



REVIVAL OF SHUSHI

REVIVAL OF SHUSHI

Edited by James Bosbotinis

Moscow 2015

UDK 94(479.25)

Published:
'MIA' publishers

ISBN 978-5-8948-1958-7





James Bosbotinis has recently completed a PhD at King's College London on the debate concerning Britain's future aircraft carrier programme and British maritime strategy. His research interests include British strategy, military and strategic trends, in particular with regard to Russia and China, and maritime strategy. He is an Associate Member of the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies. He is also interested in the politics and history of the South Caucasus, including Nagorno-Karabakh.

Introduction

The South Caucasus has a rich and diverse history and cultural heritage, a product of the region's position between Europe, Asia and the Middle East. This geographical position has seen the region subject to the influences of some of history's most notable empires, including the Ottoman, Persian and Russian. Moreover, the region remains a scene of contemporary geopolitical competition and rivalry.

This book, based on the research by local experts, highlights the enduring history and distinct cultural heritage of the city of Shushi, in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Shushi's history vividly illustrates the diverse range of influences, challenges and developments that form the wider history of the South Caucasus.

Shushi's cultural heritage and identity also highlights a contemporary challenge relevant to both the South Caucasus and further afield: a national identity that transcends modern borders. The purpose of this book is to describe the fascinating heritage of a small city with a rich history.

**James Bosbotinis,
August 2014,
London**

History and Geography



Img. 1. Shushi view. © Vahe Gabrielyan

1.1. From ancient times to the 17th century

Shushi is the administrative centre of the Shushi region of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. The town is located on a plateau of a steep hill approximately 1,300–1,500 meters above sea level. Along the gorge on the south-eastern side of the hill flows the Karkar river. Shushi prides itself on a spectacular and unique heritage as a fortified town that has played an important role in the history of Nagorno-Karabakh since its foundation to this very day.

Panah-Ali khan took control of the fortress in 1750. However, the archaeological evidence and other sources suggest that the settlements on Shushi plateau are much older and Shushi itself was a fortified military stronghold in the Armenian principality of Varanda during the Middle Ages and throughout the 18th century.

According to historical sources, in antiquity temples dedicated to the Urartian deity Khaldi (Hayk) were built on high hills and called Shushi (Susi). The earliest mention of fortified settlements on the Shushi plateau, namely Karkar castle (from Armenian 'kar' – 'stone, rock'), in written sources is found in the works of such eminent Arab

and Persian scholars of the 9–14th century as Ibn Khordadbeh, Yaqut al-Hamawi, al-Qazwini, Ibn Juzzay and in the writings of an-Nasawi who was the secretary and biographer of the last Khwarezmian sultan Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu. According to these sources, the Karkar castle-city was founded in the 6th century AD by the Persian King Khosrow I (Anushirvan). The recent archaeological findings in the vicinity of Shushi town suggest that the fortified settlements on the plateau in general and Karkar castle in particular must be much older.

In 2005 the archaeological expedition of the Armenian Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography to Artsakh carried out wide-scale excavations in Shushi and its vicinity in order to verify the age of the earliest settlements. Artefacts unearthed in a tomb situated on the northern side of Shushi included an obsidian knife, an iron spearhead, a piece of ornamented silver jewelry, a small bronze bell and two bracelets, all from the 2nd to 1st millennium BC. The archaeologists also found intricately decorated earthenware: jugs, pots, bowls etc. from the 8–7th century B.C.

The archaeological excavations undertaken in Shushi fortress in 2005, especially the detailed exploration of its 18th century stone walls near Mkhitarashen gates (one of four entrances), yielded foolproof evidence that a large area inside the fortress walls were inhabited as early as the beginning of the 1st millennium BC.

The most probable location of the Karkar castle was assumed to be a site on the eastern part of Shushi plateau where the archaeologists found many artefacts from 12–14th century AD. Further excavations in the following years helped verify the castle's location and age. The site provided also important data about links between the earliest residents of the ancient settlement of Karkar and the kingdom of Van (Urartu) of the 9–6th century BC.

Several khachkars (Armenian cross-stones) have also been discovered in the vicinity of Shushi. The oldest of the five khachkars was carved in 971 AD. However, perhaps the most important historical evidence of this period is the Prince Hasan-Jalal Vahtangian's inscription from the Gandzasar monastery which leaves no doubt that in the 13th century Artsakh 'with large districts' belonged to his Principality of Khachen, a medieval Armenian principality in the territory of the present day Nagorno-Karabakh.



Img. 2. Commander Avan's cave

The earliest mention of Shushi in a written source is found in an illuminated Armenian Gospel of the 15th century and kept in Yerevan's Matenadaran, the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts. The Gospel was written in Shushi by calligrapher Ter-Manuel in 1428.

In the Early Modern period Armenia, due to its strategic importance, was constantly fought over and passed back and forth between the dominion



Img. 3. Excavation site in the vicinity of Shushi

of Persia and the Ottoman Turks. The prolonged wars caused yet another division of Armenia: the Eastern part went to Persia; the Western to the Ottoman Empire. In the 14–15th century relatively small feudal entities called

melikdoms or melikates started to emerge in several Eastern Armenian territories. They were formed on the ruins of the great principalities of the past and ruled by noble families that claimed their descent from various branches of Artsakh princes and kings. The medieval principality of Khachen in Artsakh existed until the 16–17th century when it was broken up in five principalities commonly referred to as the Khamsa Melikdoms. One of these melikdoms was Varanda whose hereditary rulers belonged to Melik-Shakhnazaryan house.



Img. 4. Artefacts, 2nd-1st millennium BC

Many historical sources confirm that in 1606 the Persian Shah Abbas I issued an edict that confirmed Melik Shakhnazar's right to rule a province (gavar). Arakel Davrizhetsi, a 17th century Armenian historian, writes in his 'Book of Histories':

'After leaving Tiflis the Shah went to Gegham province and his troops camped there, but Shah

Abbas himself stayed in the village Mazra in the house of the local Melik Shakhnazar. And this Melik Shakhnazar was of Armenian origin and Christian faith. The Shah granted him the right to rule as a melik of that province and gave him and his brothers other estates and villages. And [Shah Abbas I] wrote a solid nomos, and confirmed it with his royal seal, so that this demesne would irrevocably belong to them and to their sons for evermore, from generation to generation.'

1.2. 18th century

At the beginning of the 18th century the meliks and the general population of the region faced a dire situation due to the increasingly frequent raids of Turkic tribes. The descendants of Melik Shakhnazar I, who had been

granted the right to rule vast territories, were forced to build new forts in the mountains of Artsakh.



Img. 5. Commander Tarhan's castle

The Shushi fort was located in the territory that traditionally belonged to the Melik-Shakhnazaryan house of the Armenian principality of Varanda and, dating back to the 1710–1720s.

The original correspondence of 1724–1726 between the Russian military and the Armenian meliks and commanders of Karabakh has reached our days. These letters reconfirm that Shoushi has been a fortified settlement at least since 1720s. Moreover, it was in the Shushi fort (Armenian 'sghnakh') where the Armenian commander Avan defeated the forces of Ottoman Turks that had invaded the Transcaucasia.

As quoted in a letter of January 5, 1724 '... heads of the Shushi sghnakh, I, Commander Avan, and I, Commander Mirza, and all greater nobles and lesser nobles of the sghnakh...' declared that they would remain true to their promises.

On November 15, 1726 commander Avan informed the commander of Russian army that the Ottoman Turks 'with their army have attacked Shushi – Commander Avan's and Commander Ohan's stronghold.'

Meanwhile, Russian general Matyushkin reported to the tsar's court that 'the commander Avan heard the entreaties of Karabakh's populace and didn't go to Gilan with his 10 thousand men. He stays in the sghnakh and builds a fortress.'

Finally, Kehva Chelebi, who actually maintained correspondence between the meliks of Karabakh and the Russian authorities, in his report of 1725 mentions Shushi as a fort and a town: '...The nearest Armenian stronghold ... was Shushi. Shushi is four days' distance from Shemakhi. (...) Rocky mountains surround the town of Shushi.'

The Shushi stronghold in Varanda remained under the rule of the Melik-Shakhnazaryan house until the middle of the 18th century when Melik Shakhnazar II of Varanda established a military alliance with the chief of a nomadic tribe Panah-Ali Javanshir whose stronghold was Shahbulag. For a while the interests of Melik Shakhnazar II coincided with those of Panah-Ali who strived to become the undisputed ruler of the region. The latter made use of the differences between the Armenian Meliks of Karabakh in order to gain control over their territories. In 1750 Panah-Ali who was hiding from Mohammad Hasan Khan Qajar wrath in Tigranakert in the Melikdom of Khachen persuaded Melik Shakhnazar II to grant him permission to move to the Shushi stronghold. Later, in 1769, the Georgian king Heraclius II in his letter to the Russian diplomat Count Panin alluded to these events as follows: 'there was an ancient fortress which was conquered, through deceit, by one man from the Muslim Javanshir tribe.' However, the poor condition of the existing Shushi fortress walls could not guaranty protection against imminent enemy attacks which must have been the main reason why Panah-Ali deemed it necessary to rebuild the fort. Limestone blocks were used to construct impregnable stronghold. The geographical position of the stronghold was perfect for border defense purposes. The newly rebuilt town received the name of Panahabad and became the capital of the short-lived Karabakh



Img. 6. Shushi Armenian woman with a child

Khanate founded by Panah-Ali. Under the reign of the first khan's son Ibrahim-Khalil khan it was again renamed Shushi and became a big town with approximately 10,000 inhabitants.

The Armenian military stronghold or sghnakh was built in the early 18th century on a site inhabited since the 1st millennium BC. Panah-Ali rebuilt and fortified the fort and town that was in turn rebuilt and expanded at the beginning of the 19th century after Karabakh became part of Russia. The Azerbaijani claim that the fort on the Shushi plateau was first founded by Panah-Ali is not supported by either archaeological evidence or written sources. Moreover, such terms as 'Azerbaijan' and 'Azerbaijani' that abound in a very free translation of Mirza Jamal Javanshir Qarabaghi's 'Tarikh-e Qarabagh' ('History of Karabakh'), published in Baku in 1959, cannot be found in the Persian original.

In the last few decades of the 18th century Shushi was besieged several times by various Muslim warlords who craved control over the Karabakh khanate and the wider Transcaucasia. The invading armies devastated the land and slaughtered its people so that the years of the first two Karabakh khans' rule are remembered as a particularly bleak period in the region's history.

In 1784 Russian Prince Grigory Potyomkin who was evidently quite well-informed of the situation in Artsakh wrote a report to the Empress Catherine II in regard to Panah-Ali's son's Ibrahim-Khalil's usurpation of khan's power. Among other things, he stated that after the subjugation of the khan and 'if such opportunity arises, his region that consists of Armenians should be given to a national governing body and in this way a Christian state should be re-established in Asia, according to Your Imperial Highness' august promise given to Armenian meliks through the offices of myself.'



Img. 7. Shushi. An Armenian couple

From the early 19th century, the Russian Empire enlarged its influence in the Caucasus and many khanates accepted Russian protectorate. According to the Kurakchay Treaty between the Karabakh Khanate and the Russian

Empire signed in 1805, the Karabakh khan recognized the supremacy and dominance of Russia. The Shushi fortress was rebuilt and became a Russian fort. The Treaty of Gulistan that was concluded in 1813 between Russia and Persia stated that all cities, towns and villages of the khanates in Transcaucasia should become part of Russia. The Karabakh khanate was finally abolished in 1822. Shushi ceased to be a capital of a khanate and instead became the administrative capital of the Karabakh province (1822–1840) and then of the Shushi district of the Elisavetpol Governorate (1840–1923).

The 70-year-long existence of Karabakh khanate with its Muslim khans has become the cornerstone of the Azerbaijani argument that Artsakh with its 2000 years of history belongs to the relatively new territorial entity known as Azerbaijan. Khanates were administrative units of the Persian Empire and are not connected with the Republic of Azerbaijan that was established in 1918.

In 1826 when the Persian Fath-Ali Shah Qajar decided to recover the territories lost to Russia, his general Abbas Mirza invaded Karabakh with an army of 35,000 and tried to recapture Shushi but the local populace and the Russian garrison of 1,700 men managed to withstand the Persian attack. The fortress held out for several months and never fell.

1.3. Shushi in the 19th century

The final abolishment of the Karabakh khanate in 1822 and Russia's victory in the Russo-Persian war of 1826–1828 proved to be a major turning point in the cultural and economic development of Karabakh. In 1847, when Shushi was officially granted a city status, and due to its strategic location, was well on its way to becoming one of the most important economic and cultural centres in the South Caucasus. In 1856 its population was already 15,000 and was continuously growing. Approximately 50 per cent of Shushi inhabitants were Armenians and during the second half of the 19th century this percentage tended to increase. In 1897 the number of Shushi inhabitants reached almost 26,000, and 55 per cent of them were Armenians. The population of

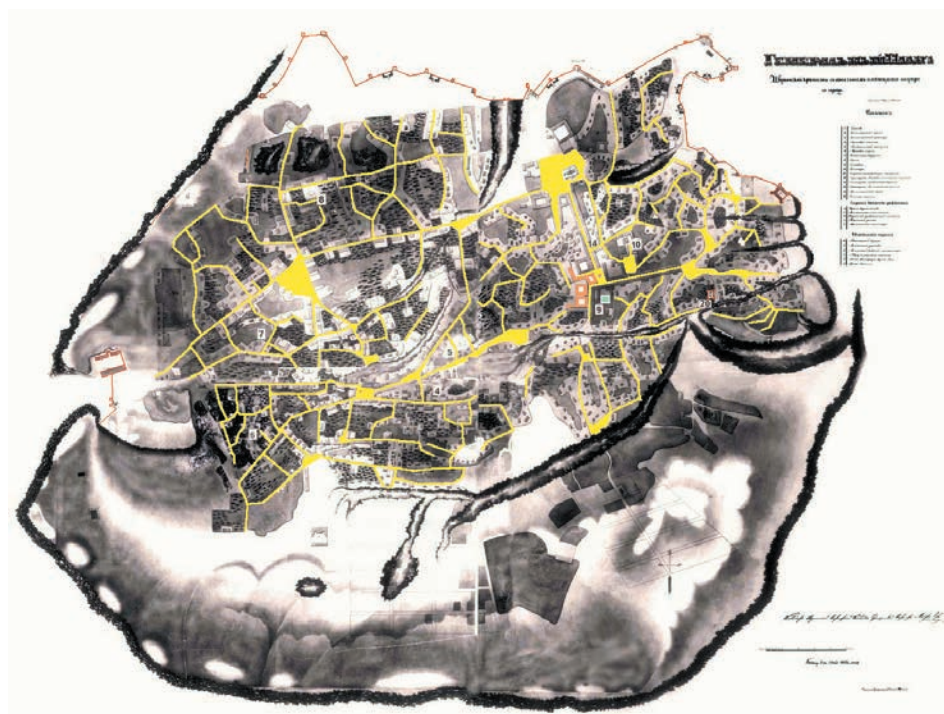


Img. 8. Shushi. An Armenian woman with a child

Shushi primarily were involved in trade, horse-breeding, carpet weaving and wine and vodka production. Shushi was also the biggest centre of silk production in the Caucasus.

The favourable socio-economic and political situation in Shushi stimulated the implementation of the general urban development plan of 1853. This was a major step forward compared to some previous attempts of urban planning. The public buildings and municipal offices of Shushi were designed and constructed according to the traditions of Armenian architecture by notable Armenian architects, such as Simon Ter-Akopyan, Markar Karagezyants and Armenak Khondasazyan. A distinctive and unique feature of the urban development plan was the preservation of the existing division of Shushi in two relatively independent parts.

Since the beginning of the 1830s the eastern lower section of Shushi was mainly inhabited by the Turkic-speaking Muslims, while Armenians settled in the western upper section of the town. Already in these early years the Armenian district of the town, mentioned in various sources as the Western, First or Main district, had become the most important part of Shushi and managed to preserve its dominant socio-economic status. The Armenian



Img. 9. General town planning scheme



Img. 10. The Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in the 19th century

district had five churches, district school and a school for girls. Two-storey and three-storey stone houses in the residential part of the Armenian district are of special artistic value.

Many public as well as sacred buildings of the Muslim district were constructed during the times of Karabakh khanate. The first Muslim architects of Shushi had apparently used principles inherent to Armenian architecture as the long tradition of Armenian urban design and architecture could not fail to influence the culture of a people who had only recently been nomadic herdsmen. Architectural elements of Armenian origin were successfully used in secular buildings as well as in the Mosque Ashagi (Lower) built in 1874. Less impressive were the attempts of some prosperous Muslims to adorn their private residences and public buildings with elements typical of Islamic architecture which resulted in an awkward synthesis of traditional Armenian design and outlandish additions such as pillars or banal wall paintings.

A major problem in Shushi was a shortage of drinking water. The first aqueduct was built in 1871 through the offices of Hayrapet Piryantsi and Agadsan Danielyants. The water supply network was further improved in 1896 when a wealthy merchant Tatevos Tamiryants financed the construction of a water-supply pipe that brought water to the town from 18km away. Many water storage facilities were built in



Img. 11. Shushi, Loris-Melikov Street

both districts of Shushi and the problem was finally solved. At the end of the 19th century the Armenian district also had an intricate underground sewer system.

1.4. Beginning of the 20th century

The beginning of the 20th century in the Caucasus was marked by the first violent clashes between Armenians and Tatars¹. The first major conflict between the Armenian and Turkic-speaking Muslim inhabitants of Shushi erupted on August 5, 1905. The resulting pogroms against Armenians led to death of hundreds of people, and more than 200 public buildings and private houses were burnt down. The fires in the Armenian district could not be put out for three days. In the following decade many Armenians who lived in quarters nearest to the Muslim district preferred to sell their properties and even move out of the town. By the 1916 the proportion of the Armenian population in Shushi was reduced to less than 50 per cent.

¹ Tatars, historically Tartars, is an umbrella term for Turkic peoples in the territory of the former Russian Empire.

The First World War, the revolution in Russia and subsequent warfare in Caucasus effectively put an end to the prosperity of the 'little Paris of the Caucasus' as Shushi was lovingly nicknamed by its inhabitants. 1918–1920 proved to be the most decisive years for the Armenians of Karabakh as it was during this short but tumultuous period that their homeland became 'a disputed territory'. For a few months, after the Russian Revolution of 1917, Karabakh was part of the short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic which in May 1918 broke into separate Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian states. Shortly afterwards, the Ottoman army moved into areas of Armenia that had not been under the sultan's control since the 17th century. According to the testimony of the German military attache Otto von Lossow, on May 15, 1918 'the Turks have begun a full-scale extermination of Armenians in Transcaucasia.' However, their ambitious plans to conquer the Eastern part of Armenia failed thanks to the heroic fight of the Armenian people in the battles of Sardarapat, Gharakilisa and Bash-Aparan. The peace treaty with Ottoman Turkey was signed in Batum on June 4, 1918.

On July 22–28, 1918, the First Assembly of Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh in Shushi declared the region self-governing and created a National Council and a government that were to rule over the entire Karabakh. Unfortunately, already on September 22–23, 1918, Shushi was sacked by Turkish forces that remained until the Ottoman Empire was forced to retreat from its occupied territories in Transcaucasia, according to the terms of the armistice of Mudros concluded on October 30, 1918. Subsequently, Shushi was occupied by British forces. The British command provisionally affirmed Khosrov bey Sultanov as the interim



Img. 12. Armenian District Qamu Aghaci



Img. 13. Greco-Russian Church. The beginning of the 20th century

Governor General of Karabakh and Zangezur (appointed by the Azerbaijani government in January 1919), pending final decision by a future peace conference.

Sultanov was a widely feared and hated figure in Karabakh as the local Armenians took objection to his threats to compel them to fully submit under Azerbaijani rule. In response to his appointment, the Armenian National Council of Karabakh held several meetings insisting on their right of self-determination. Tensions reached a high point on June 3, 1919 when Sultanov issued an order to his troops to encircle the Armenian district of Shushi. According to 'The New York Times', it resulted in a full-scale massacre 'by Tartars of 700 of the Christian inhabitants of the town'. After the arrival of cavalry forces the following day, the Azerbaijani forces attacked several nearby Armenian villages, leaving at least 600 Armenians dead and the settlements in ruins. Though Sultanov denied any wrongdoing, an investigation carried out by the British military concluded that he had instigated the massacres. Captain Glaterberg wrote in his report to General Shattleword: 'Admittedly, the slaughter has been previously planned by Sultanov.'

Sultanov was recalled to Baku. Nevertheless, by the end of June he resumed his office as Governor General and intensified his efforts to bring the region under Azerbaijani rule: a move adamantly opposed by the local Armenian population. A provisional compromise was reached in the agreement of 22 August 1919 signed between the Seventh Armenian National Council of Karabakh and Azerbaijan. According to this agreement, Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh agreed to submit to Azerbaijani rule in the region in exchange for their cultural and civic rights until the final status was



Img. 14. Ruins of the Armenian part of the city of Shushi after the March 1920 pogroms

decided at the Peace Conference in Paris. The twenty-six clauses of the agreement strictly limited the Azerbaijani administrative and military presence in the region and underscored the autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Unfortunately, the Paris Peace Conference did not satisfactorily address the territorial disputes of the Transcaucasian republics. The political section of the British Peace Delegation that was entrusted with the question of Karabakh was poorly informed and passive. Admittedly, several lesser officials, for example, Eric Forbes Adam, a junior Foreign Office member of the British Peace Delegation, repeatedly expressed doubts regarding the justification of Karabakh's inclusion in Azerbaijan instead of Armenia but to no avail. In June 1919, Forbes Adam wrote: 'The only point which is not quite clear from this is why the Karabakh district, which is admittedly preponderantly Armenian and belongs geographically to Armenia as being the N.E. corner of the Armenian 'plateau', should not be attached to the Armenian republic instead of Azerbaijan,' emphasizing that the subordination of Karabakh to



Img. 15, 16. The Armenian District Megretots Tagh before and after the pogroms

Azerbaijani administration 'remains a mystery.' In the end, the fate of Karabakh was decided by force of arms, not on the basis of the high-sounding moral principles proclaimed by the Allies during and immediately after the First World War.

Although the relations between Armenians and Tatars in Karabakh seemed to normalize, Sultanov almost immediately violated all terms of the agreement of August 22 increasing the sizes of Azerbaijani garrisons in Shushi and moving his troops without the Council's approval. On March 23, 1920 the prolonged period of mutual disappointment, tension and frustration culminated in a largely botched revolt of Armenians against Azerbaijani control. The Azerbaijanis immediately retaliated with savage pogroms and mass killings of Armenians that lasted several days and are known as the Shushi Massacre.

According to the description of the Azerbaijani communist Ojakhuli Musaev, 'a ruthless destruction of defenceless women, children, old women and old men began. Armenians were exposed to a mass slaughter. ... At an order of ... Khosrov bey Sultanov, pogroms proceeded for more than six days, houses in the Armenian part were crushed, plundered and reduced all to ashes...' The Shushi Massacre resulted in the complete destruction of the Armenian district of Shushi and an almost complete elimination of its Armenian population as those who managed to escape death or capture fled the town. According to the 1916 data, more than 23,000 Armenians lived in Shushi, whereas in 1921 their number was less than 300. This starkly illustrates the effect of the massacre.

1.5. Shushi under Azerbaijani rule

On April 28, 1920 Soviet government was established in Azerbaijan and the 11th Red Army came perilously close to the borders of Artsakh. While the government of Armenia was committed to a peaceful reconciliation, Red Army troops entered Shushi under the pretext of prevention of further pogroms. On May 23, Khachen, Jevanshir and Gulistan came under Soviet rule although Nagorno-Karabakh continued to be semi-independent under Armenian control. Nevertheless, on July 5, 1921 the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party imposed a decision to give Nagorno-Karabakh wide autonomy within Azerbaijan, and proclaimed Shushi the administrative centre of the autonomous region. Azerbaijan solved the autonomy issue two years later, establishing the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast with the Vararakn settlement (later renamed Stepanakert) as its administrative centre on July 7, 1923. However, Azerbaijan formed the Autonomous Oblast

only on a portion of the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, mainly leaving out the territories that connect Nagorno-Karabakh with the Armenian SSR. The Azerbaijani leadership did realize that keeping Shushi as the administrative centre of Nagorno-Karabakh would inevitably lead to the revival of Shushi. Therefore, in order to preserve the results of the



Img. 17. Shushi. Aguletsots Church

preceding pogroms and destruction in Shushi, it was decided to select a new administrative centre.

As was the case in Nakhchivan, for many years the Armenian refugees were denied the right to return to their homes. Shushi that had not so long ago been

a thriving multicultural town now lay in ruins. At the end of the 1920s it was just a poor village with little more than 3,000 inhabitants, mostly Turkic-speaking Azerbaijanis and Kurds. Nadezhda Mandelshtam who visited Shushi in 1930 wrote:

‘...In this town, which formerly, of course, was healthy and with every amenity, the picture of catastrophe and massacres was terribly vivid... They say after the massacres all the wells were full of corpses. (...) We did not see anyone in the streets or on the mountain. Only downtown, in the market-square there were a lot of people, but there wasn’t any Armenian among them, they were all Muslims.’

Plans to rebuild Shushi that had been made in the first years after establishment of Soviet government were never carried out. The Armenian district lay in ruins until the beginning of the 1960s. In 1961, Azerbaijan’s government finally managed to pass a decision to clear away the ruins so that the last traces of the Armenian district would perish, even though many old buildings still could have been renovated. One Russian and three Armenian churches were



Img. 18. Shushi. The ruins of the Armenian District Verin Tagh

SHUSHI AS AN IMPORTANT ARMENIAN CULTURE CENTRE

Scale 1:9 500



Fragment of Shushi Fortification



St. Amenaprkich (Ghazanchetsots) Church, 1868-1886



Technical Secondary School, 1881



Luniakin's House



Newly discovered



*St. Hovhannes Mkrtych
('Green Church') Church,
1847*



Fragment of Shushi Fortress



Covered Cross-stone

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| | Church | | Specialized School |
| | Fortress | | Dwelling House |
| | Tower | | School |
| | Mosque | | Theatre |
| | Fortification | | Hospital |
| | Tombs | | Post |
| | Armenian, Russian Cemeteries | | Inn |
| | Muslim Cemetery | | Carpet Factory |
| | Palace of Khan | | Prison |
| | Historic Museum | | Arsenal |
| | Cross-stone | | Market |
| | Publishing-House | | Spring |
| | | | Reservoir |

demolished and the town was built up with plain buildings typical of the Khrushchev era. Despite these efforts, Shushi preserved its unique aura, as the distinctive features of Armenian architecture were clearly discernible also in the Muslim part of the town.

At the beginning of the 1970s Shushi was awarded the status of a conservation area, although only in the boundaries of its Eastern part that was traditionally allocated to the Muslim inhabitants of the town. The rationale for conservation area was the preservation, restoration and propaganda of Muslim architectural monuments notwithstanding the fact that examples of genuine Islamic architecture in Shushi are extremely rare – three mosques and a few residential buildings.

During the whole Soviet era, the Karabakh Armenians felt they were the object of various repressions on the part of Azerbaijan. Although the region's population was predominantly Armenian, the Baku authorities doggedly carried out a policy of demolition of the Armenian cultural heritage in all the territories controlled by Azerbaijan. With the beginning of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the question of Nagorno-Karabakh re-emerged.

When Armenians organized one of the first peaceful demonstrations in Stepanakert on February 13, 1988, many Azerbaijanis left for Shushi, with the result that it became the most important Azerbaijani stronghold in Karabakh. The 2,000 Armenian inhabitants of Shushi were forced to leave the town; Armenian churches were desecrated, looted and destroyed. Shushi became the ideal spot from where to launch a large scale artillery bombardment of Stepanakert, mostly targeting civilians.

1.6. Liberation of Shushi

On May 9, 1992 Armenian forces liberated Shushi and the Azerbaijani population left. May 9 is officially celebrated as Shushi Liberation Day in Nagorno-Karabakh. Taking into account the importance of liberation of Shushi, in 1994 the Supreme Council of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic established a medal 'For Liberation of Shushi.'

Immediately after the liberation of Shushi units of local government were formed and, swiftly started the long process of rebuilding the town. In the following years Shushi acquired many administrative, communal, sacred, residential and other buildings that were newly built or restored, as well as new roads, water supply and communication systems. Many local and foreign organizations cooperated with the government in projects aimed at

rebuilding this previously renowned cultural centre of the Transcaucasia. In 2007 a new coat of arms for Shushi – an angel, was selected taking into account the results of an art competition jointly organized municipal authorities and the Shushi Revival Fund. The author of the design was Ruben Arutchyan, a famous Armenian artist, a descendant of a well-known family from Shushi.

On September 23, 2013, the townspeople witnessed the official opening of a public garden dedicated to friendship between Shushi and the city of Los Angeles. On the centre of the park a statue of an angel was unveiled that serves as a symbol for both Shushi and Los Angeles.



Img. 19. Artsvaberd opera by Andrey Babayev in Shushi on the occasion of the 22nd anniversary of the NKR independence, 2013



Img. 20. The President of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Republic Bako Sahakyan visited the 'Shushi' market of agricultural products, 2013

Economics

The geographical position of Shushi at the intersection of roads joining Tebriz and Transcaucasia, Zangezur and Karabakh favoured the development of commerce. At the beginning of the 19th century there were many wealthy Armenian merchant families in Shushi, such as the Tarumyans that were wealthy enough to afford a daily distribution of 500 rubles among the poor. In the early 20th century merchants from Shushi had links to major trade centres in Russia, Persia and Europe, importing manufacture and, consumer goods and boosting trade in Karabakh.



Img. 21. Shushi. Square

A significant proportion of Shushi population were skilled craftsmen – smiths, tailors, weavers, potters, stonemasons, carpenters, shoemakers, copper workers, barbers, goldsmiths, etc. In the late 19th and early 20th century there were 570 workshops, guilds and factories in Shushi including a workshop that specialized in the production of oriental musical instruments and was later expanded into a factory.

Shushi was the biggest centre of silk production in the Caucasus and also had a large carpet weaving factory that was founded in 1906 and employed 120 workers. Its yearly production was 600–700 carpets the majority of which was exported. As carpet weaving was historically an important traditional profession for the majority of the female population of Karabakh, many Armenian women who had lost their husbands in the pogroms of 1905 found employment in the Shushi carpet factory.

The common townspeople usually did not engage in agriculture or a large-scale horticulture as the available space for such pursuits on the plateau was rather limited, but many wealthy citizens of Shushi (according to some sources, approximately 12 per cent) owned land parcels in Karabakh. The Tatars of Karabakh in general and Shushi in particular have been engaged in sheep and horse-breeding and therefore, led a semi-nomadic lifestyle, spending wintertime in lowland Karabakh in winter pastures, and spring and summer in Shushi and other mountainous regions.

Religion

The Armenian population in Karabakh is Christian and mostly belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Tatars of Shushi from the late 18th to early 20th century were almost entirely Shia Muslims. According to some descriptions the first two Armenian churches in Shushi were



Img. 22. Green Church. © Vahe Gabrielyan

wooden buildings erected around 1752–1753, that is simultaneously with the foundation of the first Armenian quarters Aguletsots and Gazanchetsots. Later they were replaced with stone buildings. The first mosques in Shushi date back to roughly the same period and have similarly humble beginnings.

In 1815 the head of Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos Yeprem I Dzoragetsi issued an encyclical, founding the Artsakh Diocese. 1836 marked the foundation of the Karabakh Diocese that had 3 towns (Shushi, Nuhi and Lenkoran) and 156 villages. In 1914 the Diocese of Karabakh had 222 functioning churches and monasteries, with 188 clergymen, and 206,000 parishioners living in 224 Armenian settlements.

Only two out of five Armenian Churches of Shushi survived the turbulent years after the First World War, namely the St. John Baptist or the Green Church (1818) and the Gazanchetsots Cathedral (1868–1881). Both were built by local masters, according to the characteristic, domed structure design typical of Armenian Church architecture of the 6–7th and 9–14th century. Architect Simon Ter-Hakobyan, who designed the



Img. 23. The Upper Govhar Agha Mosque

Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, intended the church to resemble Etchmiadzin Cathedral. After the Shushi Massacre of 1920 the cathedral ceased to function as a church. During Soviet times it was used as a granary, and later as a garage. During the Karabakh war the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral was turned into an ammunition store. The Azerbaijani authorities were convinced that their Armenian adversaries would never attempt to destroy a church, which they did not and took the city without damaging the church.

After the establishment of Soviet control in the region, especially after the forced incorporation of Karabakh into Azerbaijan, the Diocese of Karabakh suffered great losses. According to the report of the ecclesiastical council in Etchmiadzin on February 11, 1929, the Karabakh Diocese lost 11 of its 18 monasteries, 79 churches were desecrated and turned into libraries, warehouses or granaries. Eventually, all Armenian churches in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast were closed down and subjected to intentional neglect. Many church buildings fell into disrepair or were wrecked. The Diocese of Karabakh was liquidated as early as in 1930, and Armenian clerics were either killed or exiled to Siberia.

After the beginning of the Karabakh Liberation Movement in 1988 the Armenian Apostolic Church received an opportunity to revive its Diocese of Artsakh which was reestablished in 1989. Nowadays the Diocese has headquarters in the Gandzasar monastery but mainly operates from its offices in Shushi.



Img. 24. Bell tower of Kusanats Monastery, 1960



Img. 25. Ruins of Megretsots Church

Education and Culture

The economic prosperity of the late 19th and early 20th century stimulated the cultural life of Shushi, with the result that it became one of the main cultural and intellectual centres in the Transcaucasia, particularly renowned for its musical and theatrical traditions. The town was home to many eminent figures of Armenian culture, including, for example, writers Muratsan and Ashot Arzumyants, artists Hakob Gyurjyan and Stepan Aghajanyan, composers Daniel Kazaryan, Grigor Syuni and Yeghishe Bagdasaryan. In addition, Shushi was home to scientists Arakel Babakhanyan, Margar Arustumov, Artashes Arakelyan and Ivan Knunyants; and public figures including Aram Manukyan, Mkrtich Khandamiryan, Ivan Lazarev, Andranik Kazaryan and many others.

4.1. Education

The first private school in Shushi was opened in 1805 by Melik Azatyan and had 35 students. Another private school opened by Hakop Yuzbashyan could accommodate 45 students. The first public school was established in 1823 by representatives of the local Basel Evangelical Mission (Switzerland). The students at the mission school were taught Armenian, Persian, Russian and other languages and within a short period of time their number increased to 130. The Armenians of Shushi were the first to pay serious attention to female education. The first school for girls, St. Mary's women's school of Karabakh (Mariamyan), was opened in 1864 on the initiative of Mariam Akhumyan. The well-educated graduates of this school could



Img. 26. St. Mary's women's school (Mariamyan)

work as teachers in parish schools. Meanwhile the first Tatar school was opened in 1896. Shushi had the only orphanage in Karabakh which was also founded in the 1890s. There were also two kindergartens and a sewing school.

Thus, toward the end of the 19th century Shushi already had one specialized and six regular schools, all of which played an invaluable role in the community. The Armenian Diocesan Theological School of Karabakh, that was founded in 1838 thanks to the efforts of Metropolitan Baghdasar, was especially important. A significant part of the curriculum was devoted to natural sciences as the Seminary trained both future clergymen and teachers. The classrooms had up-to-date technical equipment and the Seminary had an extensive library. In 1892 the number of the students enrolled in the seminary was about 500. At different times various famous pedagogues, philologists, writers taught there, including P. Shamshtyan, S. Mandinyan,



Img. 27. Participants of the Armenian Diocesan Theological School at the 75th anniversary of the founding of the school, 1913

P. Proshyan, Gh. Aghayan and L. Abeghyan. Many of its graduates became well-known public figures, for example, historian Leo, writer Muratsan, and the pedagogue A. Bagratian, and prominent leaders of the liberation movement Aram Manukyan, Misak Ter-Danielyan, Grigor Mirzabekyan, etc. In 1913 when Shushi celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of the

Seminary it received a congratulatory telegram from the University of Dorpat (Tartu) that expressed the warmest wishes for the future of this centre of spiritual light.



Img. 28. Real College

After the pogroms and massacres of the early 20th century many previously thriving educational establishments of Shushi ceased to exist.

There was also a significant shortage of Armenian teachers as the Soviet Azerbaijan cared only for the establishment and promotion of Azerbaijani schools. In 1946–1988 the authorities did everything in their power to discourage Armenian-language education. New establishments of primary, secondary and higher education in the Armenian language were founded only after 1992 when the forcibly deported Armenians

began to return to their hometowns. It is worth mentioning that only the three-storey building that had housed the Real College, built in 1901–1908 managed to survive the upheavals of the 20th century.

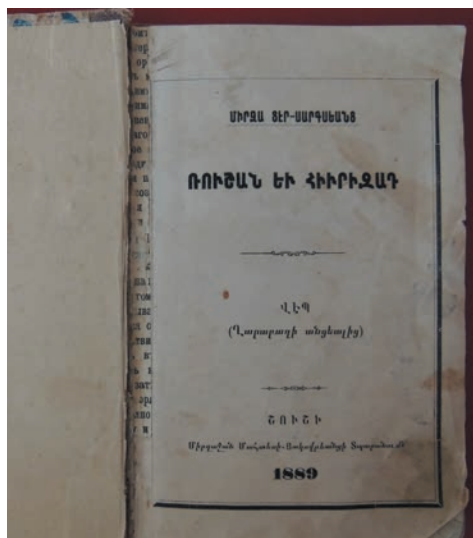
Nowadays Shushi has two schools as well as the Arsen Khachatryan upper secondary school and the Daniel Kazaryan music school. All these schools have well-equipped classrooms and libraries with impressive collections of books.



Img. 29. Shushi. Knowledge Day at School after Khachatur Abovyan, September 2013

4.2. Publishing and media

The first publishing house in Shushi was opened in 1827 by the Basel Evangelical Mission and the first book in Armenian, 'A History of the Holy Scriptures', was printed a year later. In the same year, the Swiss missionaries succeeded in printing 11,679 copies of books in Armenian, 728 in Persian, 147 in Turkish. In 1830 the publishing house was bought by the Metropolitan Baghdasar who continued the traditions established by the Swiss missionaries. Apart from books of theological and moralistic nature the publishing house, that was the second largest in Eastern Armenia, published also secular works, for example Movses Zohrapyan's translation of Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon' (1837), which was warmly welcomed by Shushi townspeople.



Img. 30. Novel 'Roushan and Erizad' by Mirza Ter-Sargseanc, published in 'Mirzajan Mahtesi Hakopyan's Typography', 1889



Img. 31. Armenian newspapers published in Shushi in the 19th century

In 1881 a new publishing house was opened in Shushi – 'Mirzajan Mahtesi Hakopyan's Typography' which operated for 25 years publishing literary and historical works, magazines and textbooks. In the period between 1820 and 1920 Shushi had five typographies.

The first Armenian-language monthly 'Haykakan Ashkhar' that was launched in 1874 and was soon followed by many other newspapers and magazines. 19 out of 21 periodicals published in Shushi between 1874–1920 were in Armenian and two in Russian.

4.3. Music

The town was often referred to as 'the music academy of Transcaucasia' because of its many talented musicians and singers. The most common Armenian musical instruments were tar, kyamancha and dap (percussion instrument) along with the traditional zurna, shvi (pipe) and d'hol (percussion instrument). Gradually the musicians started accompanying singers, and in the first decades of the 20th century they often went on tours in Russia and Europe. The famous tar player Melikyan even performed for the Russian Tsar. Shushi was also renowned for one of the leading schools of mugham, traditional genre of vocal and instrumental arts that draws on Iranian-Arab-Turkic maqam. In the late 19th and early 20th century, concerts of Armenian and European music were often staged in Shushi. The town had an orchestra and a dance ensemble.

The musical culture of the old Shushi had perhaps the main influence in the formative years of Uzeyir Hajibeyov, a prominent Lezgin composer and musicologist who was born in the nearby village of Akhjaberd and grew up in Shushi. Another beneficiary of the rich and diverse folk music traditions of Shushi was the famous Azerbaijani singer Martuza Meshadi Rza ogly Mamedov (nicknamed 'Biul-Biul' or Nightingale) who became one of the founders of Azerbaijani musical theatre.



Img. 32. R. Manasyan's choir, 1901

4.4. Theatre

The theatrical traditions of Shushi date back to the second half of the 19th century when Armenian theatre companies began to include Shushi in the itinerary of their tours in the province. Over the years Shushi hosted almost every star of Armenian stage – Gevorg Chmshkyan, Hovhannes Abelyan, Siranush and many others. In 1882 Petros Adamyan, a famous actor who had appeared on stage in many theatres of such major cities as Tiflis, Baku and Alexandrapol, starred in a guest performance in Shushi.

The wonders of theatre proved irresistible to Shushi townspeople so that by the 1850s there were quite a few amateur theatre groups. During the early years only men performed on stage, and also the audience was predominantly male. Women and girls who went to

theatre were often harshly criticized. The enthusiastic amateurs used the premises of the Diocesan Theological School of Karabakh to stage historical plays in Karabakh dialect, for example 'Tmblachi Khachan' by K. Melik-Shakhnazaryan and others. Later Nikita Khandamiryan united the amateur actors of Shushi creating a theatre company with permanent performers. Their repertoire included Gabriel Sundukyan's plays 'One More Victim' (1889), 'Pepo' (1890), 'Khatabala' (1890), Moliere's 'The Forced Marriage' (1890) and many others.

In 1891 a building that had previously housed an exclusive club, opened by Khandamiryan in 1873, was reconstructed to fit the requirements of a theatre. The new theatre opened on July 7, 1891 with the performance



Img. 33. Shushi Theatre before 1905

Img. 34. Shushi Theatre after 1905 massacre



of Muratsan's historical drama 'Ruzan'. The Shushi theatre had 350 seats and complied with the European standards. It was one of the best theatres in Transcaucasia, inferior only to those in the Russian capital.

The Armenian pogroms of 1905 resulted in loss of many material and spiritual assets including the Shushi theatre building that was burned down and destroyed. In 1914–1917 famous Armenian actor Vahram Papazian starred in Shakespeare's 'Othello' and 'Hamlet' staged in Shushi.



Img. 35. Summer building of the country club of Shushi

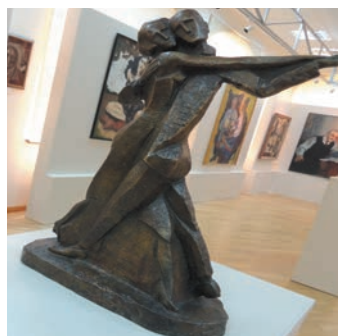
4.5. Visual art

Renowned Armenian painter Stepanos Nersisyan (1815–1884) often visited Shushi where he created quite a few portraits, for example, 'Highlander' (1848). In 1857 Nersisyan worked in an Armenian parish school in Shushi. Another well-known portraitist who occasionally visited Shushi was Stepan Aghajanyan (1863–1940).

Sculptor Hakop Gyurjyan (1881–1948), one of the most famous Armenian artists of the 20th century, was born in Shushi. His works have been shown in Paris, New York, Oslo, Tokyo and many other cities around the world.



Img. 36. 'Victory' by Hakop Gyurjyan



Img. 37. 'Tango' by Hakop Gyurjyan



Img. 38. Artsakh State Museum of Fine Arts, Shushi

4.6. Carpet weaving



Img. 39. Embroidery Silk, 17th century

A form of art central to the artistic identity of Nagorno-Karabakh is carpet weaving. As early as in the 10th century dyed fabrics and rugs from Karabakh were highly valued in the Arab world. This form of art especially developed in the second half of the 19th century, when Shushi became the centre of Karabakh carpet weaving. There was even a school where the art of carpet weaving could be learned. The patterns commonly used on Karabakh carpets include not only depictions of dragons and eagles but also Christian symbols. On almost all Armenian rugs and napless woven carpets one can

find the depiction of cross in various forms as well as the Armenian letter ‘S’ (‘T’) for ‘Տըր’ (Lord, that is God). According to carpet experts, Armenian and especially Karabakh rugs differ from their Persian or Turkish counterparts mainly because all depictions on them are symbolic – God, sun, stars, people, dragons, serpents, animals, birds etc. Artsakh is also the source of some of the oldest rugs bearing Armenian inscriptions, such as the famous Gohar rug (1700). Since after a turbulent past, Shushi has



Img. 40. Museum Of Ancient and Modern Carpets, Shushi

only been free again for a little over 20 years, its carpet collection of the Artsakh National Historical Museum is not large – only 125 items some of which have been shown in various exhibitions around the world. There are also a few others that are presently kept in private collections and various museums in Europe and the USA.

In 2013 a carpet weaving factory and carpet museum were reopened in Shushi.