

Fathollahov Mansion symbolizes Iranian-Russian architecture



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The historic mansion of Fathollahov is located in downtown Tabriz, in East Azarbaijan Province. With regard to its structure and exterior, it is considered as a unique historical symbol of Russian architecture. Fathollahov Mansion is situated close to Arg-e Alish, or Arg of Tabriz, the remnants of a large acropolis fortification and city wall in downtown Tabriz. Historical evidence and existing photos in the archive of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of East Azarbaijan Province suggest that the construction of Fathollahov Mansion pertains to at least 150 years ago. The Qajar era building was registered on the country's National Heritage List in 2005, according to IRNA. Due to the negligence of related bodies, the mansion has fallen into oblivion and some parts of the building have collapsed. However, the Cultural Heritage, Tour-



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ism and Handicrafts Department of East Azarbaijan Province is renovating the building. If the mansion's renovation is completed, it could turn into a major tourist attraction. With dimensions of 20 meters by 40 meters, this building has three floors including a basement. It has many beautiful rooms with decorative plasterwork, columns, wooden

fences and stairs. Thick walls and wooden doors are prominent features of the structure and its exterior is a combination of Russian and Iranian architecture.

Foreign-style construction

A senior official of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of East Azarbaijan Province told IRNA that re-

lated provincial bodies are cooperating to restore the Fathollahov Mansion. Nasser Zavari said one of the major features of the mansion pertains to its internal plasterwork. He noted that these features symbolize Tsarist Russian architecture. The official said there is an *ab-anbar* (a roofed underground water cistern) in the basement of the mansion. He added that efforts

are underway to preserve its original condition.

Renovation costs

The deputy head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of East Azarbaijan Province said the renovation operation of Fathollahov Mansion began four years ago. Vahid Navadad added that about \$20,000 have been spent on restoring the house over the past four years.

He said some \$60,000 are needed to complete the mansion's renovation. The official said a proposal has been submitted to the Planning and Budget Organization of East Azarbaijan Province and the Ministry of Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts to allocate the appropriate funds. Navadad noted that the mansion's renovation will become complete by March

20 next year if the project is funded in due time.

The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of East Azarbaijan Province said earlier that the renovation of historic houses in Tabriz, including the Fathollahov Mansion, is among the priorities of the department.

Ahmad Hamzehzadeh said the mansion is among historical attractions of the province, which is a combination of Russian and Iranian architecture. He said that with its 400 historic houses, Tabriz offers great tourism potential.

The official said the provincial tourism sector is only able to restore a limited number of historic houses because it does not have sufficient funds.

Hamzehzadeh called for assistance on the nation level to help restore historic houses in Tabriz.

Presently, a number of famous historic houses in Tabriz lure many domestic and foreign tourists.



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Isfahan's art of qalamkari

Qalamkari, a kind of traditional print that is applied to textile, is one of the many handicrafts of the city of Isfahan in central Iran.

The handicrafts of Isfahan are so popular and significant that this city was chosen as the World Crafts City by the World Council of Handicrafts in 2015, visitiran.ir reported.

Qalamkari print, also known as "*chitsazi*", is one of the artistic products with a very ancient history.

Some believe that this craft originated in India. In the past, to apply the prints on a traditional textiles such as cotton, silk, and linen, the artists painted using brush and herbal paints.

Because of the skillful and elaborate works of the masters, this craft was named *qalamkari* which refers to the

word *qalam*, meaning pen or brush in the Persian language. Gradually, wooden print blocks replaced the painting process because they were less time-consuming and easier to use.

The oldest blocks found in Iran, dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries, were carved out of stone. But the wooden blocks were brought to Iran by Mongols in the late 14th century, and ever since then, designing and making wooden blocks have become the first and perhaps most important step for making *qalamkari* prints.

To make the block, first the intended design is drawn on a sketch paper with graphite, then, based on the color, it is separated to single-color layers. Then each design is applied and later carved to blocks

of Pear or Hawthorn wood. Most commonly, four blocks are created for each design, and the textiles usually have four colors.

Out of the colors, first the black layer is printed, then red, blue, and yellow is applied last. Sometimes green and brown are used as complementary colors.

Patterns of animals, foliage, arabesque, and monuments of Isfahan, the story of Leili and Majnoon, and miniature paintings are used. The Safavid era is known as the flourishing period of *qalamkari*. During that time *qalamkari* textiles were prospering so much that, only in Isfahan, artists were busy making this craft in four great bazaars and multiple caravanserais, and they sent their products to cities all over the country.