

Shahr-e Rey, a great ancient land in southern Tehran

Gabri Hill, home to strange ancient ossuaries



Cheshmeh Ali
aradmobile.com



Tomb of Bibi Shahrbanu
tasnimnews.com



Gabri Hill
shadmag.com



Naqareh Khaneh Tower
itto.org



Nasooz and Haft Dastgah Village
AHMAD AGHASIANI/tehranpicture.ir

Iranica Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Shahr-e Rey, also known as Rhages and Rhagae, was formerly one of the great cities of Iran. The remains of the ancient city lie on the eastern outskirts of the modern city of Shahr-e Rey, which is located just a few miles southeast of the capital city of Tehran. Shahr-e Rey was among the main centers of Zoroastrians in ancient times. Dating back to the Medes period, the city, known as a sacred land, lies on the route of the Silk Road. That is why it was one of the most prosperous cities of the world in various historical periods. The 7,000-year-old Cheshmeh-Ali (Spring of Ali), also known as Cheshmeh Surin, is an ancient site, which is one of the oldest in the country. Cheshmeh-Ali is now a recreational

center located near Toghrol Tower.

The tomb of Bibi Shahrbanu, the wife of Imam Hussein (PBUH), is situated on a mountain with the same name, which lies in the northeastern part of the Shahr-e Rey.

A big hill is in the southern part of this mountain, which used to be called Tabarak Mountain, or Gabri Hill. An octagonal tower, known as Gabri Castle, is seen on the southern slope of the ancient hill, which catches the eye of every passerby.

A large ossuary resembling a huge temple is located a little further from the tower. Several other ossuaries, which are very old and unique, are on the hill as well. On the southern slope of Gabri Hill there is a village called "Nasooz and Haft Dastgah," that is as strange and unknown as its name. The residents of the village have lived near sever-

al huge ancient structures for many years.

If this village had a better destiny, perhaps today it would be a major tourist center and a dream destination for archaeologists, but, alas, a different fate had been awaiting it.

The village has several historical sites dating back to various eras including Naqareh Khaneh Tower, which is the octagonal structure with a diameter of 11 meters. Two different layers are seen in the structure, showing that the tower has been restored at least once.

Its location shows that the structure, originally a small fire temple, was turned into Naqareh Khaneh Tower (Bell Tower) during the rule of Buyid Dynasty (934 to 1062 CE).

According to some sources, the tower was built by a person named Bozorg Omid for personal use.

Ali Ahmadi, the village manager, said the outer layer of Naqareh Khaneh Tower is made of bricks. He added that an ancient ossuary, dating back to the Sassanid era (224-651 CE), is located a little further away from the tower, which is different from those that were common in Iran in ancient times. In fact, it is a royal tomb, the extent of which reaches the Taqjabad crossroad of Shahr-e Rey.

He said an ossuary was a place in which dead bodies were placed so that birds could feed on their flesh, and then the bones were poured into a well in the middle of the ossuary. It seems that this ossuary belonged to a great person with a high position, for whom they also built a tomb.

Ahmadi, who has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, said, "I think this structure is something like a ziggurat, only the

top of which is visible. Unfortunately, in recent decades, the foundations of some rural houses have been built on the walls of the tomb.

Ahmadi said there is an ancient mine behind Gabri Hill, whose entrance looks like a cave. It is not yet clear what was extracted from the mine; however, some believe that it was a lime mine or a precious stone mine.

The mine, with a brick arch, has a three-story corridor, and when you get out of it, you find yourself on the hilltop.

He noted that a fireproof brick factory and a tea warehouse, both dating back to the Pahlavi era (1925-1979 CE), are among the other historical monuments of the Nasooz and Haft Dastgah Village.

According to historical documents, Iran's first tea factory was built in the village. The statue of Kashif al-Dawlah, the first person who brought tea to Iran, is

now in the warehouse. The fireproof brick factory, from which the name of the village is derived, is famous among the people who live in the area. It was operating until some months ago. 'Nasooz' means fireproof in Persian. Moreover, seven houses were built in the area for workers who were active in the factory; that is why the name of the village is Nasooz and Haft Dastgah (Fireproof and Seven Structures). "The old kiln of the factory was registered on Iran's National Heritage List as the first brick kiln of the country," said Ahmadi. He referred to Inanj as the name of the village in ancient times, adding that it was the name of a famous commander of the Buyid Dynasty. "Archeologists are permanently active in the village," he said, pointing out that all of its residents are native and no migrant lives in the village.



visitiran.ir

Chootashi, an old handicraft of Mazandaran Province

Chootashi is among the oldest handicrafts of people residing in the northern provinces of the country, especially Mazandaran.

The word "chootashi" consists of two parts, *choo* is the short form of "choob," which means wood, and *tashi* is the short form of *tarashi*, which means carving, visitiran.ir wrote.

This art, which is wood carving, is often practiced to make tools and utensils that

are used by local people in their daily lives. A sustainable and diverse supply of wood from the green forests of Tabarestan, the old name of Mazandaran, has helped prepare the ground for making various wood objects in the region throughout history.

In Mazandaran Province, the art of *chootashi* is used to make various tools such as *kacheh* (wooden spoon), *ketra*

(wooden ladle), *joleh* (a kind of jug with a wide opening and a thin neck, which is used to keep milk and dairy products). The craftspeople also make *kelez*, which is a wooden utensil that is used as a measuring cup.

This craft is popularly practiced in various cities of Mazandaran Province such as Noor, Chamestan, Amol, Babol, Savadkuh, Sari, Behshahr, Neka.

In the past, those who practiced the craft, *chootash*, were highly regarded in the history of Tabarestan. They donated their best or first products to the holy shrines of their villages, believing that this would bring blessings to their lives.

Wood from various types of trees including maple, box, beech, oak, walnut, European ash and elm are used by the artists involved in this craft.