

# Impact of thriving Iranian handicraft industry on domestic economy



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## Iranica Desk

Iran is globally renowned for its diverse and beautiful handicraft products, which stand out as a valuable treasure. According to the Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Maryam Jalali, out of 400 registered handicrafts worldwide, 299 originate from Iran. Additionally, Iran boasts 18 officially registered major handicrafts. Skilled craftspeople in the country produce unique artworks in various fields, including painting, pottery, and marquetry. Based on figures released by the cultural heritage organizations of various provinces, a total of 531,556 people are engaged in the production of officially registered handicrafts, with 429,831 women and 101,725 men actively involved. All fields are currently active, and the number of artists engaged in them is regularly and continuously recorded. It's important to note that handicraft production is a family-oriented matter; a large number of families, especially those in rural areas, traditionally are active in this sector, chntn.ir wrote. All of this highlights how focusing on handicrafts can alleviate

unemployment and contribute to greater income generation. The thriving handicrafts sector, in addition to enriching the country's cultural and artistic heritage, can address gaps in macro policies and serve as a strategic export-oriented commodity with the right policies in place. Iranian handicrafts are fortunately exported to numerous countries, including Iraq, Qatar, China, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Germany, Canada, and others, garnering dedicated fans in these regions. Despite handicraft exports being common worldwide, Iran has the potential to further enhance the export of its handicraft products by implementing effective policies. Presently, Iran's annual handicraft export value stands at \$325 million, yet experts estimate that the figure could exceed \$2 billion. This is certainly feasible, given Iran's unparalleled capacity in producing handicraft products. Iran ranks third globally in terms of diversity and first in terms of capacity within the field of handicraft production. Jabar Koochakinejad, a Majlis representative from Rasht, said "Iran's handicrafts have many enthusiasts around the world,



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and marketing is the most important way to increase exports. He emphasized the need to organize handicrafts exports and the necessity of creating market for Iranian handicrafts by Iranian embassies in different countries, adding: The carry-on-luggage exports of Iranian handicrafts reflects the interest of foreign tourists in these artworks. Therefore, it is essential for officials to find target markets and find a more effective mechanisms for this matter. He urged Iranian embassies in

various foreign countries to take a more proactive role in promoting and marketing Iranian handicrafts, as there is significant global interest in these traditional products. He added that officials should organize the supply of traditional products and arts systematically. In fact, organizing the export of handicrafts with the creation of tax incentives and facilities can significantly contribute to economic prosperity. Accessing new markets is the missing link in increasing the export of handicraft

products.

This is while Zahra Elahian, Tehran's representative in the Parliament, emphasized that the approach to handicraft production in the country should be export-oriented, and highlighted that neglecting the packaging is a mistake. Elahian also pointed out that based on conducted studies, an export-oriented approach to handicraft production could significantly increase sales of these products in other countries. She further stated that most of the handicraft productions are tailored to the tastes and needs of Iranians, overlooking the fact that foreigners have different preferences. Elahian suggested that artists involved in this industry could be familiarized with the tastes and desires of foreign customers through appropriate classes. He emphasized that production aligned with global demand in the handicraft industry can significantly contribute to its prosperity through increased exports, resulting in a substantial influx of foreign currency to Iran. Regarding the role of packaging in the sale of handicrafts, he noted that Iranian handicrafts are renowned for their exceptional quality and beauty worldwide.

However, the lack of attention to packaging has hindered significant sales. He stressed that implementing scientific, contemporary, and high-quality packaging for handicrafts can notably impact sales, as customers prioritize quality and packaging above other factors. Aside from Parliament, the government also has a crucial role in enhancing export opportunities for handicrafts. Minister of Interior Ahmad Vahidi emphasized the government's backing for the handicraft industry, especially in the field of exports. He assured that the Ministry of Interior supports artisans and exporters, ensuring dedicated spaces in every city for showcasing and selling handicraft products. He considers backing those involved in the handicraft industry as one of the ministry's foremost policies and noted that mayors across various cities have been directed to allocate spaces for the presentation and sale of handicraft products. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of supporting handicraft producers, particularly women, highlighting that providing a venue for showcasing their products can lead to increased sales and effective marketing.

## Historical and geographical significance of Kerman

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Several roads connect Kerman with Quhistan, the mountainous region in the southern part of Khorasan; mentioned especially often is the road through Rawar and the oasis of Nayband to Khur, and that through Khabis to Khusb. Quhistan did not have a great significance in the history of Iran. As early as the tenth century the villages were separated from each other by extensive areas where only nomads could live; there were no rivers there, but only wells and underground canals. Palm trees grew in the southern part of Quhistan, but the rest of the province was counted among the "cold regions." Wilhelm Tomaschek, a Czech-Austrian geographer and orientalist, remarks that Quhistan gives an idea of what Iran may look like many thousands of years hence, as a result of dessication (extreme dry-

ness) and weathering of the soils. Qaen and Tun (Ferdows) were the chief towns, so that the whole region is called Tunocain or Tonocain by Marco Polo. Only Qaen had commercial importance; Maqdisi, a historian, calls it "the warehouse of the goods of Khorasan and the treasure-trove of Kerman. There were, moreover, many mountain castles in this region, so that Quhistan became in the eleventh century one of the centers of power for the Isma'ilis. The deserts of Kerman, Makran, and Sind were considered less sterile than that of Khorasan, and they were inhabited by nomadic tribes. The areas near mountains were suited for agriculture and fruit growing, and here the inhabitants soon adopted a sedentary way of life. Herodotus, a Greek historian, counts the people of Kerman among the sedentary tribes of Persia.



The Arabs divided the cultivated areas according to the kind of crops grown there, into surud (cold areas) and jurum (warm areas), from the Persian words *sard* (cold) and *garm* (hot). In Kerman, only the northern districts, occupying approximately one-fourth of the whole region, were reckoned as surud, the rest were jurum; and whereas the

crops of the former cold region could absolutely not be grown in the southern regions, the reverse did occasionally occur. The cultivated lands in Kerman lay in separate patches and thus differed from the more continuous areas under cultivation in Fars. The towns of Kerman mentioned by the Arab geographers

have partly conserved their former names, as, for example, Bam, Khabis, Zarand, and some smaller places like Mahan. The last-named town is noted for the fact that the only monument from the Achaemenid period found in Kerman was located there: in the mausoleum of Ne'matullah Vali, a saint who lived in the fifteenth century and who founded the Ne'matollahi order of dervishes. The find was a small pyramid on a triangular base, with a trilingual inscription (Persian, Assyrian, and the language of Susiana): "I, Darius, great king, king of kings, king of the regions, king of this land, son of Gushtasp, the Achaemenid." The names of some other cities mentioned by the tenth-century geographers are now applied primarily to their corresponding districts, such as Narmashir, Bardasir, Jiruft, and so on. The Arabs mention Sirjan as the chief city of Kerman. Its location was probably not identical with

that of Sa'idabad, the present capital of the district of Sirjan, but must have been to the northeast of it, in the present district of Rafsanjan, with its chief town, Bahramabad: this probability is based on the fact that the Arab geographers count only two days' march from Sirjan to Zarand. In Tomaschek's opinion, Sirjan became the capital of the province only in Arab times; prior to that the capital would have been the city of Kerman, built by Ardashir, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty, who named it Weh-Ardashir, a name transformed by the Arabs into Bardasir. Sirjan, nevertheless, had already been the capital of the province of Kerman in pre-Islamic times. The town created by Ardashir seems to have been just a military camp; only in the second half of the tenth century, under the Buyid dynasty, did it become the capital of the province.