



Adapting Family Professions Amidst Social Turmoil



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Lebanon has seen a shift in professions from parents to children over the last two centuries. Several factors have contributed to this transition, some of which are familial, geographical, and environmental in nature, as well as related to the nature of the profession itself and the extent to which it remains needed in the face of changing economic and social conditions.

The inheritance of professions has not ceased and has continued to reflect on the one hand the needs of the local community and on the other hand the family bond, which is today under a lot of pressure due to the economic conditions that force many to travel and leave their families and the country, and to abandon their parents' profession in search of a better future elsewhere. However, fathers' professions remained a kind of inheritance that is passed down through generations regardless of economic return, and the names of some professions were associated with the names of certain families so the disappearance of the profession meant the disappearance of the family name. These crafts, such as carpenter, blacksmith, whitster (or linen bleacher), upholsterer, miller, etc. were made famous by families that bore their names. "This profession is not enough for us today, but my grandfather's hand blessed it, and we passed it down from generation to generation." This is almost always the first response of any craftsman when asked about the possibility of continuing to work with his craft today.

Crafts are part of Lebanon's heritage and have taken on regional and familial characteristics as they have been passed down from grandparents to children for over a century and more. When researching the history of crafts in Lebanon, we discover two paths: the first is regional, where towns were unique to a certain craft, while other crafts gained family fame due to mastery and continuity as it was passed down from generation to generation.

Many professions have become famous in Lebanon at the regional level, so when we talk about tanning, the process of transforming animal skins into a product that can be dyed and used, one immediately associates it with Mashghara in West Beqaa, specifically with the Ghazaleh family, who became famous for this craft and passed it down from generation to generation.

While bladesmithing (or knife-making) thrives in Jezzine in South Lebanon and is a pioneer in this field, as it is available in the markets in various forms for decoration, souvenirs, and daily use. The soap industry is a profession of the people of Tripoli and Sidon, and the Soap Museum in Sidon traces the history of this region with this profession, which was widely famous in it, in addition to the professions famous for Sidon and some of its families, such as cordwaining (or shoe-making), which has been practiced in Sidon for more than a century and have been passed down from generation to generation.

Bint Jbeil was famous for shoemaking, and this craft has survived even with the introduction of modern machinery.

When we arrive on the Lebanese coast, we will learn about the glass industry in the town of Sarafand, a craft inherited by the Khalife family from their ancestors and developed today and renovated in it to be suitable for decoration, decoration, and daily use with new and modern additions that suit people's tastes, but without changing the method of production, as the thermal plant remains the same. These family professions of all kinds faced numerous challenges as a result of deteriorating economic conditions on the one hand, and competition from imported goods on the other, which can sometimes be cheaper than local manufacturing, which receives no official government support or attention. Especially since some professions, such as carpet-making in the North Beqaa region, rely on sheep wool, imposing the need to pay attention to livestock raising, which should be a government policy rather than a family policy.

It is important to recognize the local development dimension of these family professions, which provide employment opportunities for all, including women, without being away from home and bearing the hardships and costs of mobility, while also maintaining family bonding through working together in one profession.

There is no doubt that some professions have vanished as a result of industrial transformations that eliminated the use of certain machines, and this cannot be addressed or prevented because it is the result of changes like services as well as the use of time and speed in production. The phenomenon of youth migration, which has grown in recent years, has also harmed the continuity of some trades.

The socioeconomic crises that Lebanon is experiencing, which have harmed many aspects of life, have also contributed to encouraging a return to the professions that parents and grandparents worked to recover in the hope of saving money, meeting needs, and building simple industries that suffice for family needs without lofty goals. These professions would have contributed far more to local development, reducing youth migration, and promoting a culture of self-production if properly supported.

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