

Namin Museum, a gateway to the past

Iranica Desk

Museums are like a mirror of the culture and history of each region. When we travel to a new city or area, there is a possibility that there is a museum that can give us an understanding of its past and present, taking us on a journey beyond the dimensions of time and space.

Museums may appear to only host pieces of objects, tools, and documents that are older compared to today. However, museums are in fact a language of history, and they can narrate the passage of time and everything that has happened to humanity through a silent language, chtn.ir wrote.

The existence of a museum can serve as a medium for a city, becoming an important choice for tourists and even locals to visit and delve into the captivating world of history and culture. Namin Museum, in Ardebil, is situated in the heart of the city, within a magnificent historical structure known as Saarem al-Saltaneh House. After a temporary closure, the museum reopened in July of this year and is all set to

welcome the public.

It is a city with a rich cultural heritage and culture-loving people, which happens to attract tourists due to its natural beauty and climate. The mind-boggling Heyran Pass, the lush Fandoqlu Forest, the mesmerizing Sooha Lake, and countless breathtaking natural landscapes alongside its historical and ancient landmarks, have turned Namin into an ideal choice for travel and exploration. Namin Museum can also be an important addition to all the attractions of this area.

Director General of the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization,

Hassan Mohammadi Adib, said that Namin Museum was temporarily closed due to a lack of human resources. However, thanks to the coordinated efforts and support of the municipality and the city's Islamic City Council, the museum's objects have been successfully returned.

Several historical buildings surround the main square of the city, showcasing themselves very proudly. Alongside the majestic Grand Mosque and the city's bustling ancient bazaar, there stands the most eye-catching monument: Saarem al-Saltaneh House. This iconic structure was officially recognized as a national heritage site in the year 2000. After undergoing an extensive restoration



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project, the building was enthusiastically opened as the Namin Museum in 2009, inviting the public to explore its captivating history and treasures.

This historical house, dating back to the Qajar period, belonged to Mir Kazem Khan Saarem al-Saltaneh, who was the ruler of the region. He established his governance in the pleasant and climatically favorable region of Namin and had this building built.

Currently, a portion of this historical house is being used by Namin's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department as an administrative office. The majority of the structure comprises halls and rooms on two floors, especially designated for exhibiting museum artifacts. Malakeh Golmaghani-zadeh, an official from

Ardebil Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, who oversees museum management, said that on the first floor, a hall is dedicated to showcasing prehistoric and historical artifacts, while a neighboring room introduces Islamic period objects. This section also displays paintings donated by the local culture enthusiasts. On the museum's second floor, the central hall is devoted to a diverse collection of handicrafts dating from the Qajar period to the modern era. Additionally, there are two adjacent rooms designated for ethnographic objects. In these sections, several donated items from the people of Namin are on display.

Visiting this museum, located in one of the most beautiful historical houses of Ardebil Province, is like a journey to the heart of history.

Competition and collaboration between Roman and Sassanid empires

Extending the length and breadth of the globe, the variety of regions and peoples that played a role in the Roman and Sassanid empires' struggles demonstrates how the field of competition, as well as the empires' knowledge of the world, expanded exponentially. Several peoples who lived in the border areas or strategic military or commercial locations, or who had established themselves as participants in international trade, were instrumental in mediating both economic and cultural goods between the two realms. Armenian and Syriac speakers lived on both sides of the frontier and, when left unmolested by the two great powers, lived as though nothing divided them.

Until they were destroyed by or incorporated into the Roman or Sassanid Empire, the independent merchant cities of Palmyra and Hatra functioned as engines of exchange as well as sites of conflict between the empires in the third century. Cults of Christian martyrs originating in Syria and Mesopotamia gained adherents in both empires whose backgrounds extended well beyond the original Syriac-speaking population, even into the courts.

Indeed, the Syrian Sergius could count no less than the Roman emperor Justinian I and the Sassanid king Kosrow II as donors, with several records of Kosrow II's rich offerings and the church of

Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople standing as testaments to the frontier saint's cross-cultural appeal. Armenia played an especially important and constant role in facilitating exchange between the two realms, and its elites were politically and culturally adept at operating in both the Roman and the Iranian cultural spheres. While not partitioned as starkly as Armenia, the kingdom of Lazika too passed between Roman and Sassanid spheres of influence. Because its kings were integrated into both court hierarchies, at times even concurrently, the Laz transmitted several royal practices and attributes between the two realms through the travels of their kings.

From what is known about the Sassanid court, it is clear that the sons of vassal kings resided at court, participated in royal activities with the king, and were integrated into the court's ritual life as well.

Farther south the Arab Lakhmids and Ghassanids were responsible for starting, as well as fighting in, many Roman-Sassanid conflicts, especially in the sixth century. Not surprisingly, the Lakhmid and Ghassanid rulers were well integrated into the two court hierarchies and appropriated diverse aspects of their court cultures. Although situated on the empires' peripheries, the kingdom of Aksum in east Africa

and the rulers of Hadramawt in the southern Arabian peninsula received the attention of both powers from the mid-third through the seventh century. Given these regions' ability to control the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade and, in the case of Hadramawt, a possible route of invasion into Iran, the Roman and Sassanid courts expended a great deal of diplomatic and monetary resources in both.

While the Sassanids were ultimately more successful, incorporating the rulers of the south Arabian kingdoms of Himyar, Saba, and Hadramawt into their courtly hierarchy by the reign of Shapur II, the Romans continued to use Christian missionary work and enthronement of bishops as an imperial tool in attempting to gain a foothold in the region through the fifth century.

In the sixth century the Christian Aksumites and Jewish Himyarites fought several proxy wars on behalf of the Romans and Persians for control of the Arabian Peninsula.

Settled Central Asian peoples such as the Sogdians, and nomadic powers such as the Avars, Huns, Chionites, Hephthalites, Khazars, and the first Turk steppe empire, became involved in the affairs of both empires. As they became embroiled in Roman-Sassanid conflicts, these steppe peoples extended the field of contact as well as rivalry between the



two realms into Central Asia in mercantile, diplomatic, and military spheres alike. The Sogdians, an eastern Iranian people, were an especially important catalyst in this process.

This merchant people established trading colonies emanating from their homeland in Transoxiana throughout the length of the Silk Road, from the Crimea to China, and were responsible for mediating goods, motifs, and religions between Rome and Iran, not to mention Europe and Asia.

In addition, Sogdians played an important diplomatic role in the Turk steppe empire in dealings with Sassanid Iran

and China and in serving this third power provided yet another indirect avenue of communication between the Roman and Sassanid worlds.

The collaborative aspect of the Roman-Sassanid relationship was most readily apparent in relation to the invasions of nomadic steppe peoples. Though both attempted to play these tribes off each other, they at times mutually portrayed each other as strongholds of civilization in the face of the pressures of the nomadic peoples, who humiliated and shook both realms several times over.