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The Role of Small and Medium Industries in the Heritage Identity in Iraq: A Case Study of Bashiqa Town

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Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Research problem	4
3	Research objective	5
4	Research methodology	6
	4.1 Research structure	7
5	Previous studies	8
	5.1 Heritage craft industries	10
	5.2 Tourism and heritage industries	11
	5.3 The study site (Bashiqa town)	14
6	Heritage industries of Bashiqa	16
	6.1 <i>Rashi</i> (tahini)	16
	6.1.1 The old method	17
	6.1.2 The modern method	17
	6.2 Olive oil	19
	6.2.1 The old method	20
	6.2.2 The modern method	22
	6.3 Soap industry	22
	6.3.1 The old method	23
	6.3.2 The modern method	24
7	Interviews with key informants	25
	7.1 Supporting traditional industries before and after ISIS	34
	7.2 Heritage industries and cultural identity	39
	7.2.1 The <i>al-rashi</i> industry	39
	7.2.2 The olive pressing industry	42
	7.2.3 The olive oil soap industry	43
8	Conclusions	45
	References	47

Figures

Photo (1) The sesame washing and peeling machine.	18
Photo (2) The modern frying pan for roasting sesame.	18
Photo (3) The stones that grind the sesame, and the upper hole for pouring the sesame.	18
Photo (4) An olive oil press carved from stone.	19
Photo (5) Sewing a hemp bag with olives inside.	21
Photo (6) The process of squeezing olive oil with legs on hemp bags.	21
Photos (7 and 8) Filtering the olive oil from the water using a perforated plate.	21
Photo (9) A basin showing the height of oil over water.	21
Photo (10) Boiling oil after squeezing it into large pots.	21
Photo (11) The olive sink.	22
Photo (12) A machine for separating oil from the core and water.	22
Photo (13) A wire used to cut soap.	23
Photo (14) Soap packaging after cutting it.	23
Photo (15) Iron moulds into which soap is poured.	24
Photo (16) Soap-cutting machine instead of wire.	24

Tables

Table 1: Participants who own traditional factories	7
Table 2: Economic indicators in Iraq for the period 2010–2021	12
Table 3: Poverty indicators in Iraq	13
Table 4: Poverty rates by region, 2014–2018	14
Table 5: <i>Al-rashi</i> industries in Bashiqa, before and after ISIS	26
Table 6: Olive oil and soap industry in Bashiqa	30

1 Introduction

Heritage has great civilised and cultural values, and is an indicator of the authenticity of society, as well as an effective element in facing the challenges of different cultural invasions. The quest to link the positive legacy of our country, Iraq, and its civilisational creations is necessary, as it results in distinctive and contemporary designs that represent a bridge linking the present and the future. Our research deals with the small and medium heritage industries in the town of Bashiqa in Nineveh governorate, and their importance in the formation of Iraq's national and cultural identity from the viewpoint of its people.

The selected industries for our research are *rashi* (tahini), olive oil, and soap. The importance of these projects lies in the fact that they are an important part of the heritage of the Yazidi community, whose people are proud of their industry, and that their establishment represents the core of their social and cultural life, because most of the production of raw materials is local and is considered one of the unique industries in Bashiqa. The manufacture of *rashi*, soap and olive oil represents a heritage of which the people of Bashiqa are very proud. The reason behind the continuity of these traditional industries is the Iraqis' adherence to their industrial heritage, which symbolises their civilisation dating back thousands of years. The community in Bashiqa enjoys a distinguished position among the geographical regions of Iraq in the field of ancient traditional industries. It has long exported (and continues to export) products to other governorates as well as beyond Iraq's borders. The research sample for this study is from the Bashiqa community.

2 Research problem

The traditional craft industries practiced by the Yazidi community in the town of Bashiqa, in Nineveh governorate, have encountered many problems, particularly in relation to the security situation and political stability, especially after ISIS entered the area in 2014, causing widespread destruction. Before ISIS arrived, these industries were among the most important in the local area, providing job opportunities for local people and representing an identity for the Yazidi community, which marketed the crafts and produced them in sufficiently large quantities to export to all parts of Iraq and abroad. However, the destruction of the town after ISIS arrived and the theft of all local equipment and industries had a major impact on local people's cultural identity and severely curtailed production. In

order to find appropriate solutions that contribute to reducing the obstacles and problems facing these heritage industries, and to realise their role in the heritage environments, we must focus on developing local production by relying on traditional heritage industries.

3 Research objective

This paper aims to identify the most famous Yazidi heritage industries in the town of Bashiqa, in Nineveh governorate. It explores the economic, social and cultural reality of three non-material industries (the manufacture of *al-rashi*, olive oil and soap) in the town of Bashiqa by comparing how they were manufactured in the past with how they are manufactured in the present, and assessing the impact of ISIS gangs on these industries. Finally, the paper puts forward proposals for how these industries can be developed to maintain their heritage and sustainability. The research also aims to invoke the cultural and scientific heritage of the local community to draw inspiration from their sources of strength to plan how local production of the traditional heritage industries can be revitalised after the destruction caused by ISIS.

The paper also explores the attachment of the Yazidi community in Bashiqa to the traditional industrial crafts and the extent of their influence on social and economic life, especially given that the city of Mosul is famous for its craft activity, in addition to the cultural and religious differences among the local population of Bashiqa, which comprises several components of Iraqi society (Yazidi, Catholic and Orthodox Christians, and the Muslim Shabak – Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish) and thus affect the community's view of the traditional crafts. The research addresses the following questions:

1. What is the impact of small and medium heritage industries on the Yazidi individual?
2. What is the impact of these traditional industries on the Yazidi community?
3. What is the impact of these industries on the Iraqi economy?
4. What is the impact of craft industries on the standard of living of Yazidi people?

4 Research methodology

In order to answer these questions, we used an analytical and descriptive approach to show the most important and famous small heritage industries of the Yazidi community in the city of Mosul, specifically the town of Bashiqa, before and after these industries were destroyed by ISIS in 2014. Economic data was obtained from the owners of these heritage industries in the aforementioned sample; sources were collected through books and periodicals published on the internet, as well as through working with heritage gatherers and quoting the information from their files (Ansam Salam, Iman Mazen, Joan Kamran, Dalia Ghanem, Ziri Khairy, Salem Wissam, Lilian Kamal, Nidaa Khalil, Nourhan Zuhair, Hind Shawan, Amir Karim, Omid Khader, Iman Mazen, and Erivan Ibrahim). The number of participants consulted (through meetings or personal communications) was 14, during February and March 2022. Some information was extracted from the files of heritage collectors, and other information was obtained through personal interviews and phone calls with the owners of these heritage industries (and their families) and others interested in this field. These particular heritage collectors were selected because they are the supervising authority and inherited from their ancestors the management of these industries. In addition, the research was expanded to obtain more information through contacts and personal meetings, again with the narrators and the owners of the Yazidi heritage professions and those interested, as well as those who are new in the field of small and medium heritage industries. The questions were prepared in advance, and the heritage collectors added new questions to ask the narrator, and their voices were recorded by them. The owners of these Yazidi heritage professions also have a role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of their industry after it was destroyed and stolen by ISIS.

Study limitations include obtaining economic data pertaining to the period before 2014, as many written records were burned, destroyed or stolen, and many owners of these small and medium industries were reluctant to rebuild their factories. Another difficulty in obtaining data is that many factories, especially *al-rashi* factories, were moved from Bashiqa to the Kurdistan region of Iraq after Bashiqa was liberated from ISIS. Table 1 shows the number of participants who took part in this study.

4.1 Research structure

To reach the goal of the research and test its hypothesis, the theoretical and analytical approach relied on showing the role of the small and medium industries of the Yazidi heritage in the identity of the Yazidi individual. The study compares the situation before and after ISIS entered the area, and details the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate, unemployment, and poverty rates in Iraq for the period before and after ISIS. It also explores the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation of these heritage industries, which varied from one industry to another, with some receiving support from various organisations while others did not.

Table 1: Participants who own traditional factories

No.	Participant's name	Age	Occupation	Address	Marital status	Economic field
1	Amer Elias Khider	50	Farmer	Mosul-Bashiqa-Bahzani	Married	Specialised in the soap industry and the production of olive oil
2	Aed Hajji	69	Retired from a teaching service in a preparatory girls' school in the town of Al-Sheikhan	Mosul-Bashiqa-Bahzani	Married	Researcher on Yazidi heritage
3	Karim Elias Katto	63	Graduate of the Institute of Agriculture	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	One of the members of the management of Rashi Al-Akhawain, olive oil and Katto soap
4	Mowfaq Naif	58	Primary school teacher and principal	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	Director of the <i>rashi</i> family factory
5	Falih Hassan Marji	61	Teacher	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	Owner of an olive oil press
6	Khairi Dakheel Sulaiman			Mosul-Bashiqa		Samiim Rashi factory owner
7	Yazdeen Barani	65	Master's degree in civil engineering – former university professor	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	Owner of the Rashi Al-Barani factory and a trader and distributor of sesame in Nineveh governorate. Owns a series of packaging factories and trades in <i>al-rashi</i> presses from outside and inside Iraq
8	Saeed Katto	57	Writer	Mosul-Bashiqa-Bahzani	Married	One of the members of the management of the Rashi Al-Akhawain factory, olive oil and Katto soap factories
9	Sizar Salman Darweesh	24	Accountant	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	Heir, producer and accountant of the Rashi Al-Ailla factory

No.	Participant's name	Age	Occupation	Address	Marital status	Economic field
10	Salim Saleem Kajani	66	Graduated from the Institute of Agriculture – a farmer – works as a consultant with agricultural organisations	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	Responsible for the Olive Tree Agricultural Organization Farmer in the olive grove for 40 years. Management of the olive press
11	Khairi Hassan	57	Teacher	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	Owner of Al-Asala Al-Rashi factory
12	Saleem Elias	32	Unemployed	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	One of the heirs and owner of a <i>rashi</i> factory in Bashiqa
13	Elias Jumaa	62	Government employee	Mosul-Bashiqa-Bahzani	Married	Owner and producer of olive trees – owner of an olive oil press and soap production
14	Rami Rasho	32	Mechanical engineer – government employee	Mosul-Bashiqa	Married	Supervisor of press machines for the production and packaging of olives provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to the Directorate of Nineveh Municipalities – Bashiqa municipality

Source: Author's own. Created using project data.

5 Previous studies

The study by Al-Jubouri and Salman (2018), entitled *Weaving in Mesopotamia in the Light of the Desired Cuneiform Texts and Artistic Scenes*, focused on the economic diversity of Mesopotamia through the specialisation of cities with specific crafts and industries, including the textile industry. The study showed that the process of shearing wool from sheep was taking place in a palace in the city of Lagash, and this is what was mentioned in one of the cuneiform texts in the year 2800–2371 BC, in the era of the Sumerian dynasties. The study concluded that according to the cuneiform texts and artistic scenes, there were workshops that were specialised for the textile industry in Mesopotamia, such as in the cities of Ur, Eridu, Mari, and others. These workshops included the wool comb, the loom, which is a tool used to convert wool, linen or spun cotton into textile pieces. Also, some textiles, especially those made of linen, were considered sacred to the ancient Iraqis, so they were used as clothing for statues of gods and kings.

The study by Al-Masoudi (2018), entitled *Traditional Industries and Handicrafts and their Role in the Development of the Tourism Sector in the Province of Najaf*, found that these

traditional industries in the province of Najaf were an important part of the heritage of its people. The study covers one year (16 April 2016–16 April 2017), and among the industries and crafts it explores are ornaments, gold, silver, household items made of wood, handmade carpets, and pottery tools. The study concluded that the preservation of traditional industries and handicrafts related to heritage in particular is necessary to preserve the cultural identity. It also plays an important role in the economy and development, as local handicraft products from traditional industries are displayed in international and local exhibitions to stimulate demand for such products from tourists.

The study by Hassan (2012), entitled *The Craft of Goldsmithing, Past and Present in the City of Mosul*, focused on the changes that occurred in goldsmithing in Mosul between the past and the present, because it is a popular craft that distinguishes the people of the city of Mosul. The researcher relied on descriptive analytical research, as well as interviews with a number of goldsmiths in Mosul. The study concluded that it is a historical craft that has been practiced since ancient times, and the Assyrians were goldsmiths who crafted gold and silver for their kings. This craft continued to preserve its heritage for Iraqis, including the Mosulis, but there were changes that occurred, including the introduction of modern mechanisation, electricity, and ready-made moulds as reliable tools in drafting. Another change was the emergence of a number of goldsmiths whose primary mission was to display and sell gold without having knowledge of the origins of goldsmithing (i.e., gold merchants), which had not existed previously. Furthermore, other negative changes took place, such as the loss of credibility of Iraqi gold, and the accuracy of its standard, as it was not subject to standardisation and quality control apparatus.

The study by Al-Zarkani (2015), entitled *Industry in Baghdad (334 AH / 935 AD – 555 AH / 1160 AD)*, clarified the most important industries in Baghdad, which represented the most important economic activities in the Buyid and Seljuk eras due to the abundance of labour and resources that encouraged the establishment of these industries. They took the character of simple crafts, but they affected the nature of social and economic life in Baghdadi society during the era of foreign domination over Iraq, and particularly Baghdad. The study showed that the most important and famous industries in Baghdad at that time were textile industry, tents and mats, paper, dyeing, glass, goldsmithing, soap, sesame oils, olive oil, tanning, shipbuilding, and blacksmithing. People regarded these crafts and industries with respect, in contrast to how they were regarded at the beginning of the Abbasid era.

A study by Abd (2015), exploring industrial crafts in the holy city of Karbala, aimed to reveal the effects of spatial and temporal factors on the concentration of industrial crafts in the traditional centre of the city of Karbala, and how the region has a role in the specialisation of industrial crafts and the ease of marketing heritage industrial products locally and internationally, especially as Karbala has a heritage and religious character. The study was based on a descriptive approach through a field survey on the industrial crafts in the traditional centre of the city (the oldest sector of the city). Research methods included interviews, questionnaire and photographs to explore the status of these industrial crafts, which include stone-breaking, gypsum, pottery, tanning and leather, making vinegar, vinegar and pickles, prayer soil (which is the manufacture of mud rosaries for the purpose of praising and prostrating), jewellery, precious stones, palm leaves, and sewing. The study concluded that the industrial crafts in this city known for its religious and historical status have led to the development of local economies in terms of their contribution to people's incomes, which reflects the reasons for the social stability of the owners of these industries in the study sample.

5.1 Heritage craft industries

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined craft industries as:

... those industries that are produced by the craftsman in a complete manual way, mechanical methods, or manual tools. One of the advantages of these industries is that they have creative and artistic value and are related to culture, as they are religiously traditional industries and represent a social symbol. Also, these industries have economic, cultural, civil and social dimensions, as they represent at the present time an important space in defining and preserving the cultures of peoples. In addition, it means originality, identity, and nobility, and expresses the history of these peoples. It also represents the link between the past and the present, and it is the ideal means for the continuity of civilization and heritage. Therefore, it must be preserved because it is considered a national heritage, and part of the identity and originality of societies, and thus a symbol of the antiquity and development of these societies and civilizations.

(Al-Hayaji 2020: 15–16)

It also has an effective and positive role in tourism development, through the appeal of tourists and visitors to traditional heritage products. This is why handicraft industries represent one of the most important elements of tourism attractions, which contribute to mobilising the labour force, especially in villages and rural areas. In addition, it has the ability to develop skills and create modern opportunities for integration through training. The importance of craft industries lies in its developmental role, as it contributes to improving its representation in the local and international communities, achieving competitive products, promoting them, and working to develop them as an independent sector from the rest of the economic sectors. Thus, it becomes an important element in the areas of employment, export, preservation of cultural identity, development and stability (Al-Hayaji 2020: 16–17).

Small and medium industries also contribute to raising the efficiency of resource allocation in developing countries. They tend to adopt labour-intensive production methods, which reflects the situation of these countries through the abundance of labour force and scarcity of capital. The prices of production inputs or factors of production and the products that deal with them better reflect the opportunity costs compared to the prices that large projects and industries deal with (Hobohm 2002: 24).

5.2 Tourism and heritage industries

The optimal utilisation of tourism in Iraq can reflect positive results on the growth of sales of heritage industries through quantity and value, as there is an organic link between tourism and heritage industries. The promotion and development of the tourism sector contributes to the promotion and prosperity of heritage industries, while the different types of heritage industries and appropriate prices at home can all be used in media campaigns organised for the purpose of encouraging tourism. That is, the tourism sector and heritage industries complement each other; spending on tourism contributes to the development of heritage industries, and both contribute to Iraq's economic growth. There is thus a close relationship between tourism and heritage industries; they are interrelated. Heritage artefacts attract tourists, whether local or foreign, and tourism develops the heritage industries sector. Their presence in an area means that tourists acquire some heritage artefacts, either for mementos or as commodities with special aesthetic values, or for other uses. Where a region is famed for certain popular products or heritage artefacts, this also attracts tourists (Hussein and Darwish 2011: 19–20).

Table 2 presents economic and social indicators for Iraq.

Table 2: Economic indicators in Iraq for the period 2010–2021

Year	GDP growth (%)	Unemployment rate of the total labour force (%)
2010	6.40	8.251
2011	7.55	8.122
2012	13.94	7.96
2013	7.63	9.264
2014	0.20	10.59
2015	4.72	10.725
2016	13.79	10.82
2017	-1.82	13.02
2018	2.63	12.966
2019	5.51	12.863
2020	-11.32	14.088
2021	2.78	14.192

Source: Author's own. Created using data from Ministry of Planning, World Bank and Higher Committee for Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018) and Ministry of Planning (2020).

Table 2 shows that the GDP growth rate reached 6.40 per cent in 2010, while it decreased to 0.20 per cent in 2014. This is due to the drop in international oil prices and the entry of ISIS into the northern and western provinces of Iraq (Nineveh, Salah al-Din, and Anbar) in 2014. The rate continued to fluctuate and reached 2.63 per cent in 2018, decreasing to -11.32 per cent in the year 2020. This is because Iraq is a rentier country that depends on oil for the largest proportion of GDP. The decline in the GDP rate for 2020 was also due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the labour force in countries all over the world. The decline in Iraq's GDP rate also reflected the decline in global demand for oil as a result of governments introducing lockdown measures, which led to a significant decrease in global oil prices, which caused the activation of OPEC+ (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) agreements to temporarily reduce oil production. The second quarter of 2021 saw a return to positive growth rates, more than doubling the growth level for the second quarter of 2021, due to the increase in the quantities of oil produced and exported as a result of OPEC+ increasing the export share of three countries, among them Iraq, in conjunction with the recovery of global demand for oil as the pandemic diminished and there was a relative return of a number of economic activities. There was also an improvement in non-oil real domestic product, which is mainly attributed to the improvement in distributed activities (banking and insurance, transportation,

communications, storage, wholesalers and retailers). These distributed activities refer to dealing from its point of origin to its final destination and the problem of a point of contact with global supply chains, and are reinforced by the initiatives of the Central Bank of Iraq, which came to support economic diversification and private sector development (Central Bank of Iraq 2021).

Table 2 shows that unemployment amounted to 8.25 per cent of the total labour force in Iraq for the year 2010, but increased in the subsequent years and reached 10.59 per cent in 2014. This is due to the deterioration of the security situation and the entry of ISIS into Iraq in that year, and unemployment continued to rise until it reached 12.86 per cent, 14.08 per cent and 14.19 per cent respectively for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021. As already explained, both the pandemic and the decline in global demand for oil affected the labour force in Iraq.

Table 3: Poverty indicators in Iraq

Shocks	Year	The poverty line (dinar)	Poverty rate (%)	Number of people living in poverty (millions)
Al-Qaeda shock and loss of security	2007	76,896	22.4	6.648
	2012	105,500	18.9	6.465
Before ISIS	2014	105,500	16.0	5.760
ISIS shock	2014	105,500	22.5	8.101
After ISIS	2018	110,880	20.5	7.370
Covid-19 shock	2020	111,000	31.7	12.680
Fixed general social transformation scenario (1,190) dinars/dollars	2020	111,000	26.7	11.170
In case of changing the exchange rate (1,470 dinars/dollars)	2021	115,000	29.6	12.271

Source: Author's own. Created using data from [The Second National Voluntary Review Report on the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), July 2021, Ministry of Planning, National Committee for Sustainable Development.

Table 3 shows that the poverty rate in Iraq has been increasing as a result of successive shocks, including the shock of ISIS, and the shock of the change in the exchange rate of the Iraqi dinar against the US dollar and its devaluation. The poverty rate reached 22.4 per cent in 2007, but decreased to 18.9 per cent in 2012 thanks to the efforts of the government and partners. However, the security crisis and the entry of ISIS into the provinces of Iraq in 2014 caused the poverty rate to rise again to about 22.5 per cent, decreasing in 2018 to 20.5 per cent as a result of the improvement in the security situation in the country. However, in 2020, the poverty rate increased considerably to 31.7 per cent due to the

Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns, and the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar against the US dollar, which led to a further deterioration of living conditions in the country (United Nations Development Programme 2021: 38).

Table 4: Poverty rates by region, 2014–2018

Region		Year		Change from 2014 to 2018 (%)
		2014	2018	
The centre	Baghdad – Babylon – Wasit – Najaf – Karbala	18.6	11.5	-7.1
The north	Nineveh – Kirkuk – Diyala – Anbar – Salahuddin	17.7	27.5	9.8
The south	Qadisiyah – Muthanna – Dhi Qar – Maysan – Basra	31.5	31.1	-0.4
Kurdistan	Dohuk-Sulaymaniyah – Erbil	12.5	5.5	-7
Total		22.5	20.5	-2

Source: Author’s own. Created using data from United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2019).

Table 4 shows that there is also spatial variation in the poverty rate between Iraq’s governorates. For example, Sulaymaniyah governorate has the lowest poverty rate, around 4.5 per cent, while Al-Muthanna governorate has the highest, reaching around 52.1 per cent. Poverty rates in southern Iraq still account for a large proportion of the country’s overall poverty rate because of the inherited historical problems resulting from spatial disparity in development and the focus during past eras on the largest provinces (Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul), in addition to the dependence of southern Iraq on agriculture, and the impacts of climate change and drought. On the other hand, poverty rates increased in the northern governorates liberated from ISIS (Nineveh, Kirkuk, Diyala, Anbar, and Salah al-Din) because of what they suffered directly during the war in terms of hunger, killing, and persecution from terrorist organisations. Therefore, Nineveh governorate alone includes about a fifth of the number of poor people in Iraq, while Baghdad includes about 11 per cent (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2019: 35).

5.3 The study site (Bashiqa town)

The town of Bashiqa is located 12km north-east of Mosul. Before the ISIS attack in 2014 its population had reached 35,000, including the neighbouring village of Bahzani. Yazidis make up 75 per cent of the population of Bashiqa, Christians 20 per cent, and Muslims 5 per cent. Its inhabitants, regardless of their nationality and religion, speak Arabic, and their language is a special result of the mixing of the neighbouring dialects of Kurdish and Arabic, but it belongs to the Arabic dialect of the Peninsula, which is spoken by the people of the

city of Tikrit in central Iraq, and in Mardin, in Turkey. The population of Bashiqa, according to the geographer Vital Kineh, reached 3,000 at the end of the nineteenth century, of whom 2,000 were Christian, and 1,000 were Yazidis. In the middle of the twentieth century, its population reached 2,566, including 1,517 Yezidi, 719 Christians, and 258 Muslims (Zara 2021: 76–77).

Bashiqa is an ancient town dating back to the days of the Assyrians, as it flourished in later ages and was mentioned in the form of Beit Shahaq, and then in the form of Bashiqa, meaning ‘the house of the downtrodden or the afflicted’. In addition, it maintained its activity and vitality during the different Islamic eras. Its houses are old, all of them are vaulted, and they contain catacombs in which there is an old style that represents small houses with a front yard and one room above the ground and a basement under the room, and the entrance to the house is from one entrance. There are also houses of another type that contain a hall or several halls, depending on the owner’s financial situation. Bashiqa relied on the style of building houses as was found in the city of Mosul, consisting of two rooms, including a hall. Bashiqa is famous for the presence of arches (which connect the two sides of the alley), and some of these arches have a room above them for living, and some do not have rooms. What distinguishes the old town is that its houses remain inhabited until today, after the people restored them, building with plaster and stone, which resist all difficult conditions (Zara 2021: 78–79).

Bashiqa was mentioned by Yaqut al-Hamwi (1179-1229), (a writer and author of *Mujam AlBuldaan*, ‘Dictionary of the Countries’), who was of Roman origin and lived in Baghdad until his death:

Bashiqa is from the villages of Mosul, a city in the areas of Nineveh, east of the Tigris. It has a running river that irrigates its orchards and several parts of it are managed. It has a large market, and it has baths and some small markets in which linen is sold... and it has a large, beautiful mosque with a lighthouse, and there are three or four leagues between it and Mosul, and most of its people are Christians, and next to it is a large village with markets and orchards.

(Zara 2021: 78)

As for the economic aspect, the people of Bashiqa have been engaged in agriculture since ancient times, growing crops that include vegetables and olives. This town is considered one of the largest cities in Iraq for the cultivation of olive trees, which numbered around 40,000 before ISIS entered the area. It is also famous for the manufacture of olive oil, soap, wines, *rashi* (tahini), and pickles (Zara 2021: 78). The most famous traditional industries in Bashiqa are as follows.

6 Heritage industries of Bashiqa

6.1 *Rashi* (tahini)

Rashi is one of the important industries that has a strong reputation throughout Iraq, as it is characterised by good quality and flavour. The *al-rashi* industry was established in Bashiqa around 1885 to 1890. This craft is considered one of the lost crafts in Bashiqa, as is knitting (which is called Al-Gumi). The first family to make *rashi* was the family of Jacob Al-Jajji. They taught their neighbours in Bashiqa to make *rashi*, and families who lived close to their homes (Al-Sukoon, Dakhil Selko, and Haji Jali). In the 1950s, having worked in the *al-rashi* industry for 67 years, the Jacob Al-Jajji family switched to the Al-Gumi industry (i.e., knitting). *Rashi's* entry to Bashiqa was from areas close to the town in the Nineveh Plain, the town of Tel Kaif, which was inhabited by the Christian community and was famous in the *al-rashi* industry.

The most important component of *rashi* – the basic raw material – is sesame, which must be pressed to produce *rashi*. The importance of *rashi* lies in its high nutritional value. It is used by Iraqi families in the mornings during winter because it is high in calories and is free of saturated fats. It is also used in the manufacture of other foodstuffs such as sweets, which are called *halawa* (a mixture of sprinkles, sugar, pistachios, and other materials). The *al-rashi* industry went through different stages and was substantially developed, especially after the introduction of modern technology and machines, as previous (traditional) production methods were primitive (pers. comm. Mowaffaq Nayef, 19 August 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul). The process of its production is as follows.

6.1.1 The old method

The *al-rashi* industry was primitive and required high effort. Sesame was placed in water to wet it, to be washed, and then transferred to dry. The drying process was done by workers, moving the sesame to the roof to dry for a full day, in the summer. There were problems in the winter because of the rains, as drying took several days. After that, some of the workers would fry it (roast it) using a tool called Al-Jafafa ('the dryer'), which was made of clay and mixed with straw, the soft husk from the stem of wheat or barley. The sesame was fried using this dryer, and the roasting or frying process was done by igniting animal waste or firewood (due to the lack of gas and electricity) (pers. comm. Ziyad Khairi Elias, 11 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul). After that, it was placed under a large stone called Al-Dank, which consists of an upper and lower stone in a circular shape. The upper stone has a hole to put the raw material (sesame) for squeezing it and removing the product (*al-rash*). It was packaged by sheet cartons. The process of rotating the stone was carried out by animals (e.g., mules), which rotated the stone after the sesame was peeled by means of a fan, and for this reason the production was very limited. Previously, all *rashi* factories were run in the basements of old houses. The sesame used was local, Iraqi. Some of the workers were responsible for managing the product and others were responsible for raising animals (pers. comm. Elias Hiran Tawfiq, 21 February 2022).

6.1.2 The modern method

The production of *rashi* changed owing to the introduction of technology and technical equipment into the production process. In the first stage, the sesame is wetted or soaked in basins and left for six hours to wash it. Then the sesame is peeled after transferring it from the tubs. The peeling process is done through special machines for drying and peeling (see photo 1). After that, the workers move the sesame to be roasted in an industrial frying pan (photo 2). Then it is transferred to machines (called *habasha*) to filter it from impurities, and then it is cooled through air conditioners. Then the grinding process begins through large stones, especially for sesame juice (as in photo 3). The process of squeezing the sesame lasts for 15 minutes, then it is packed in plastic boxes, unlike the old method in which it was packed in the form of 12kg cans (pers. comm. Zaid Nayef, 24 March 2022).

Photo (1) The sesame washing and peeling machine.



Source: Iman Mazen, Bashiqa, Bahzani village, Mosul

Photo (2) The modern frying pan for roasting sesame.



Source: Iman Mazen, Bashiqa, Bahzani village, Mosul

Photo (3) The stones that grind the sesame, and the upper hole for pouring the sesame.



Source: Iman Mazen, Bashiqa, Bahzani village, Mosul

6.2 Olive oil

The olive tree is one of the oldest fruit trees known to humankind. The use and trade of its oil is found in most monotheistic religions and cultures. Olive oil is used on religious occasions, especially in the shrine of Lalish, as well as in the Yazidi temples, by lighting lamps for worship and lighting inside the Yazidi religious shrines. It was also previously used in food due to the lack of modern vegetable oils and fats, as well as its use as a public health measure. The history of olive oil pressing in Bashiqa dates back to the cultivation of olive trees there, although there is a difference of opinion as to how far they date back: some people estimate more than 500 years, while others estimate more than 1,000 years. Therefore, olive oil is closely linked to the history of olive trees in Bashiqa. It was the first industry that was practiced in Bashiqa town, and most families in the area used to squeeze olive oil in their homes for domestic consumption. But now, the industry is beginning to disappear, and there are only a few families left to manufacture it. It is noteworthy that there is an old olive oil press in the village of Bahzani, dating back nearly 200 years, carved out of stone by the people of the village (see photo 4) (pers. comm. Aed Hajji, 15 July 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Photo (4) An olive oil press carved from stone.



Source: Wafaa Sabah Khuder, Bahzani village, Mosul

It is said that this olive oil press belongs to the family of Sayyid Haddou in the village of Bahzani, affiliated to Bashiqa in Nineveh governorate. The photo shows the place designated for squeezing the olives by means of the legs on the upper and lower stone so that the oil descends into the small basin in which there are plant remains at the present

time because it is no longer in use (pers. comm. Aed Hajji, 15 July 2022, Bahzani – Mosul). Iraq is now considered as a relatively small producer of olives, although the country has a rich heritage in olive production and in the use of its oil in most climatic regions of Iraq, especially the northern regions, specifically in the areas of Bashiqa in Nineveh governorate (Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture 2016). The olive oil industry is one of the oldest heritage industries in the Bashiqa region, and there are two ways to produce it, as follows.

6.2.1 The old method

The process of obtaining olive oil by the people of Bashiqa and the village of Bahzani relied on the primitive method. The process begins with harvesting the olive crop from trees in the winter season. Some of the workers climb onto the olive tree and move the branches to drop the olives. It is customary in Bashiqa that women are the only ones who collect the olives that fall from the tree onto the ground. The harvesting process continues for two months or more. The second step is pressing the olives (preserving the black olives), where the green olives are separated from the black olives, and the black oil is cleaned of dirt, washed with water, and placed in plastic boxes (plastic drums) with the addition of water and salt from time to time for a period of two months. The third step is to transfer the olives from plastic cans to bags (burlap or hemp bags), and the bag is sewn so that no piece of olive falls (see photo 5). After that, the bags are placed on the edge of the basin in which there is water, and then the legs are used to squeeze the olives by adding hot water to it (photo 6). After that, the oil floating above the water in the basin is taken through perforated food containers (photos 7, 8 and 9), and then the oil is transferred to a large saucepan and placed on the fire to be filtered from the water (photo 10). The oil continues to boil for 3–4 hours. Then the water falls to the bottom and the pure oil is extracted and is fit for consumption. It is used for eating, and for lighting (by dipping the wick in olive oil to ignite it) in the Lalish temple and the religious shrines of the Yazidis. The old method is still used today in the production of olive oil. The only difference is that at the present time, cooking gas is used to light the fire (pers. comm. Aed Hajji, 15 August 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Photo (5) Sewing a hemp bag with olives inside.



Source: Amir Karim, Lalish Temple, Al-Sheikhan, Nineveh Governorate

Photo (6) The process of squeezing olive oil with legs on hemp bags.



Source: Amir Karim, Lalish Temple, Al-Sheikhan, Nineveh Governorate

Photos (7 and 8) Filtering the olive oil from the water using a perforated plate.



Source: Amir Karim, Lalish Temple, Al-Sheikhan, Nineveh Governorate



Source: Nidaa Khalil, Lalish Temple, Al-Sheikhan, Nineveh Governorate

Photo (9) A basin showing the height of oil over water.



Source: Amir Karim, Lalish Temple, Al-Sheikhan, Nineveh Governorate

Photo (10) Boiling oil after squeezing it into large pots.



Source: Amir Karim, Lalish Temple, Al-Sheikhan, Nineveh Governorate

6.2.2 The modern method

The modern olive oil industry uses technology to facilitate the production process. To begin, the olive fruits are placed in a large basin made of steel. At the bottom of the basin there is a fan that separates the leaves from the fruits – a process that requires a lot of water for washing the olives, with the water temperature controlled by a control panel (photo 10). After the washing and filtering process, the olive fruits are transferred to a transport basin by means of electric drive devices (a motor linked to a helical transmission). Then the olives are transferred to the kernel crushing machine, where the kernel is broken and separated from the dough. After obtaining the pulp of the olive fruits, the dough is transferred to a machine called the kneader (meaning mixing olives only without the kernels). This stage continues for 40 minutes. After that, this mixture or (dough) is transferred to a machine called a separator (photo 11), to separate the oil from the water and the kernel again. Then the pure oil production is extracted, while the kernels are used as fodder for animals and also as firewood for fuel (pers. comm. Faleh Hassan Marji, 18 February 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Photo (11) The olive sink.



Source: Nourhan Zuhair, Bashiqa, Nineveh Governorate

Photo (12) A machine for separating oil from the core and water.



Source: Nourhan Zuhair, Bashiqa, Nineveh Governorate

6.3 Soap industry

The soap industry is an old industry that has been going on for hundreds of years in the town of Bashiqa and the village of Bahzani. This is due to the abundance of raw materials (olive oil), which is available as a result of the presence of olive trees (which, as noted earlier, have been present in the area for between 500 and 1,000 years). There are two ways to produce soap, as follows.

6.3.1 The old method

This is a method in which raw materials are used, and the same method is followed to this day, with the exception of some simple machines that have been used. Two types of raw materials are used in the manufacture of soap. The first is called *qalli* (or *Al-Shanan*), which is a plant material that is obtained from the town of Tal Afar in order to wash clothes due to the density of its foam in the washing process. It should be noted that previously washing powders that are used today were not available. As for the second material, it is a kind of lime called *nougaa*. This is a material that is obtained from burning the stone located in the mountains of Bashiqa. After that, *nougaa*, *qalli*, and water are mixed, and the boiling process takes place under firewood, and the water called *tish* ('strong water') is collected and placed in a special barrel. After that, the *nougaa* is added to it again, then it is boiled for a second time, and then left. This process is called soft water and it is left until the next day. Olive oil from the fruits of black olives is added to it, and the boiling process is repeated until the oil mixes with the water. After that, the mixture is poured into the ground to become ready to make soap. It is poured into large wooden moulds, 120cm or 130cm long and 60cm or 70cm wide. Then, it must be left for 24 hours. The next step is cutting, which is done with a strong wire (photo 13) and then left to dry. Previously, the packaging process was in nylon bags, but recently cartons have been used for packaging (photo 14) and are displayed in the market. As for the boiling process, it was done by igniting animal waste and firewood under a large pot to make soap (pers. comm. Karim Elias Kato, 23 March 2022, Bahzani village – Mosul).

Photo (13) A wire used to cut soap.



Source: Omid Khadr Joqi, Bahzani village, Nineveh Governorate

Photo (14) Soap packaging after cutting it.



Source: Omid Khadr Joqi, Bahzani village, Nineveh Governorate

6.3.2 The modern method

The old method is still used in the production of soap in Bashiqa and the village of Bahzani, with the exception that sodium hydroxide is purchased ready to make soap with water only instead of using *nouga* and *qallia* as in the past. The olive industry season is in March, when the weather is conducive, with days that are long and warm, so the soap dries up more easily. Sodium hydroxide is added with olive oil, and black olives are preferred. One day before starting the soap production process and before mixing the oil and sodium hydroxide, cold water must be put with sodium hydroxide to quickly mix with the water and thus become very hot (70 degrees Celsius). Then the olive oil is put, and mixed for 20 minutes under a pot of fire until it dries. After that it is filtered from the remaining water, and the mixture is placed in moulds, each of which can accommodate 20kg of the mixture, dried, and weights or kilogrammes of iron are placed on the mould in order to press the soap and remove the excess water; it should remain until the second day when the soap is placed in the cutting position. After that it must be placed on the ground to dry and become ready for use. As for the water that comes out of the soap when it is made, it is used in the manufacture of floor cleaners and other goods (pers. comm. Amer Elias, 20 March 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Photo (15) Iron moulds into which soap is poured.



Source: Omid Khadr Joqi, Bahzani village, Nineveh Governorate

Photo (16) Soap-cutting machine instead of wire.



Source: Omid Khadr Joqi, Bahzani village, Nineveh Governorate

7 Interviews with key informants

These industries are very popular with the majority of the population of Iraq, especially in the town of Bashiqa. Before ISIS occupied the area in 2014, there were 23 *al-rashi* (tahini) factories. But ISIS destroyed this flourishing industry and stole all its contents, forcing the population to flee to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) 2019). As for the number of olive trees, there were about 30,000 in Bashiqa and Bahzani, but after ISIS occupied Bashiqa in 2014, they burned the trees and orchards, leaving very few (pers. comm. Amer Elias, 20 March 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

During an interview with Sabah Jabbour, a retired teacher who owns a *rashi* factory, he explained that, 'Before 2014, we had advanced factories, but when ISIS entered the district of Bashiqa, we lost everything.' He stated that his factory was opened in 1990 during the first Gulf war. He went on to explain that, after the liberation of Bashiqa from ISIS at the end of 2016 and the improvement of the security situation, the displaced people began to return to their homes, but when they returned, they found that their factories, homes, and properties had been burned, looted, and deliberately destroyed, and his factory had been bombed. Also, he stated that all the factory equipment and tools were stolen. He also lost his farm, which contained 350 olive trees, as well as his poultry field (UNIDO 2019). Sabah Jabbour said that his factory previously provided job opportunities for about 40 people, but when it reopened in 2018 after the liberation of Bashiqa, the factory could only provide work for fewer people – between six and eight workers (*ibid.*).

As for the marketing of the products produced by the factory, this was done by selling it in the factory itself, and in the city of Mosul in the Bab Al-Saray area. Previously, the *rashi* produced at the factory was sold in tanks of 12kg each, with the sales taking place from September through to March. After that, production stops until the next year. Now, the factory has agents in Erbil and other provinces (pers. comm. Saeed Katto, 12 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

However, ISIS destroyed the infrastructure, civilisational landmarks, industry, and agriculture of Bashiqa district. It burned olive trees, stole and destroyed the contents of *rashi* factories, olive oil factories, soap factories, and others. As Saeed Katto said:

With regard to our Al-Rashi Al-Akhawain factory, raw materials were stolen, especially sesame, and it was about 100 tons of sesame when the cost of a ton was \$2,600; in addition to this, the rashi material that was ready for marketing was

stolen too. It amounted to 20–25 tons of rashi. Before the entry of ISIS, the production capacity of the factory was about 10 tons of sesame per day. ISIS also stole 22 sesame presses and six roasting machines, in addition to three electric generators with a production capacity of 250kv for each electric generator, and other raw materials and equipment.

(Saeed Katto, 12 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul)

Table 5 shows some indicators of the *al-rashi* industry in Bashiqa and Bahzani.

Table 5: *Al-rashi* industries in Bashiqa, before and after ISIS

Factory name	Number of workers before ISIS	Number of workers after ISIS	Daily consumption of sesame before ISIS (tons)	Daily consumption of sesame after ISIS (tons)	Losses (in \$)
Haji	45	20	10	4	800,000
Al-Barani Rashi	15	14	2–4	3	3,100,000
Al-Akhawain	40	30	10	7–8	1,500,000
Al-Aaila	60	15	8	2–4	1,350,000
Al-Asala	35	0	3–5	0	250,000
Al-Sameem	70	0	8–10	0	2,500,000

Source: Author's own. Created using data from UNIDO (2019); and meetings with Saeed Katto, Director of Al-Akhawain factory; Abu Shaker, Director of Rashi factory and Barani sesame trade; Mowaffaq Nayef, Director of Rashi Al-Aaila factory; Khairy Dakhil Suleiman, owner of Al-Sameem factory; Khairy Hassan, owner of Al-Asala factory.

Table 5 shows that Mr Haji has owned a factory for the production of *al-rashi* since 1980, where his family has been working in this industry for several generations. He said: 'I lost \$800,000 because of ISIS', as the walls were demolished in his factory and all his equipment and raw materials of sesame were stolen. The Haji factory used to employ 45 workers, and it produced more than 10 tons of *rashi* per day, but now it has only 20 workers and the daily production is 4 tons (UNIDO 2019).

As for the Rashi Al-Barani factory, the number of workers decreased from 15 before the entry of ISIS to 14 workers after. Consumption of sesame at the factory before ISIS reached 2–4 tons per day and decreased to 3 tons per day after, while total losses amounted to \$3.1m. Yazdin Barani (aged 62 years), the owner of the factory, said that previously the family used to work in the trade of legumes, wheat, barley, and sesame. He was continuing his work in the city of Mosul until the events of 2007, when terrorist gangs targeted the Yazidis, killing them and displacing them, in an effort to drive them from the city. So, they moved from Mosul to a farm inside Bashiqa, and changed the *al-rashi* factory that was in their house in Bashiqa to their farm in Bashiqa, and they became sesame merchants and

imported sesame from all around the world, including India, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. Mr Barani mentioned that Iraqi sesame is the best type of sesame in the *al-rashi* industry, and was always available previously, but now Iraqi sesame has become scarce due to the poor security situation and the government's lack of interest in the agricultural sector. Nowadays, Afghan sesame is imported, and is very similar to Iraqi sesame. This type of sesame was imported and worked on in Bashiqa until ISIS entered Mosul and Bashiqa. After that, ISIS stole all their products, machinery, and equipment, causing losses amounting to approximately \$3m. After their displacement to the city of Dohuk, they were able to open two companies in Turkey for the sesame trade and the *al-rashi* industry, and these two companies continued in Turkey for four years. After the liberation of Bashiqa, they set up a new, modern factory for peeling and roasting sesame – the only one in the region – that would distribute it to the other *al-rashi* factories in Bashiqa. Therefore, another factory was opened, which is the sesame oil factory (pers. comm. Yazdin Barani, 12–15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Mr Barani said:

As for the economic aspect of the al-rashi industry, production was exported to Mosul, Baghdad, and the southern governorates, and the rest of the production was exported to Iraqi Kurdistan (Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah). One ton of raw sesame of Iraqi origin produces between 750kg and 800kg of rashi, while the Afghan sesame produces 820kg to 860kg per ton, while the highly oily African sesame may yield from 840kg to 860kg of rashi. However, good sesame does not depend only on the quantity of production, but rather on the quality and good taste of al-rashi. There is bitter sesame and rotten sesame. Medium sesame is often chosen, which has a good price, good juice, and good taste, so the production of al-rashi of this type of sesame will have a good taste.

Bashiqa and Mosul factories until 2014 constituted the highest percentage of factories in Iraq for the production of al-rashi, as the export of al-rashi from Bashiqa reached 50 to 70 tons per day before the entry of ISIS into Iraq. Today, the large number of factories has led to an abundance of supply and a lack of demand. In addition, Mosul used to have 30 factories for the production of al-rashi, and Bashiqa had the largest share, but after the events of ISIS, these factories collapsed, and today only a few of them remain, but the Nineveh governorate still ranks first in the al-rashi market throughout Iraq.

As for export in Bashiqa, there are factories that began to export abroad, including the Al-Akhawain factory for the production of al-rashi, as well as the Al-Fadhiliya factory, but ISIS destroyed the commercial process and the factories in Bashiqa in a very large way, so that the losses are estimated at millions of dollars, and now the arrangement and restructuring of the factories has begun. As for the role of advertising in achieving profits for the product, it was found that advertising has a great and effective role in reaching the product to all countries of the world, which achieves economic profits and encourages the producer to buy the product.

(Yazdin Barani, 14–15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

As for the losses incurred by the sesame factories and trade when ISIS entered Bashiqa, their loss of raw sesame amounted to approximately 1,200 tons, 70 loads of plastic packages, and 90 stones for grinding sesame, in addition to demolishing more than a quarter of the factory and burning a large part of it. There is no compensation from the Iraqi government and without any support, as it was relying only on self-financing (pers. comm. Yazdin Barani, 14–15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

The number of workers in the Al-Akhawain factory before ISIS was about 40, and decreased to 30 workers after ISIS. As for the daily consumption of sesame, it reached 10 tons per day before the events of ISIS, decreasing to 7–8 tons, with losses estimated at \$1.5m due to the destruction committed by ISIS (they stole all the contents of the factory and destroyed it). Saeed Kato (aged 53 years), one of the owners of the Rashi Al-Akhawain factory (together with his brother), is from the village of Bahzani. The factory was established in 1981, and at that time it had only two machines for pressing sesame, and a production capacity that did not exceed 1 ton of sesame per day and 500kg of daily production. The work mechanism was old because the factory was run by Saeed's father and aunt, and they did not have academic degrees. However, they had good practical knowledge and leadership. The factory's machines were bought from a family from Bashiqa who helped to teach the factory owners the best way to prepare *rashi*. (The families who helped them were Khader Barani, Noun Al-Juri, and Haji Jali.) They received help on issues relating to the pressing of sesame, peeling, modification, and everything that the *al-rashi* industry requires, because they had no previous experience in the field of *rashi*-making, and the factory was developed years later. Work in the *al-rashi* industry takes place exclusively in the winter season, and sales were good; because Iraqi sesame

was used at the time, the work was fruitful (pers. comm. Saeed Katto, 12 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

As for the Rashi Al-Aaila factory, there were about 60 workers before 2014, decreasing to 15 after ISIS, while the daily consumption of sesame reached 8 tons before the events of ISIS and decreased to 2–4 tons after. Total losses due to the destruction of the factory and the looting of all its equipment and presses by ISIS in 2014 amounted to about \$1.35m. Cesar Silwan Darwishan, a 24-year-old graduate of the Faculty of Education, whose father is one of the owners of the Rashi Al-Aaila factory, said:

We bought sesame and raw materials shortly before ISIS entered Bashiqa, and we lost it because of ISIS, and today we pay these debts to the sesame merchants. I owe them \$200,000, excluding losses to other raw materials. Also, this sesame was not produced by al-rashi and was not sold, because ISIS entered the area and stole and looted everything with the destruction of property. As for the profits they make today, they are paid to pay off pre-ISIS debts to sesame merchants and others.

He also added that the local government had found in the city of Mosul *al-rashi* stones and factories in large numbers that were stolen by ISIS:

During the liberation of the city of Mosul, these stolen factories were discovered. So, I asked the local police to go to the location of these factories and stones to search for the parts of our stolen factory. But when I went there, I found many people searching for their factories, but I did not find things belonging to our factory because I could not distinguish between things belonging to our factory and those belonging to others. Therefore, I could not swear by God that my press was present among them, so I left it, as the number of the presses for the factory amounted to 22, and all were lost.

(Cesar Silwan Darwishan, March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

Table 5 also shows that the Rashi Al-Asala factory incurred total losses of about \$250,000. Although it employed 35 factory workers before the events of ISIS, it employed none after, and while consumption of sesame reached 3–5 tons per day before ISIS, it was zero after.

The number of workers at the Rashi al-Sameem factory was around 70 before ISIS entered Bashiqa, and it consumed 8–10 tons of sesame per day. But ISIS destroyed the factory and it was not able to be rebuilt, and losses were estimated at \$2.25m. Khairy Dakhil Suleiman,

the factory owner, said that his father started the *al-rashi* industry in 1972, and used primitive equipment in production, and that his children continued to work and develop this industry in subsequent years. Before 2014, exports of their products reached all of Iraq and countries such as the United States of America (USA) and European countries. Khairy Dakhil said:

We started developing our factory after inheriting it from my father in 1972. We had two sesame grinding stones, and the factory was developed in the years before ISIS, and the number of sesame grinding stones reached 32. They were stolen when ISIS entered Bashiqa in 2014, and these stones were moved to Mosul; 19 sesame grinding stones were recovered from Mosul. As for the rest, they were stolen... and they are now working inside Mosul in the al-rashi industry. In the past, only Bashiqa used to produce rashi, but now, after ISIS, the city of Mosul also produces rashi. After the destruction of their core factory, it was not reconstructed and returned to work in Bashiqa. So, there were approximately 20 stones for grinding sesame left in Bashiqa that do not work due to the lack of material capabilities to build a factory, and they did not receive any support from any organisation. The al-rashi industry moved to the city of Kirkuk through renting rashi factories to be used instead of Bashiqa since September 2014. To this day, we work there, but with slow productivity, not like our factory in Bashiqa.

(Khairy Dakhil Suleiman, 19 August 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

Table 6: Olive oil and soap industry in Bashiqa

Producer – and the name of its owner	The number of workers after ISIS – daily	The number of workers before ISIS-daily	Daily olive consumption before ISIS	Daily olive consumption after ISIS	Losses (in Iraqi dinars)
Soap (Elias Al-Kashaghi)	10	15	200–300 kg	80–100 kg	10,000,000
Olive oil (Elias Al-Kashaghi)	6	10	2 tons	1 ton	30,000,000
Total losses (Elias Al-Kashaghi)	-				40,000,000
Olive oil (Katto)	31	31	8,000 kg	25 kg	180,000,000
Olive oil soap (Katto)	31	31	33,000 kg	16.6 kg	36,000,000
Total losses (Katto)	-				216,000,000
Olive oil (Salem Kajani)	8	35	8 tons	3 tons	700,000
Al Nabaa soap factory	3	-	-	5 kg	none

Source: Author’s own. Created using data from interviews with Saeed Katto (Bahzani, Mosul, 12 February 2022); Elias Jumaa (Bahzani, Mosul, 21 February 2022); and Salem Salim Kajani (Bashiqa, Mosul, 28 March 2022).

Table 6 gives details of some factories in the soap and olive oil industry. Elias Al-Kashaghi's soap and olive oil factory has been operational for 20 years. Al-Kashaghi has about 30 years of experience in the process of pressing green and black olives. He believes that the soap industry is ancient. Most of the families in Bashiqa and the village of Bahzani used to work in the olive oil soap industry, but during the economic blockade of Iraq imposed by the United Nations in 1991 due to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, most families (like the family of Suleiman Al-Sabunji) stopped manufacturing soap and olive oil due to its high cost, the difficult economic conditions at that time, and the demanding nature of the work, particularly the high temperatures needed for production. At the present time, there are two families still working in this industry: Elias Kato and Elias Al-Kashaghi. The work in the years before ISIS reached 50 per cent (for Al-Kashaghi) and with the continuity of work, the percentage rose to 100 per cent, while production before ISIS used to make up 60 per cent, but at the present time production has increased and is better than before. This is because people knew that Elias Al-Kashaghi's soap is one of the best and finest soaps in Bahzani, and also because of the lack of other producers in the region and the high demand. The work is still going on in soap and olive oil production. The process of producing soap and olive oil takes place during the olive harvest season, every December or January (pers. comm. Elias Jumaa, 21 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Table 6 shows that daily production of soap for the Elias Al-Kashaghi family was estimated at 200–300kg before ISIS entered Bashiqa, and the number of daily workers was 15 (though 700 workers contributed to the work of harvesting the olive crop from trees in the harvest season before the entry of ISIS in 2014). After ISIS and the liberation of Bashiqa, daily production of olive oil soap decreased to 80–100kg, and the number of workers decreased to 10. As for workers harvesting the olive crop from trees, this number decreased to 600. It is noteworthy that Mr Al-Kashaghi rented 1,500 olive trees from their owners each season because ISIS burned the orchard that contained the olive trees he owned. As for the losses incurred by the soap industry after ISIS entered Bashiqa, they amounted to 10m Iraqi dinars (pers. comm. Elias Jumaa, 21 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

The olive oil industry is closely linked to the soap industry in terms of harvesting the olive crop and the number of workers in the olive harvest season, which is represented by the same number of workers in Table 6. As for olive pressing, the number of workers before the entry of ISIS reached ten workers per day, and decreased to six workers after Bashiqa was liberated. As for the daily consumption of olives, before ISIS it was about 2 tons, decreasing

to 1 ton after ISIS, with losses estimated at 30m Iraqi dinars, due to the theft of all olive pressing equipment and the burning of olive trees. Total losses (of olive oil and soap) amounted to 40m Iraqi dinars (pers. comm. Elias Jumaa, 21 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

As for the Katto family, Saeed Katto and his cousins are partners in the soap and olive oil industry. The olive oil product, estimated at about 10 tons, was stolen and was prepared for marketing for health benefits and treatment. The number of workers in harvesting and squeezing olive oil reached approximately 31 before ISIS, and this number of workers continued after the events of ISIS, and to this day, the same number are involved in preserving and harvesting olive oil for the Al-Katto family. While the daily consumption of black olives reached 8,000kg before ISIS, it decreased to only 25kg after ISIS, and remains at that level today. The losses of the olive oil press for the Al-Katto family amounted to approximately 180m Iraqi dinars due to the destruction of their factory and the theft of all its contents by ISIS.

As for the Katto soap industry, before the events of ISIS, there were about 31 workers involved in harvesting the olive crop from trees as well as working in the soap industry, but after ISIS and the return of people to their areas, the factory kept the same number of workers. However, daily consumption of olives before the events of ISIS in 2014 amounted to 33,000kg, decreasing to 16.6kg after the period of displacement in 2018 and the return to their areas, and even today. The Katto family's losses in the soap industry amounted to about 36m Iraqi dinars. In addition to that, about 6 tons of soap and olive oil prepared for marketing were stolen when ISIS entered Bahzani, and about 40 tons of olives inside the farm were lost. Total losses for the Katto family across both industries amounted to 216m Iraqi dinars (pers. comm. Saeed Katto, 12 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Salem Kajani is an official of the Olive Tree Agricultural Organization. He is 64 years old. He has been working in the field of agriculture and strategic crops (wheat and barley) since his childhood. In addition, he is specialised in cultivating olive trees and olive seedlings. He stated that their losses of olive oil amounted to 700,000 Iraqi dinars because ISIS burned their olive trees and looted their products and equipment. The number of workers before ISIS reached 35 workers, who were harvesting the fruit from the olive trees as well as working in the olive oil industry, but the number decreased to only eight workers after ISIS. Daily consumption of black olives at the factory was about 8 tons before the events of ISIS, decreasing to 3 tons after. The decrease in production is attributed to the burning of olive

trees and the lack of orchards to harvest them, and then the import of olive fruits from outside the town of Bashiqa, which led to a shortage in the local labour force and in the production of the olive crop. Salem Kajani explained that he obtained an olive oil press from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2010 in Bashiqa. Previously, there was huge demand from farmers and people to buy and squeeze olive oil in their mills, and thus they were able to export the final products of olive oil to the Iraqi provinces and outside Iraq. This was done through social media and friends, and also thanks to the olive trees that Bashiqa is famous for and the good quality of olives in the area that contributed to the production of olive oil. That was the period of prosperity in the production of olive oil before ISIS entered Bashiqa; at that time, the work continued and within good specifications of the productivity process, which continued until ISIS entered Bashiqa in 2014. The olive oil press and its equipment were completely destroyed, while the final products and electrical generators were stolen, and all that was in the factory was destroyed (pers. comm. Salem Kajani, 28 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Salem Kajani explained that he owned 9 barrels of olive oil that were looted, and when he returned to Bashiqa after its liberation, he started from scratch because they had lost all the equipment of the press, and even the olive trees were completely burnt. In addition, olive trees are perennial trees, dating back hundreds of years in Bashiqa, and their production was excellent. However, when the area was liberated, ISIS had burned all the trees, and this affected the production of olive oil. Nowadays, olives are imported. Despite the liberation of the area, the efforts to restore life to the olive trees were weak, and in any case olive trees need years to produce fruits. This was the reason for the lack of olive production in Bashiqa and the current dependence on imported olives (*ibid.*).

As for the Al-Nabaa soap factory, it was newly established in 2019. The number of workers is three, with daily consumption of olives amounting to 3kg, and production capacity of olive oil amounting to 170kg per month, and an estimated monthly production of 250kg of soap (pers. comm. Saeed Katto, 6 November 2022, Kasbah Behzani – Mosul).

Heritage in small projects is a resource and energy, representing a stock or a material or symbolic reserve, which is used to meet the challenges afflicting the Yazidi community, by working to invest it and transform it into a cultural, economic or civilisational achievement.

7.1 Supporting traditional industries before and after ISIS

Mr Yazdin Barani explained that:

Today we represent the second generation after my father's generation in these projects. Now the third generation, and they are our sons, have graduated from the most important universities with specialisations in business administration, and they will take up work after a short period. However, after the liberation of Bashiqa at the end of 2016 from ISIS terrorism, the factory was destroyed. So it was rebuilt again, as well as machinery and equipment were purchased in preparation for handing it over to the third generation – that is, our children – to take over these factories (a factory for the production of al-rashi, a factory for sesame peeling, and a factory for plastic containers for the al-rashi industry).

As for the obstacles that factory owners suffer from in general, they are the bureaucracy of state institutions in dealing with us. The Ministry of Commerce and Customs does not provide any facilitation to local investors and intends to create problems in order to pay money and bribes to them. Most factories need facilitation loans, but we did not get this thing, and state banks did not facilitate the reconstruction of factories. The owners of small and medium factories are the ones who support each other financially, in machinery and crops as well. This is often based on trust. An example of this is that we provide the owners of al-rashi factories with raw sesame or stones for pressing al-rashi and sesame and other machines until they have money and pay off their debts.

(Yazdin Barani, 14–15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

In addition, before 2003, the value of olive oil was very high because the local government (customs) prevented the entry of any commodity into Iraq before it was presented to customs. The farmer who owned olive groves was considered rich at that time because it was forbidden to import olives, and 1kg of olives was sold at a price of 100–200 Iraqi dinars, due to the lack of olive pressing at that time, and it was mainly used for food at the table only. In 2010, oils became imported from outside Iraq without customs control. Among the obstacles facing the people of Bashiqa in the olive harvest process is the lack of labour force and the high cost of paying workers who pick the olive fruits, which reaches 25,000 Iraqi dinars, in addition to the wages of the press, electricity, working hands inside the mill, ploughing, irrigation, pruning, and transportation fees. Because of the lack of labour and

the high costs of olive presses, owners of olive presses sometimes resort to renting orchards to other farmers to carry out the harvesting process in exchange for a percentage of the production (pers. comm. Salem Kajani, 28 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul). In addition, the government contributed to undermining olive cultivation in Bashiqa, due to allowing traders to import olives from other countries without protecting the local product and without imposing customs taxes on foreign olives (pers. comm. Amer Elias, 20 March 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

As for the support of the Iraqi government for factories and laboratories, there is no support from the state to support small and medium enterprises in the region, especially after the liberation of Bashiqa from ISIS terrorism. This is due to the lack of a law that protects the local product by preventing the import of the commodity that is available in Iraq. It is necessary to impose a tax on imported commodities to prevent the import of *rashi* and sesame from abroad and to protect the local product (pers. comm. Yazdin Barani, 14–15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

As for the support of governmental and international organisations after ISIS, several organisations came to provide support, but to no avail, and no organisation provided support for people to rebuild their factories. It may be because there are organisations that have suspicions of corruption by supporting some factories in the region and leaving others without their support (pers. comm. Yazdin Barani, 14–15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Salem Kajani said, in 2010 he was provided with an olive oil press from UNDP in Iraq, consisting of three parts, and the amount of production capacity for each part is 150kg, and for three parts it is 500 kg per hour. The first press that entered Iraq was through the Agricultural Olive Tree Organisation, for which Salem Kajani is responsible, and the beginning of its entry was in 2010, and the work in the press at that time was going well and with high profits because it was the only press in Iraq. After that, a packing line was established and work was done in the field of olive oil soap. This press provided a great service for the farmer by bringing in the olive crop. The olives are pressed at very low prices, 110–120 per ton (pers. comm. Salem Kajani, 28 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Also, some international and private organisations provided support to factories after the events of ISIS, including Yazda Organisation and Olive Branch Organisation, by clearing olive groves of explosive devices placed by ISIS, in addition to the process of digging and pruning dry trees. After returning from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to Bashiqa, Salem

Kajani worked with the farmers in his capacity as an official of the Olive Tree Agricultural Organization in Bashiqa and through civil society organisations, including the Yazda Organization and the Olive Branch Organization, which played a major role in encouraging farmers to replant and rehabilitate olive trees so that they could return to the abundant levels of production before the entry of ISIS (pers. comm. Salem Kajani, 28 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Salem Kajani said, 'I personally brought 15,000 olive tree seedlings and planted them in Bashiqa' after its liberation from ISIS, and that this work was voluntary and collective. As for the role of international organisations, they had to deal with civil society organisations rather than with the Iraqi government, because civil society organisations represent a link between state institutions and society, and also because of rampant corruption within the state. The Thamer Al-Saleh organisation in Qaraqosh also provided agricultural equipment and their support was due to the size of the losses and destruction inflicted by ISIS on the factory owned by Salem Kajani. In 2022, after being provided with appropriate equipment and machines, they opened an olive oil press, and the olive crop was purchased from other merchants because the olive grove was in the growth stage after having been cleaned and reforested, and it produced experimentally 1–2 tons of olive oil. This is because production in the region was low, and the season for harvesting olives ranged from 3–4 months. When the olive crop is harvested, it must be squeezed directly. If it is not squeezed within 24 hours, salt must be added to the olives. When salt is added to the olives, the olives cannot be pressed because the salts affect the mill (pers. comm. Salem Kajani, 28 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

There is also a discrepancy on the part of international or private organisations in providing support to farmers after their factories and olive groves were destroyed by ISIS. While some (the majority of whom were government and private job-holders) received financial support as well as equipment and machinery, Amer Elias, being a farmer, did not receive any financial support or machinery and equipment from any source, whether governmental, international or private. After the farmers returned to Bashiqa, they found that their orchards had been burned, and due to the lack of electricity and water in the area, civil society organisations dug artesian water wells and provided solar panels and generators to some of the farmers who did not deserve this support because they sold this aid and did not take care of their orchards or their factories (pers. comm. Amer Elias, 20 March 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

An olive oil press was also obtained from the World Food Programme (WFP) with a production capacity of 450–500kg per hour from Italian origin in 2021, and there is continuous communication with the WFP. As for the World Trade Organization (WTO), in an interview with farmers of Bashiqa, it promised them (in July 2022) that it would market the production of olive oil from Bashiqa, in addition to providing the olive fruit to the farmers for pressing. In 2018 and 2019, the Mercy Corps organisation held discussions with 70 farmers, and a project to dig wells and plant 10,000 olive trees was submitted, but the proposal was rejected because the olive trees were provided by foreign seedlings and not from the seedlings of the Bashiqa variety of olive trees. Despite the proposal being rejected, this organisation worked on it and brought unqualified workers to plant trees. A total of 16,000 olive seedlings were planted, of a foreign variety (not the Bashiqa tree known for the quality of its oil and olives). However, of these 16,000 seedlings, less than 80 succeeded. They were planted without there being water for irrigation. They also promised to provide the farmers with three wells, but this did not happen. Because they planted olive trees that are not suitable for the local environment, a complaint was filed with Bashiqa Intelligence and Security against Mercy Corps, and work with it was suspended (pers. comm. Salem Kajani, 22 August 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Khairy Hassan, who works as a teacher, and is also a farmer and owner of Al-Asala factory (established in 1994), said: 'The Rashi Al-Asala factory has disappeared because it was destroyed during the entry of the terrorist ISIS gangs.' Since this factory was established in cooperation with his brothers, as they are farmers, and Bashiqa was previously famous for cultivating sesame, it was of benefit to the community as a local production, and provided job opportunities for youth. The product was exported to Rabia, Baghdad, Samarra, Balad, and Mosul. After ISIS, they lost this factory (Rashi Al-Asala), and nothing remains of it until today. All the machines and machinery were stolen and destroyed, and approximately 4–5 tons of the sesame crop was stolen, but the owner has not received any financial or in-kind support, whether from civil society, international or governmental organisations (pers. comm. Khairy Hassan, 13 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Salim Elias, who is 32 years old, is one of the sons of the families of the owners of the Rashi Al-Asala factory, who has been working in the manufacture of olive oil, soap and *rashi* since he was young. He said:

When I was sick, I did not go to the doctor. My mother used to give me olive oil, and I would drink it and get better. I also worked in the cultivation of onions and

vegetables in Bashiqa, but at the present time I work as a labourer with a monthly wage in al-rashi factories in the region, and unfortunately not in our factory because it was destroyed and looted by ISIS. Nobody provided us with any governmental or international support from the organisations that visit the region, and we do not even have a loan in order to contribute to restoring what was destroyed of our heritage industry.

(Salim Elias, 12 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

Since the inception of *al-rashi*, Bashiqa was known as the leader in *al-rashi* in Iraq. People used to come from southern Iraq to buy *al-rashi* from Bashiqa, on the one hand. On the other hand, the price of *al-rashi* is considered symbolic, and it has high nutritional value. Today, *al-rashi* factories have spread throughout Iraq, especially in Baghdad, Salah Al-Din, and in Heet in Al-Anbar governorate. Before the events of 2014, *al-rashi* called Al-Aala ('the family') was not exported outside Iraq, but during the period of displacement to the Kurdistan Region, the Al-Aala *rashi* factory was opened in the town of Al-Shekhan, and another in the city of Erbil. Al-Aala *rashi* began to be exported to Germany, the Netherlands, Britain, and Sweden, and was distributed to all parts of the world (mainly from Germany). As for the obstacles facing the export of Al-Aala *rashi*, they include the cost of transportation, because the lowest shipping cost reaches between \$13,000 and \$14,000, and the shipping period takes 15 days, while the total cost of the *al-rashi* is 70m Iraqi dinars (approximately \$50,000), and when we returned to Bashiqa, this process continued (pers. comm. Cesar Silwan Darwishan, March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Elias Jumaa, a factory owner, confirmed that after returning to Bashiqa, there was no ability to restart work in the soap and olive oil industry because of the destruction and burning of olive groves by ISIS. However, two years after the town was liberated, the olive crop was purchased from neighbouring villages and regions, such as the village of al-Nuran, to continue the industry, so that its soap would be exported to Mosul, as well as to Jordan and Syria. Elias Jumaa also received support from international organisations, but it was not sufficient because his losses were large, estimated at 40m Iraqi dinars. He received an electric generator only; he confirmed that they had relied on their own efforts to restore the soap and olive oil factory (pers. comm. Elias Jumaa, 21 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Elias Jumaa said:

I started from scratch when I returned to Bashiqa and worked on my own without the help of any international or governmental organisation or civil society organisations. I work as a government employee and I was saving my monthly salary in order to work on restoring my soap-making factory and I continued for seven months. I worked on restoring my factory with simple and traditional tools, and I also press the olives in the primitive way, as the olive oil is extracted in the old way, with a production of 70kg per 1 ton of olives.

(Elias Jumaa, 25 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

As for UNDP, in 2021, it rebuilt the Bashiqa press for the production and distribution of olives after it had been looted and destroyed by ISIS in 2014, and work restarted at the beginning of 2022. This press belongs to the Nineveh municipalities directorate, the municipality Bashiqa, and an operational staff estimated at four workers and engineers, including the director of the Bashiqa press for the production and bottling of olive oil. The aim of establishing this press is to restore what remains of the cultural heritage of the identity of the individual Bashiqa. Its working season goes from November to April, and this press consists of three kneading machines for squeezing olive fruits. Each kneading machine takes 750kg of olive fruits, and the consumption of olive fruits is estimated at about 10 tons per month. For every ton of olive fruits, 100kg of olive oil (black) is produced, while about 50kg of green oil is produced (pers. comm. Rami Rasho Omar, 6 November 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

7.2 Heritage industries and cultural identity

7.2.1 The al-rashi industry

Mr Yazdin Barani says that the *al-rashi* industry represents his national and cultural identity, as he says: 'I was born in the *rashi* factory and now I am 62 years old. No matter how much we tried to change our trade to something else, we went back again to the *rashi* industry and roasting sesame again.' He mentions that he is the owner of a factory called Al-Barani. They are one of the most important reasons for the development of *al-rashi* in Bashiqa and its spread through their import of sesame and its distribution in Bashiqa, in addition to importing modern machines to Bashiqa and plastic boxes for packing *al-rashi*. This profession has been inherited from their grandfathers and fathers, and thus they have

become widely known in the past and present for the *al-rashi* industry (Yazdin Barani, 14–15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

As for Cesar Silwan Darwishan, he said:

When we came and saw all this destruction in my town and our rashi factory, I said we cannot work again in the factory, and I felt deep sadness and deep depression inside. I told my family that we will not work again in Bashiqa, as we had opened rashi factories during the period of displacement in the district of Al-Sheikhan [a district belonging to the Nineveh governorate] and also in the city of Erbil, we will work there and we will not return to Bashiqa, but my father and uncles confirmed that the factory in Bashiqa will start working again.

(Cesar Silwan Darwishan, March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Indeed, the work was done by the youth, by cleaning the factory from the rubble, by Cesar and his cousins, because they have a partnership in the factory, and now the factory is ready for operation (pers. comm. Cesar Silwan Darwishan, March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Cesar Silwan Darwishan also considered that the *al-rashi* industry in Bashiqa is a purely heritage industry, because in the past, sesame presses were not electric, but rather manual and natural, including the sesame press that used the water wheel. As the wheel rotates through the water, the sesame is squeezed to extract the *rashi*. The evidence that it is a heritage industry is because it continues to this day and the production techniques were inherited from their fathers and grandfathers despite the introduction of technology (*ibid.*).

Salim Elias also indicated that there was cooperation between his uncles and cousins in the administration of *al-rashi* before the entry of ISIS, and the labour force was from the same family. But when they returned to Bashiqa after its liberation, they received a video of the *al-rashi* factory, while they were displaced in Iraqi Kurdistan, and it was completely destroyed. They were deeply saddened by the fact that nothing was left of everything that their ancestors and fathers had built. So, his cousins left Iraq and left everything. As for Salim Elias, he did not leave the country because he has a salaried job working for the state, so this is the reason he stayed in Iraq. Salim said, 'Our ancestors inherited the *rashi* factory, but unfortunately we can no longer bequeath it to future generations after its destruction, due to the lack of capabilities and the lack of safety for the Yazidis in Iraq.' He considers that the value lies in the individual being productive and in addition to employing the

workforce, because it has a positive impact in terms of improving the standard of living of the people in that region. As for its historical value, that lies in the fact that it is the industry of his ancestors, and he wished he had preserved it for his children and bequeathed it to his grandchildren, but he lost everything. Salim Elias said, 'I felt bad when I lost this industry, and of course the biggest loser is Iraq, because we are importing everything from outside Iraq, but despite that we have lost a lot of industry. *Rashi* is considered one of the oldest industries in the Nineveh governorate...' (Salim Elias, 12 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Aed Hajji, a teacher and researcher in the matter of the Yazidi heritage, aged 69, explained that the *al-rashi* industry entered late in Bashiqa and is not considered a national and cultural identity for the individual in Bashiqa because this industry was famous in every region of the Nineveh Plain, which is the town of Sheikhan and Tel Kaif. The town of Tel Kaif is the first stronghold of the *al-rashi* industry in Nineveh governorate. Aed Hajji said:

The people of Tel Kaif [a town on the outskirts of the city of Mosul] were famous in the rashi industry, but in the era of the 1930s and 1940s when most of the people of Tel Kaif immigrated in the Nineveh Plain and its inhabitants are of the Christian religion and the owners of al-rashi factories from Tel Kaif moved outside Iraq, especially to America. So they worked to sell their equipment (a frying pan, sesame, and a room for grinding sesame) and their old work tools to the people of Bashiqa. They used animals (mules) to rotate the sesame grinding room to extract the sesame because there was no electricity in rotating the grinding chamber. The other method is a mill using water to move the chamber to grind the sesame to extract the rashi.

(Aed Hajji, 15 August 2022, Bahzani – Mosul)

The *al-rashi* industry still maintains its production in a region that represents cultural and heritage identity. Mr Mowaffaq Nayef, the owner of the Rashi Al-Akhawain factory, said: 'I currently consider the *rashi* factory as part of my identity. We live from its livelihood, so it is necessary to preserve it generation after generation, meaning that in the year 1992 I used to work in the factory and run it, but at the present time my children work in it and manage it in production, marketing, export and import' (pers. comm. Mowaffaq Nayef, 15 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

Khairy Dakhil Suleiman considers that the *al-rashi* industry is traditional because they inherited it from their parents and their parents learned it from their neighbours. He considers this industry his cultural identity and cherishes it because it represents Bashiqa wherever he goes. He was deeply pained when he found that his father's factory, which he inherited from him, was bombed and completely destroyed (pers. comm. Khairy Dakhil Suleiman, 19 August 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul).

7.2.2 The olive pressing industry

Salem Salim Kajani stated that he inherited the profession of pressing olive oil from his father, who was squeezing olive oil using the old method. He felt vengeful when he found the olive oil press and olive trees destroyed, stolen and burned after ISIS entered the area, as it had been a source of livelihood for his children. He inherited this industry from his fathers and grandfathers. As Salem Kajani said:

My parents and grandparents endured the difficult conditions of life at that time and endured all kinds of fatigue until they reached this stage of craftsmanship in production, and after that the terrorist organisation ISIS came and killed everything valuable, and this event was very painful for me. Also, people previously did not have any heritage value for the olive oil industry, and they did not have knowledge of the heritage, because they were simple people and their only concern was that olive oil has a healthy and therapeutic value in eating, as well as being a source of livelihood for their families, as there are large quantities of olive trees in the region. In our current time, the matter is different, as this industry has a high heritage value for the people of the Bashiqa region, and despite the stability and change that was in Bashiqa from wars and displacement, it did not disappear, and its people continued to make it, because of its inheritance from their ancestors hundreds of years ago and olive is still being pressed to this day using the old-fashioned way.

(Salem Salim Kajani, 28 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

As for Amer Elias, a 48-year-old farmer, he says that he inherited the olive oil industry from his father, who inherited it from his grandparents. The history of his family in the olive oil industry dates back to the nineteenth century. He started working in this industry when he was 12 years old, and he still irrigates olive groves and make soap even until this day. Upon his return to his village of Bahzani in Bashiqa district, he witnessed all the olive oil

equipment and machines looted by ISIS, and the theft of his stored olive oil products. His olive grove was razed to the ground and all its trees burned. He said:

As I watched this devastation and destruction, I said to myself, 'May God compensate us and restore our rights'. After that, they relied on themselves to restore the olive trees by cleaning them and digging a water well in them, and now these trees are growing and their industry has been restored.

(Amer Elias, 20 March 2022, Bahzani – Mosul)

7.2.3 The olive oil soap industry

Elias Jumaa confirmed that he learned soap-making from his ancestors, and that he would preserve it for as long as he lived and pass it on to his children to continue his heritage path in the soap and olive oil industry in the village of Bahzani. Most of his children are employees of the Iraqi state, but despite that, there is cooperation between them in the soap industry. When he saw the soap factory destroyed after the liberation of Bashiqa and the village of Bahzani, he decided to stop re-manufacturing it and continue only in the olive oil pressing industry, as it is less expensive. But after four to five months of reflection, he confirmed that the legacy of his ancestors must continue, despite the difficulties. He said, 'My heart was not at ease because of the losses, as all the tools were heritage, as we inherited them from our ancestors, but ISIS destroyed the industry' (pers. comm. Elias Jumaa, 21 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Soap-making represents a cultural identity and heritage that has been passed down through generations. But at the present time, it must be passed on to future generations, despite the security situation and the economic transformations that have ravaged the region. Their parents provided 30 per cent freedom in decision-making and learning previously, but now their children must be given more freedom to excel in the field of work, and this is done by giving them accurate information at work, providing practical capabilities and work sites, and giving them the right to practical administration; this contributes to improving the quality of the factory (pers. comm. Saeed Katto, 12 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

The traditional professions are distinguished in the Nineveh Plain, especially in Bashiqa, as they represent heritage tourism for the local heritage product. Each region in Nineveh has a special feature of heritage with its products. Previously, tourists used to come to Bashiqa from all parts of Iraq, from Baghdad or from southern Iraq. When they visited Bashiqa, they

would get to know the heritage products in the region and go to people's homes to buy the products because previously the products were made in people's homes. The sale of products spread in the region by attracting tourists to the local product, and this contributed to the economic growth of Bashiqa and thus to the growth in production (pers. comm. Saeed Katto, 12 February 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Aed Hajji explained that olive oil and soap-making represent a national and cultural identity for the individual in Bashiqa and in Nineveh governorate and Iraq, because they are the first industries related to olive trees in Bashiqa. He said:

When we go to any place in Iraq and when we are asked where you are from and we answer that we are from Bashiqa, people will always say: 'Yes, you are the people of olives, olive oil and soap'. Even in the geography books in Iraqi schools, olive trees are defined as being located in the east of Nineveh governorate, the town of Bashiqa, as it is famous for olive trees, olive oil and soap. This represents a national, cultural, and heritage identity that extends back thousands of years. It is said that olive trees have been cultivated since the founding of Bashiqa, which dates back thousands of years, being an Assyrian region, so olive oil has a close association with its trees.

(Aed Hajji, 15 August 2022, Bahzani – Mosul).

Elias Jumaa inherited this craft from his father, and his father inherited it from his ancestors. He said:

If this craft disappears due to the lack of its manufacture today, it will not only affect me, but the heritage of the entire region because it is a craft of our ancestors, and to this day I preserve the way it is made in the old way and in our home in a 9-metre-long room, I make olive oil. When I returned to my town and found my house burnt, I did not grieve over it as much as I grieved and cried over my olive oil and soap factories, because everything I inherited from my ancestors was gone and everything of heritage value to me got lost. As for the time being, I have restored my factory, depending on myself and my family, and I will preserve it and pass it on to my family and my grandchildren.

(Elias Jumaa, 25 March 2022, Bashiqa – Mosul)

8 Conclusions

1. The study revealed a decline in the production of small and medium industries for the Yazidi in the town of Bashiqa, after the deliberate destruction by ISIS in mid-2014. This led to the severance and decline of the heritage products of the Yazidi individual and the loss of the social or spiritual value associated with that heritage – i.e., the sense of identity and continuity in belonging to these industries, and dependence on imports of these products. This is in addition to the scarcity of the new generation of young people wanting to be involved in these industries due to the loss of these industries because of the war, the loss of the industry of their grandfather and father, and the emigration of young people from Iraq. These factors also contributed to the high cost of labour and a contraction of work in these traditional industries.
2. The interviews reveal how the Yazidi heritage industries were destroyed in a way that affected the community's ability to perform these traditional handicraft industries, which contributed to cutting off the Yazidi way of life by preventing the community from transmitting its unique culture from these industries from one generation to the next. The loss of these cultural heritage industries has had a negative impact on the Yazidi community through the loss of social cohesion, community participation, education, knowledge, social identity, wellbeing, and quality. However, there is also resistance from the Yazidi people in the face of this collective destruction by ISIS by returning to practicing their heritage industries with their simple material ability and helping each other in restoring their traditional heritage factories, rebuilding their heritage sites, and engaging in the practice of their tangible traditional cultural industries.
3. The study showed a decrease in the domestic production of *rashi* and soap, and an acute shortage of olive oil, which contributed to reducing Iraq's production of the product, although Iraq remains a relatively small producer of olive oil. It was also noted that the best and most famous types of olives are found in the town of Bashiqa, but this decrease negatively affected the local production and the local market, as well as the decrease in the export of these products outside Iraq, especially *al-rashi*, which had been exported and marketed to Germany, the Netherlands, and other European countries. The study also showed that GDP growth in Iraq reached 6.40 per cent in 2010, but decreased to 0.20 per cent in

2014, due to the drop in global oil prices and the entry of ISIS into the northern and western provinces of the country (Nineveh – Salah al-Din – Anbar – Diyala). It decreased further to -11.32 per cent in the year 2020, due to the decrease in GDP sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the labour force all over the world but particularly in Iraq, in addition to the decrease in global demand for oil as a result of the activation of social divergence and quarantine.

4. The study showed an increase in the percentage of poverty in the aforementioned sample as a result of the bombing and deliberate theft by ISIS of the popular traditional factories of the people of Bashiqa, causing a high unemployment rate, while local government failed to provide support to the owners of small and medium factories in the town. There was also a discrepancy in the provision of assistance by governmental organisations in the distribution of aid and its lack of fairness, which prevented restoration of the destroyed factories and led to an increase in poverty in the town. As for Iraq, Nineveh governorate now accounts for one-fifth of the number of poor people in Iraq due to the entry of ISIS into its lands. Poverty rates in Iraq have increased, reaching 22.5 per cent in 2014, up from 18.9 per cent in 2012. The rate increased further in 2021 due to the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar against the US dollar to reach 29.6 per cent.

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Personal communications and interviews

Mowaffaq Nayef, a school principal, and director of Al-Aila *rashi* factory, Bashiqa, Nineveh.

Aed Hajji, a researcher in the Yazidi heritage.

Faleh Hassan Marji, a teacher, interested in the Yazidi heritage, the owner of an olive oil press in his home.

Karim Elias Keto, one of the members of the Rashi Al-Akhawain administration, olive oil and Keto soap.

Amer Elias, a farmer cultivating olive trees, and the owner of an olive oil press.

Khairy Dakhil Suleiman, owner of Rashi Al-Sameem factory.

Yazdin Barani, the owner of a series of factories, namely the Rashi Al-Barani factory and a trader and distributor of sesame in Nineveh governorate, and a series of packaging factories and trading in *al-rashi* juicers in Nineveh governorate and importing them from abroad.

Saeed Keto, one of the members of the management of the Rashi Al-Akhawain factory, and one of the members of the olive oil and Keto soap factories.

Cesar Silwan Darwish, graduate of mathematics education, accountant of the *rashi* family factory, and one of the owners and heirs of the *rashi* family factory.

Salem Salim Kajani, responsible for the Agricultural Olive Tree Organisation in Bashiqa, a farmer for 40 years, owner of an olive oil press, and one of the consultants for agricultural organisations.

Khairy Hassan, former teacher and farmer, former owner of Rashi Al-Asala factory.

Salim Elias, one of the heirs of the owners of the *rashi* factory in Bashiqa.

Elias Jumaa, an employee and owner of an olive oil soap and soap factory, and owns olive groves.

Rami Rasho, mechanical engineer – government employee, Bashiqa district, Mosul, supervisor of the olive press machines of the Nineveh Municipalities Directorate – Bashiqa municipality.



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