

Renovation project underway in Naseri Palace of Alborz Province



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A project is underway to refurbish Naseri Palace, dating back to the Qajar era, in Shahrestanak village of Alborz Province, said the head of the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

Rahim Khaki told ISNA that most obstacles hindering the implementation of the project, including lack of cooperation by local people, have been removed.

He said the project is being implemented at an acceptable speed, adding that the problem of supplying gas to the complex has been solved as well.

The official added that the dossiers for the registration of six intangible cultural heritages of the province have been prepared and handed over to the Cultural



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Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry.

He noted that Alborz Province, with a rich treasure of tangible and intangible cultural heritages, can prepare such dossiers for many years. Khaki said that the eighth phase of the archaeological excavation has been launched in Uzbek Hill in Nazarabad,

pointing out that the results of these studies would definitely help uncover the history behind the region.

"The results of the seventh phase of excavation will be published in two books," he said.

The official noted that continuing the implementation of excavation projects is a

prerequisite for global registration of Uzbek Hill, adding a number of infrastructures should be created in the area as well.

"We are trying to receive a permit for turning the area into a museum site and a meeting will be held in this regard with related officials in the near future," he con-

cluded.

Nazarabad is a town in Alborz Province, in which this historically important site is located. Uzbek Hill is an old hill, with a peak of 26 meters, which was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 1973. In an area of 100 hectares, the historical site is one of the most valuable in the world, such that it has been deemed worthy that it be registered on UNESCO's World Heritage Site.

The 9,000-year-old site was home to villagers who, for the first time, used handmade raw clay, as well as cement, as construction materials.

Archeologists believe that at that time no other group of rural and urban people made raw clay from water and soil, and the cement was not used in any other structure of the world.

White Bridge, symbol of Ahvaz



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The White Bridge of Ahvaz (known in Persian as Pol-e Sefid) in the southern province of Khuzestan is considered a symbol of the city.

One of the oldest in Iran, the bridge was built over the Karun River to facilitate passage be-

tween the two parts of the city.

The White Bridge, with a height of 13 meters above the river, is 501m long and 9.8m wide, chn.ir reported.

At first glance what attracts everyone's attention is the white color of the bridge.

Ahvaz is divided into

two sections: the eastern part, hosting the most number of factories and offices affiliated with the oil and steel industry, and the western part, comprising the city's residential districts. The White Bridge connects these two parts to one another.

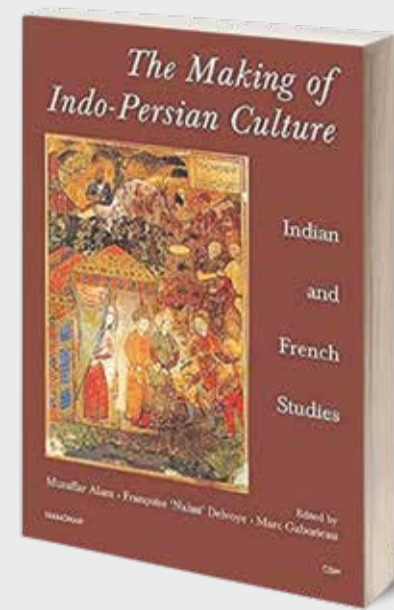
In the past, light vehi-

cles, people and cattle passed over the White Bridge, which is presently a one-way passage used by pedestrians and vehicles. It is also ranked eighth on the list of the largest suspension bridges in the Middle East.

The bridge was built by a German engineer

and his wife in the early 1900s. The engineer died after raising one of the two arches of the bridge; his wife completed the project in 1937.

The bridge was renovated in 2011, when light fixtures were added to it, and was registered as a National Heritage Site in the year 2000.



Formation of Indo-Persian culture

The making of Indo-Persian culture is closely connected with the establishment and the spread of Islam in northern Indian plains. Islam came to India in two ways. An older mode, in the longue duree, is the intermittent arrival of Muslims on the western and southern coasts of India close on the heels of the developments following the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Except for the conquerors of the province of Sind (now in Pakistan) in 711, these first Muslim settlers were peaceful merchants; they were mostly Arabs and their contact with India could indeed be traced back to the pre-Islamic period. They were the ancestors of some of the Muslim communities in south India, notably in Kerala and in Tamil Nadu; adherents of the Shafi school of law. They developed a culture which even when couched in Tamil or Malayalam remained grounded in Arabic models. They always looked to Arabia and other Arab lands for inspiration.

But from the eleventh century onwards a new wave of Muslims arrived, not from the sea, but overland through the passes of Afghanistan. They were not Arabs, but Turks steeped in Persian culture. Although Turkish sporadically remained the spoken language of the ruling families till the eighteenth century, Turkish culture never really developed in India. It was the Persian culture which flourished in Ajam that took root in India, and remained dominant—down to the nineteenth century, well into the British period. In fact more Persian literature was produced in India than in Central Asia and even in Iran proper during this period. It is this Persian culture acclimatized to the Indian environment which came to be known as Indo-Persian culture.

The formation of this culture went through several phases. The first one took nourishment with the rise of the Ghaznavids

and later the Ghurids around the north-west borders of India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even though India had had contact with Persia at the time of the Samanids of Bokhara. Based in Ghazni in Afghanistan, the Ghaznavids had become the most powerful Sultans in the eastern lands of the Baghdad caliphate; they extended their rule to north-west India down to Lahore which became their second capital in 1022, and a major centre of Persian culture. The early Ghaznavids had at one time patronized the famous epic poet Ferdowsi (940-1020 CE), who along with other major poets patronized by them, inspired the early Indo-Persian poets of Lahore.

Among them Abul Faraj Runi (died 1091) and Mas'ud Sadiq Salman (died in 1131) deserve special notice. Not only were they great poets, but they served as models later in the entire Persian world.

The same dynasty also had in Abu'l-Faql Bayhaqi, the first great historian writing in Persian. This area under the two dynasties produced a large number of Persian poets and Persian writers whose works have been noticed by later anthologists. Thus the Indo-Persian culture was undoubtedly founded as early as the eleventh century in Ghaznavid Punjab and its neighbourhood. However, it is only in the following phase of the period of the unified Delhi Sultanate, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that the Indo-Persian culture, as we know it, matured. At that time, Persianized Turkish dynasties were supreme not only in the Islamic world but in India also.

The successive dynasties of Delhi Sultans, being in constant contact with Iran and Central Asia, patronized the development of a local Persian culture. This period saw the beginning of a tradition of writing history in Persian which was to continue well into the British period.

The above is a lightly edited version of part of the first chapter of a book entitled "The Making of Indo-Persian Culture", edited by Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau, published by Centre De Sciences Humaines.