

Hastijan Cave's heritages at risk



Iranica Desk

The Hastijan Cave, located in a village with the same name in Markazi Province, has captured the attention of archaeologists worldwide. While the discovery of new artifacts from this historical site brings joy to heritage enthusiasts, the unfortunate looting that has taken place in the cave has cast a shadow on its significance. As a result, Hastijan Cave is now considered an

endangered heritage site, with its inscriptions and seals having been looted and taken out of Iran, marking a tragic loss for the country's cultural heritage. This ancient cave, which dates back millions of years and exhibits no signs of recent human activity, remained largely unnoticed until a language expert abroad discovered valuable leather inscriptions. Among the discoveries within the cave are a significant collection of fabrics,

wooden tools, leather remnants, and 11 pieces of intact leather inscriptions. Notably, one of these inscriptions is a private letter from the late Sassanid era, or the beginning of the Islamic era, believed to have originated from the region between Qom and Kashan. This particular artifact sheds light on the prevalence of literacy and writing among the people of Iran in that time, offering valuable insight into the region's historical heritage.

The discovery of artifacts in Hastijan Cave by Nima Asafi, a Ph.D. student in ancient languages, has brought attention to the region's historical significance. However, the cave has been subject to unauthorized excavation for almost 70 years, resulting in the loss of many valuable artifacts. Efforts should be made to recover these assets and ensure the national registration of the cave to protect it from further harm.

Recently, archaeologist Mohammad Reza Nemati conducted excavations in the cave and noted the challenges faced, including a nine-meter rock wall and the presence of large rocks that had to be moved with pickaxes. The cave's dry and undisturbed condition indicates that it has not been accessed in years, highlighting the urgency of protecting and preserving its historical significance. Nemati explained, "The discovery of an ancient reed pen that

dates back 1,400 years is very important for us. We also obtained a large amount of animal bones." "Nearly 70 years of unauthorized excavation has been done in this cave. These findings are a small part of the objects that have been taken out of the country. During the excavation, I talked to different people and came to the conclusion that many artifacts have been taken out. Thus we need to take action to return these assets to Iran."

Qazvin, city of historical gems



↑ Salehieh School
● IRNA



↑ Darb-e Koushk Gate
● IRNA

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Once upon a time the city of Qazvin, the capital of the north-central province of Qazvin, had 250 entrance gates, of which four remain and two are still in use. The Darb-e Koushk Gate, situated in a neighborhood with the same name, was an entrance to the first industrial township of Iran, separating flour, textile, and oil

extraction factories, as stated by Mohammad Hassan Soleymani, a history researcher. He added that in front of Koushk's gate was the Kaleskeh Khaneh Mansion, belonging to Haj Abulqassem Razavi, the owner of the flour factory. The combination of mosque and school was prevalent during the Qajar period, and Qazvin is no exception. The Salehieh School, built on three floors, holds great

historical importance. The school, which is still in operation, has 27 rooms, in which eight classes are held in two shifts. Established 191 years ago, this school was among the largest scientific centers of the country during the Qajar era. Established by Molla Mohammad Saleh Barghani, the school played a very important role in the scientific development of Qazvin. In its

heyday, Salehieh was the most important philosophy school in Qazvin, and one of the first academic centers where both men and women studied. Spanning an area of 4,000 square meters, the three-floor building was very prosperous until the Constitution era. The building was abandoned during the Pahlavi era until the 1960s, when Seyyed Hassan Mousavi Shali

made extensive efforts to revive it. The monument underwent a complete renovation in the 2000s as well. There is an old house on Mulavi Street, surrounded by an iron fence. It is a captivating monument, based on the Qajar architectural style. The monument has been renovated thanks to the efforts of its current owner, Hassan Alavi Shir Khorshidi. This is a

house with a *shahneshin* (a large room decorated with colorful glasses, delicate mirror works, and beautiful tiling), a *korsi khaneh* (a room housing a traditional low table with a heater underneath it), and a small pool in its basement. In the middle of its courtyard, there is a turquoise pool adorned with flower vases, and around the courtyard you can see cherry trees.