

## Academies of Persian, Urdu languages to collaborate

Arts & Culture Desk

ISNA - In a significant step towards fostering cultural ties between Iran and Pakistan, the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in Iran and the Academy of Urdu Language in Pakistan have declared their readiness for collaboration.

Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, the president of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, extended his congratulations to Saleem Mazhar on his appointment as the head of the Academy of Urdu Language.

In a message, Haddad-Adel stated, "I congratulate you on your appointment as the head of the Academy of Urdu Language in Pakistan. The Academy of Persian Language and Literature expresses its willingness to cooperate with the Academy of Urdu Language in all aspects under your leadership. It is hoped that the cultural, linguistic, and literary bonds between the two nations of Iran and Pakistan will continue to expand and deepen day by day."

Saleem Mazhar holds a Ph.D. in Persian language and literature from the University of Tehran. As a professor of Persian language and literature at University of the Punjab in Pakistan, he is proficient in English, Urdu, Persian, and Punjabi languages. He was bestowed with an honorary membership in the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in 2019.

To date, he has authored numerous books and articles on Persian language and literature.

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# Iranian bas-relief returned from London undergoing analysis

Arts & Culture Desk

The significance of the Sassanian bas-relief carving returned from London was examined during a conference titled, "The Ancient Iranian Bas-Relief Carving: Restoration and Study in the National Museum of Iran."

Scholars from the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Research Institute, university researchers, and independent scholars engaged in three specialized panels to discuss their expert insights about the repatriated bas-relief, ILNA wrote. Mostafa Dehpahlavan, the head of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Research Institute, conveyed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts that led to the restoration and return of the artwork to the National Museum of Iran. The carving's detailed examination aimed to provide a deeper understanding of its essence. Dehpahlavan emphasized the importance of academic cooperation and transparent research processes.

He highlighted the value of such sessions where scholars scrutinize and critique each other's works, ultimately contributing to the dissemination of accurate scientific

knowledge. Morteza Adibzadeh, the director general of Museums and Historical-Cultural Property of Iran, described the process of repatriation as complex and time-consuming, involving both sensitive diplomatic negotiations and legal considerations. He expressed hope for the successful return of historical-cultural properties to Iran this year. Adibzadeh cautioned local researchers against hasty judgments and premature conclusions, urging them to avoid prejudice before thorough examination.

He emphasized the role of scientific and technical analysis in preserving and understanding cultural heritage artifacts.

Jebreel Nokandeh, the head of the National Museum of Iran, defended the collaborative efforts between global museums, indicating their adherence to international conventions for heritage preservation. He encouraged scholarly and technical discussions, highlighting the significance of objective scientific evaluations.

The conference included three specialized panels, which delved into various aspects of the Sassanian bas-relief's restoration and study. Scholars discussed topics

such as the relief's artistic and historical attributes, its journey from London to Iran, and its cultural and stylistic features.

As the panels concluded, the event emphasized the importance of scholarly collaboration, careful analysis, and the need for accurate information dissemination in the digital age. The examination of the bas-relief's technical aspects, historical context, and architectural features aimed to deepen the understanding of this significant cultural artifact.

This conference reflects the dedication of Iranian scholars, institutions, and museums to promoting meticulous research practices and fostering cross-disciplinary cooperation, contributing to the preservation and appreciation of the nation's rich cultural heritage.



# Tracing roots of curses engraved in epitaphs

Arts & Culture Desk

Inscriptions of curses, known as "accursed epitaphs," have seemingly appeared throughout various historical eras and across the globe. Beyond these epitaphs, the words of malediction have also been used in the endings of many books, dissertations, and even talismans. It seems that curses have always been a potent tool for reinforcement and obedience, deeply ingrained in the beliefs of people. From the time people embraced prayer, curses also found their prevalence. They often serve as conditional statements to fulfill commands, contracts, preserving inscriptions, protecting the name of kings, deterring demolition and looting, or expressing hostility.

Morteza Rezvanfar

vanfar, a member of the academic faculty at the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute, spoke to ISNA about the roots of curses in history, saying, "Curses and prayers share a common origin, with curses being a negative form of prayer. Both draw upon supernatural forces to achieve a desired outcome. It could be for the betterment of the recipient, seeking benevolence, or, conversely, seeking harm and malevolence against them. Even in the Persian language, 'prayer' is called 'afarin,' which, by replacing the initial 'a' with 'n,' and receiving some modification it becomes 'nefreen' (curse)." According to historical documents, humans have often turned to supernatural forces, including the highest powers like God, to invoke curses and designate them as overseers or agents for fulfilling malevolent wishes. For

instance, "May his lineage be eradicated beneath the sun," or phrases like "May God or the gods curse him." It was even believed that when curses were inscribed on epitaphs addressed to the most powerful entities like kings and rulers, they proved to be more effective.

The recipients of curses on epitaphs are usually individuals considered responsible for wrongdoing, and in some cases, these curses extend to their children, families, or tribes. Some curses are worldly, wishing for harm to health, extinction of descendants, or destruction. In other cases, curses target the afterlife and the future life of the individual.

It is interesting to note that in the Middle Persian period (Pahlavi era), apart from books and texts, curses were not seen on epitaphs, but they resurfaced again later.

The traces of curses can

be observed in many parts of the world, as they have always been effective tools for motivation or prevention. In Iran, too, examples of these curses have been interpreted by experts from the Elamite and Achaemenid periods. For instance, the inscriptions on the Elamite ziggurat of Chogha Zanbil in Khuzestan Province read: "May the curses of the gods be upon him, and may he have no offspring under the sun." Similarly, in the Darius inscription at Bisotun, the destroyer of the inscriptions and sculptures is warned: "Ahura Mazda may hurt you, and he may destroy whatever you do."

Rezvanfar illustrated some of the curses inscribed on Persian epitaphs outside of Iran, citing examples such as:

An inscription from a mosque in Bangladesh: "Whoever destroys this mosque, if he is a Muslim,

may he consume forbidden food; if he is Hindu, may he eat beef, and whoever keeps this edifice safe, may he have a high place." An epitaph from the mosque of Baku, Azerbaijan, offering tax reduction: "May the person who modifies the mentioned reduction be cursed by divine wrath and may he face the malediction of the refuge of the message."

An inscription from a school in Derbent, Russia: "Henceforth, if anyone usurps, may God's curse be upon him in abundance."

The history and wide geographic distribution of curses in epitaphs underscore their enduring potency as a compelling tool for motivation or deterrence. From ancient times to the present day, the legacy of curses on epitaphs continues to leave its mark across diverse cultures worldwide.

