

Oldest plaster furnace unearthed in Western Iran



Arts & Culture Desk

ISNA – Archaeologists at the Chogha Golan site in Iran's western province of Ilam discovered the country's oldest plaster furnace. The Chogha Golan archaeological site in the Mehran district is renowned for having the most settlements, dating back to the Neolithic era.

Despite its significance, research on the Neolithic transition and the beginning of agriculture and settlements in Iran has received comparatively little attention compared to neighboring Western Asian countries.

Archaeologists argue that extensive and long-term excavations not only provide invaluable information into the nature of human arrival into the Neolithic world in the Zagros Mountains but also establish a foundation for preventing further destruction through protective measures.

The archaeological exploration of Chogha Golan began in mid-October 2023, led by Hojjat Darabi, an associate professor of archaeology at Razi University in Kermanshah.

Regarding the latest findings from the first season of the Chogha Golan excavation, Darabi stated that significant discoveries have been made regarding architectural structures, residential and ritual spaces, as well as industrial structures at the site.

Darabi also proposed the establishment of a site-museum and archaeological park at Chogha Golan as one of the ideas and goals of the excavation program.

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Address: #22, Hosseini-Rad Alley, South of Shahid Motahari St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran, Iran
● Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 88913453
● Editorial Dept. Fax: +98 21 88930684
● ICPI Publisher: +98 21 88548892, 5
● Advertising Dept. Tel: +98 21 88500617
● Email: irandaily@iranagahiha.com
www.irandaily.ir
newspaper.irandaily.ir
irandaily@icpi.ir
Iran Cultural & Press Institute



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Official: Foreign arrivals in Iran increased 40% in seven months

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Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced a significant 40 percent increase in foreign tourist arrivals to Iran during the first seven months of the current Iranian year (started on March 21, 2023) compared to the same period last year. Speaking at an event in Shiraz, Ali Asghar Shalbfanian emphasized the need to promote the country's tourism potential and focus on attracting visitors from neighboring countries.

Shalbfanian expressed optimism about the government's plans to facilitate the travel of foreign tourists by car, referring to successful outcomes with Iraq and Turkey.

Additionally, arrangements are in progress to extend this to Armenia in the near future, allowing tourists from these countries to travel to Iran with their personal vehicles.

The deputy minister also talked about the extensive tourism and accommodation projects underway across the country, with over 2,500

projects totaling an investment of more than \$7.4 billion.

Fars Province has 187 projects, including the construction of three five-star hotels and five four-star hotels, which are set to open in the near future.

One of the investment plans is to encourage having multiple usages for tourism areas, Shalbfanian noted.

He stressed the importance of coordination with cultural heritage, tourism, and handicraft authorities at the provincial level.

Speaking about the Iranian

diaspora's potential, Shalbfanian outlined plans to identify Iranians abroad from each province and use their capacities for investment.

He added that provinces of Bushehr, Fars, East Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Khorasan Razavi, and Mazandaran have so far effectively used the investment potential of Iranians abroad in the tourism sector.

In the past two years, the

country attracted \$291 million in foreign investments in tourism.

Iranians living abroad contributed to some of these projects, demonstrating a tenfold growth compared to 2012.

He emphasized the need to strengthen this trend and get the most out of the interest of Iranians abroad for investment in the tourism sector.



Formation of popular music in Iran



By Hamideh Hosseini
Staff writer

The evolution of popular music in Iran is a interesting journey shaped by many social, historical, and political events. Like music worldwide, Iran's musical landscape has diverse styles and genres, each with its unique characteristics formed over time.

These genres are not merely products of natural genius but rather several historical factors, portraying the complexity of artistic evolution.

With its rich social roots and historical tapestry, Iran has experienced significant influence from Western art and modernity, notably during the reign of Nassereddin Shah, the Constitutional Revolution, and the era of Pahlavi II, according to a report published

by Asriran news website.

The political-social conditions of the region also played a crucial role in the formation of various music genres. Instances of national upheavals and bravery among the Iranian people encouraged the creation of hymns and songs that resonated with popular uprisings. A notable genre that emerged from this historical backdrop is popular music, which basically takes its title from the existence of its fans. 'Emergence of Popular Music in Iran,' by renowned ethnomusicologist Sassan Fatemi, explores this genre's evolution over different periods, drawing distinctions between "folk" and "popular." Fatemi's classification into three categories—classical music, folk, and popular music—facilitates a clearer understanding of audio productions and music producers.

The book explores the concept of "tasnif," a light music style, elucidating its role in radio, media, and commercial music. Fatemi categorizes "tasnif" as a kind of popular music with short, light, and accessible songs, often with dance rhythms suitable for various occasions, not necessarily made for celebrations, but widely used in

celebrations. In the first chapter, the author discusses the historical roots of "tasnif," highlighting its evolution from court-related compositions to politically charged pieces during the Qajar era.

During the Qajar period, the Westernization of kings marked a significant shift in Iranian music, as exposure to Western cultures influenced the local musical landscape. Western culture was considered superior, resulting in a substantial one-way influence on Iranian music.

"The dominant mindset in the intellectual atmosphere is characterized by progressive and rationalist thought. It consistently draws comparisons between the Iranian society and its historical path with its European counterparts, aiming to distinguish the factors contributing to its decline. This approach involves examining nearly every aspect of traditional life. Behaviors and ideas differing from Western norms are viewed as primary factors for the nation's misfortunes, thus becoming subjects of severe criticism."

The book notes the transformation of "Tasnif-e taghazzoli," (translated as lyrical compositions) a light urban music style in

the Nassereri period, into politically charged or protest tasnifs, reflecting the feelings of the common people. The Pahlavi era saw tasnifs adapting to radio and media formats, influenced by complex compositions and Western styles. However, the 1979 Islamic Revolution led to a return to traditional Iranian music under the influence of the Music Preservation and Promotion Center.

The book's final chapter explores the musical quality of popular works, emphasizing the role of the economy and media in the genre's growth, echoing the perspectives of Theodor W. Adorno and Richard Middleton.

This book provides valuable insights into the history and development of popular music in Iran, particularly through the lens of the tasnif. It sheds light on the intricate interplay between cultural shifts, political events, and the evolving tastes of the audience, offering a comprehensive examination of this musical genre. Nevertheless, the book highlights the commercialization of Iranian music, emphasizing the need for balance between commercial success and the enhancement of public musical preferences.



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