as well. Forests are an indispensable, unique wealth of nature, so they cannot be compared with other resources of it (Karimli, 1995, p. 71). At the same time, these forests are the habitat of animals, the place of regulation of solar energy, heat, and moisture, and they also provide the atmosphere with oxygen, which is of vital importance for people.

The variety of geographical conditions and peculiarities of economic preconditions in Shusha have led to the richness of fauna in the region. Lynx, wild forest cat, roe (roeback), fox, and grey hares live in the forests of Shusha. Bears, wild boars, and "Persian" grey squirrels can also be found in the forests of Shusha. Border areas between the forests and steppe are inhabited by rodents – field mice, causing considerable damage to crops. The forests of Shusha are also home to gophers (mammal rodents).

The rocky areas are inhabited by lizards, grass snakes, and long-legged Caucasian frogs. The following birds are often found in Shusha forests: green and speckled woodpeckers, pigeons, sparrows, and partridges. As a result of the ecological crisis arising from the brutal treatment of nature in the Azerbaijan Republic, Karabakh, and Shusha during the Armenian occupation, many kinds of birds and animals have become extinct and other species are on the verge of extinction (Mammadov, 2015, p. 20). These animals, which inhabited the forests and added beauty to Shusha until the Armenian occupation, were objects of periodic, seasonal hunting and brought some profit to the population and the economy of the region. If we rationally use the natural resources of Azerbaijan, including its integral part of Nagorno-Karabakh, we will significantly increase the level of economic development of our country and improve the welfare of the people.

Even under Soviet rule, the regional leadership treated the forests of Shusha carelessly. "For the development of the cattle-breeding sector in the autonomous region," deforestation of Shusha's forests was encouraged, and these forests gradually disappeared and turned into pastures. The gradual disappearance of forests in the region led to mass landslides. Several seismic centers were found in Shusha. However, the destructive force of earthquakes does not exceed 5-6 points on the Richter scale. It should be noted that in 1903 and 1932, 7-point earthquakes struck Shusha (Mammadov, 2004, p. 17).

Shusha is known worldwide for its natural sights, beautiful climate, pure water, and praiseworthy springs of "Isa Bulagy" ("Isa Spring") and "Turshsu" ("Sour water"). The high-quality Lisagorsk medical-mineral spring is located 19 kilometers southwest of the town of Shusha near Lisagorsk pass and is one of the mineral springs of this

beautiful land (Akhundova, 1967, p. 23). Due to its natural beauty and clean climate, Shusha was considered “the beauty of the Caucasus”.

Shusha, a health-improving center and place of rest, was also “the land of long-lived people”. In this regard, we can proudly cite examples of the town’s inhabitants – 157-year-old Habil Kishi, 146-year-old Hasan Gambaliyev, and others (Guliyev, 1985). The climate of Shusha, which has medicinal value, has been studied by many scientists worldwide. According to Professor Figrovskiy, Shusha can be compared to the health resort towns of Kislovodsk (Russian Federation) and Abastumani (Georgia) for its climatic parameters, and on these indicators, the Swiss resort town of Davos yields to Shusha (Karimli, 1993, p. 114).

The summer climate of Shusha is dry and moderately warm, while in winter it is dry and cold. The climate of Shusha is relatively mild, with cool summers and mild winters. On the territory of Shusha, a weak eastern wind constantly blows, and there are many sunny days in both summer and winter. The average annual temperature in Shusha is +8 degrees Celsius. The average temperature in January is -1.5 degrees Celsius (-1 to -4 Celsius), and the average temperature in July is +18.5 Celsius (+16 to +19 Celsius). The average annual rainfall in Shusha is 700-800 millimeters (Mammadov, 2004, p.18). As in many areas of the Caucasus, the heat of the sun considerably abates here due to the abundance of precipitation. Foggy days in Shusha are mostly observed in autumn and winter. Despite this fact, the climate of the town is dry. In many cases, Shusha is foggy in the mornings, which has a positive effect on the human organism and is essential for the treatment of certain diseases. Professor Yegorov noted that the climate of Shusha is beneficial for treating tuberculosis, anemia, serious forms of fever (malaria), pertussis (whooping cough), pneumonia, fatigue, pleurisy, and other diseases. The climate of Shusha contributes to the health of the town’s residents. The views of Shusha – “Gyzgayasi” (“Maiden Rock”), “Yukhary Dashalti” (“Upper Dashalti”), “Girikh pilleken” (“Forty steps”), “Shirshir”, and other natural sights also contribute to the treatment and recreation of people (Shushinsky, 1960).

Shusha is also a land of historical and cultural monuments. By studying the monuments of Shusha, we refresh and strengthen our historical memory and love our hometown even more. Among these monuments, we can mention the following: a defensive fortress in the village of Dashalti, located five km south of the town of Shusha, at the foot of the Karabakh mountain range, on the left bank of the River Zarisli (Dashalti) – a tributary of the River Gargar; a house of refuge, panel, and bathhouse, constructed for

Ibrahimkhalil Khan in the 18th century; a 125 m long and 20 m wide Shusha cave dated to the IV-II millennia BC; Bronze Age burial mounds in Malibeyli village, located 15 km away from the town of Shusha; toponyms, the preserved ethnonym “Gargar”, and the name of the ancient and early Middle Age state of Albania (the Rivers Gargar and Aghvan, Aghvan plain) (Shushinsky, 1978). For centuries, monuments of Shusha were destroyed by foreign conquerors and turned into ruins.

Gardens enhance the natural beauty of Shusha. Mulberry gardens of Ashaghi (Lower) Dashalti village, albukhara (a special sour-sweet, elongated sort of dried black plum) of Shusha, “Meleyki sort of pear”, “Chanakhchi cucumber”, “cream of Zarisli”, “raspberry of Khelfeli”, and other gifts of nature increase the value of Shusha (Zeynalov, 1980, p. 3). Every leaf of herbs from the forests of Shusha (dog rose, plantain, buckthorn, and others) contributes to the treatment of certain diseases. A certain resident of the town of Shusha, Mashadi Akbar, became famous in his time in the Republic of Azerbaijan, including in the mountainous part of Karabakh, due to his treatment of people with the above-mentioned herbs. The mineral spring “Turshsu” is located 18 km from Shusha. This water is sour and helps in the treatment of gastric disease and lack of appetite. “Turshsu” attracts people with its wonderful, pleasant landscape. Nearby, there is another mineral spring – “Demirsu” (“Iron water”), which attracts people suffering from rheumatic diseases who dream of getting rid of these ailments. There are many mineral springs in Shusha. For instance, near the village of Shirilan, at the foot of the mountain “Kohna shir” (“Old Lion”), in the area where the River Khelfeli and the spring “Sari Baba” flow together, there is another mineral spring with sour water, which contributes to the treatment of gastrointestinal diseases. Shirilan mineral water differs from others in that it instantly changes when mixed with other waters. Within 12 hours, 500 thousand liters of water flow from the potassium springs of Shusha (Zeynalov, 1973).

“Isa Bulagy”, “Turshsu”, “Findigly Gol” (“Hazel-nut Lake”), “Jidir duzu” (“Plain for the horse races”), “Girikh pilleken” (“Forty steps”), and other sights add a special beauty to the town, increasing the value of Shusha a thousandfold. There are beds (deposits) of asbestos in the area of “Sari baba”. In the years of the USSR, these deposits were enjoyed not only by the Azerbaijan SSR but also by other republics and regions of the vast Soviet Union (Mammadov, 2015, p. 16). Thus, Shusha has rich, unmatched resort and tourist resources. The basis of these resources is pleasant, clean mountain air, forests, springs of medicinal mineral waters, unique natural sights, alpine meadows,

monuments of history and culture, the hospitality of the local population, and other material and spiritual values.

Agriculture occupies the prevalent position in the economic life of Shusha. Shusha has a multi-sector rural economy. Livestock, tobacco cultivation, horticulture, vegetable growing, and bee-keeping were the main sectors of agriculture in Shusha. According to data from 1988, the area of land suitable for agriculture in the Shusha region was 20 thousand hectares. In the Shusha region, there were 25 collective farms (kolkhoz) and 5 state farms (sovkhoz). 3.8 thousand hectares of land suitable for agriculture were sown areas. Only 0.1 thousand hectares of sowing areas in Shusha were irrigated. 1.5 thousand hectares (out of 3.4 thousand hectares) of land were planted with cereals and leguminous plants (especially wheat, barley, corn) (Mammadov, 2016, p. 37).

In the Shusha region, strong, stable sorts of wheat resistant to drought ("Arandeni", "Shirvandeni", "Sharg", "Sevinj") were mostly sown. 0.1 thousand hectares of land were planted with perennials. Among the perennials of the Shusha region, "Shah tut" trees occupy a prominent place. This mulberry tree does not require special care and has been cultivated in Shusha since ancient times. "Shah tut" is the main raw material for spirit production. From a certain part of the raw material, "bekmez" (mulberry juice obtained by evaporation) is manufactured, and some is eaten (Mammadov, 1998, p. 79). The area of mulberry trees in the Shusha region has been growing steadily because the mulberry tree is also a major forage reserve for silkworms (bombyx) for the development of sericulture.

On 6 percent of sowing lands in the Shusha region, vegetables, other melons and gourds, and potatoes were cultivated. Potatoes fully met the needs of local people. Potatoes were even sown in plots of land adjoining houses. The haying area of the Shusha region suitable for farming was 0.3 thousand hectares. And pastures occupied 16.7 thousand hectares of land.

On the other hand, the livestock sector took the main place in the agriculture of Shusha. Therefore, 53% of the lands of the Shusha region were sown with fodder crops of vital importance for livestock. According to data from 1987, there were 5.2 thousand heads of neat cattle and 15.2 thousand heads of sheep and goats in the Shusha region. There were also birds on the farms of the area (Ahmadov, 1966).

Prior to the 1990s, the following industrial enterprises operated in the town of Shusha: an enterprise for repair of agricultural machinery, a factory for production of Eastern musical instruments, a power supply network, Karabakh silk factory, manufacturing works, businesses for baking bread, and Branch 1 of Baku Radio Works (association).

Since 1932, the newspaper "Shusha" was published in Shusha. From 1938, the newspaper was published under the names "Socialist maldarlygy" ("Socialist cattle-raising") and "Kolkhoz bayragy" ("Banner of collective farm", since 1963) and "Shusha kurortu" ("Shusha Resort", since 1966). In 1965, a local editorial office for radio transmission started its activity in Shusha (Zeynalov, 1980).

According to data from 1987, 4,075 pupils were trained in the 22 secondary comprehensive schools of Shusha. (One was a primary school, four were eight-year schools, and 17 were secondary schools). In seven preschools, 565 children were brought up. In one vocational school, 324 students were trained. In two musical schools, 451 students were trained. The contingent of students at the cultural-educational school was 643 people (Mammadov, 2015, p. 21). In the agricultural technical secondary school of Shusha, 530 students studied. In the town of Shusha, 6 centers of social and cultural activities ("palaces of culture"), 12 clubs, 20 libraries, and 20 portable film projectors operated. The following facilities intended to protect the health and recreation of people also operated here: two hospitals with 135 beds, 11 village first-aid medical and gynecological stations, a sanitary-epidemiological station, health resorts, pioneer camps, and a tourist base (Mammadov, 2016, p. 38).

In the city of Shusha, rich in historical monuments, there are 327 historical monuments per square kilometer (Mammadov, 1998, p. 170). Since 1977, 198 ancient historical monuments of republican level, occupying 190 hectares of the city, have been declared a "Historical and Architectural Reserve" and registered with the Ministry of Culture of the Azerbaijan SSR. After the above-mentioned "Decision" of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR in 1977, 549 ancient buildings, 1,203 meters of paved streets, 18 surrounding springs, 15 mosques, 6 caravanserais, 3 tombs, 2 madrassas, 2 castles, churches, fortress walls and towers, and 21 historical monuments built during the Soviet period were included in the protected area of the city of Shusha, taken under protection, and restored by the state. Thus, 236 historical and architectural monuments of Shusha were registered and protected, and the resort complex of the city began to develop.

From 1976 to 1982, several historical monuments were completely restored in the city of Shusha. One of them is the restoration of the "Ganja Gapysy" (Ganja Gate), which attracts attention with its beauty and splendor. During the restoration, the national features of the "Ganja Gapysy", located at the entrance to the city, were preserved. For the first time in Azerbaijan, an "Achyg Muzey" (Open Museum) was organized in the security zone of the Ganja Gapysy. The museum exhibited decorative stones with

national patterns, cornices on doors and windows, inscriptions carved on various stones, columns, and other architectural examples left to us by our great-grandfathers (Ilyasov, 2002).

During the years under study, the sources of the Shorbulag, Meydan, and Hamamgabagi quarters, a mosque, the building of a former real school, the sources of the quarter, part of the fortress walls in the Saatly quarter, and the Shirin Su bathhouse were excavated and restored. It is no coincidence that on January 12th, 1979, National Leader Heydar Aliyev came to Shusha, where he took part in the opening of a number of restored monuments and gave valuable advice for further work. In a short period, serious progress was observed in the restoration of beautiful examples of architecture and historical monuments of Shusha. The restoration of the mansions of Zohrabbeyov and Haji Gulu, Ashaghi Mecheti (Lower Mosque), the walls of the Fortress, and the opening of home museums of Vagif, Natavan, Navvab and other historical figures took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this period, the house-museum of U. Hajibeyov was reconstructed and repaired, a statue of the poetess Natavan was installed in front of her house, and the ancient "Fortress Walls" that once protected Shusha from enemies were restored (Guliyev, 1985, p. 29).

CONCLUSIONS

This research has shown the historical, cultural, and strategic importance of Shusha city. Delving into its historical trajectory, it was underscored Shusha's pivotal role as both a cultural nexus and a strategic stronghold in the Caucasus region. Over the centuries, Shusha has evolved into a bastion of Azerbaijani identity, nurturing a rich cultural tapestry of literature, music, and arts that have significantly shaped Azerbaijani heritage. Shusha's architectural landmarks and urban layout reflect its historical evolution and enduring cultural significance, serving as a testament to its resilience and cultural vibrancy amidst geopolitical shifts. Additionally, as a cultural epicenter, Shusha continues to inspire scholarly inquiry and cultural appreciation, reinforcing its status as a cherished heritage site and a beacon of Azerbaijani cultural pride.

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