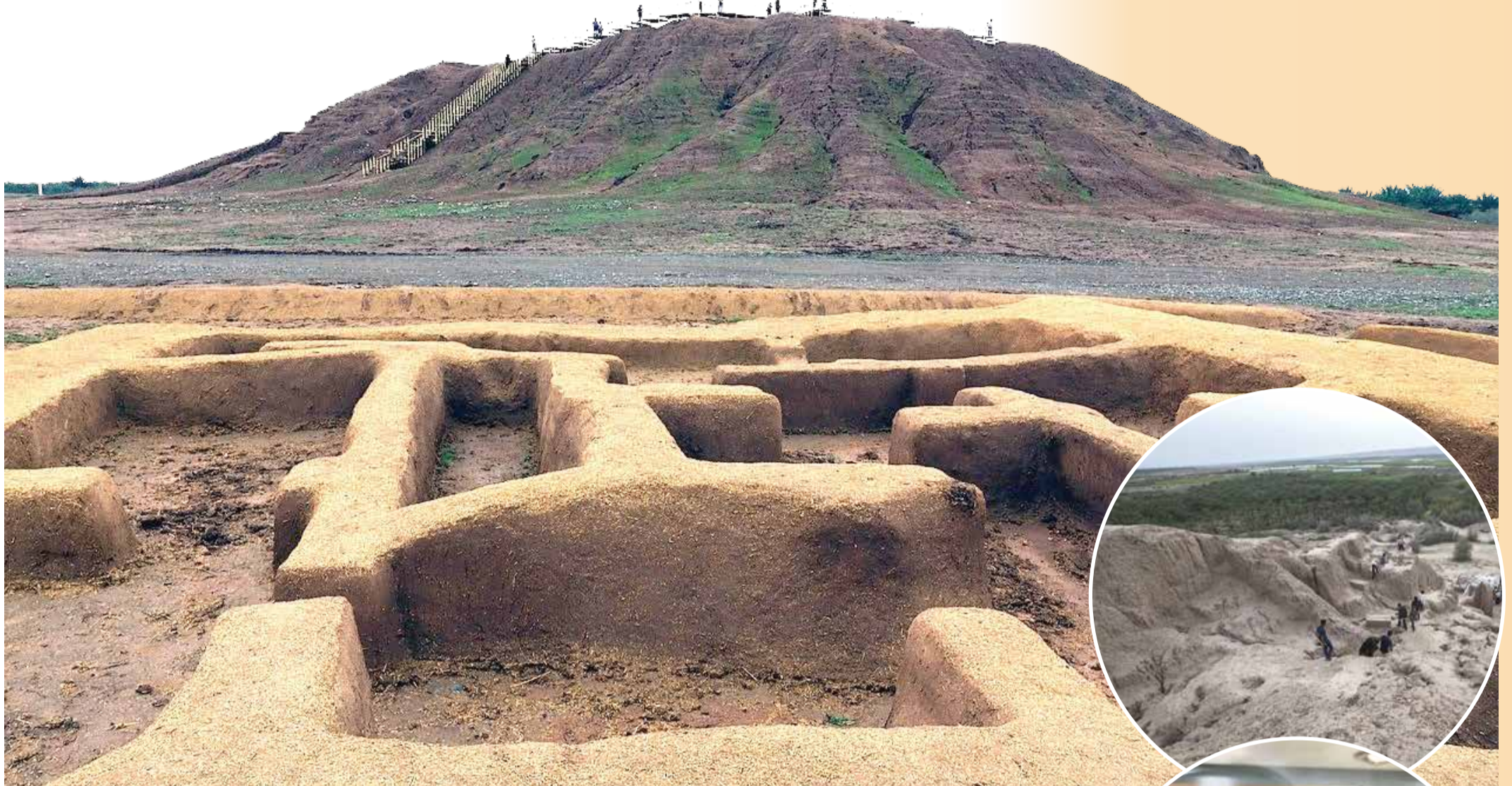


# Preserving ancient legacy of Konar Sandal in Kerman Province



## Iranica Desk

The Cultural Heritage Organization of Kerman Province announced at the end of last December, after 15 years, that excavations at the ancient archeological site of Konar Sandal in Jiroft, Kerman Province, would begin. However, the head of the excavation team recently stated that the extensive destruction in the area has forced them to prioritize restoration efforts before proceeding with further excavations. The history of this ancient area, located near the city of Jiroft in southern Kerman Province, dates back 4,600 years and holds significant cultural heritage value. Despite its historical significance, Jiroft was relatively unknown in terms of archaeology until 2001, when it suddenly became one of the most important archeological sites in West Asia.

## Restoration and protection efforts

According to Youssef Majidzadeh, the head of the first excavation team at Konar Sandal, the available documents, the richness of its artworks, and their quantity and quality indicate that the Halil Rud area, where Konar Sandal is located, was the largest industrial-commercial center in the ancient East in the early third millennium BCE, specializing in the production and export of goods made from various types of soapstone and marble.

## Excavation plans

Seyed Mansour Sajjadi, the head of the current excavation team in the area, told IRNA that most of the excavated sites at Konar Sandal used few stones and metals, while materials like brick and clay were employed more. If not addressed, these structures would be damaged by weather changes, wind, and rain. He emphasized that these areas have not been attended to for 15 years, leading to more severe destruction. Timely restoration of any damaged walls or structures will not only cost less but also prevent the destruction of other parts.

Highlighting their focus, Sajjadi noted, "Our priority in Konar Sandal is restoration and protection of the ancient structures."

He mentioned that they have commenced work on the five most critical areas and have completed initial cleaning.

He also mentioned, "Next year, we aim to conduct excavations alongside restoration

efforts. We are carrying excavations in a few areas and have allocated additional funds for restoration."

## Reconstruction of bas-reliefs and structures

He said that one of the team members is currently reconstructing a bas-relief, which was not properly maintained. The bas-reliefs, most of which has been destroyed, is actually an image on a brick that remained half-buried during the excavation. This brick relief, dating back approximately 4,500 years, depicts a man with a patterned skirt, with folded hands against the chest. The skirt of this statue is decorated with black and red colors in lozenge shapes, and its upper part is covered in yellow color.

Sajjadi added, "The western part of the southern Konar Sandal Hill, which we believe was the entrance gate of the site and referred to as the temple, had a tower and a bas-relief. He mentioned that the wall that was found during the excavation after 2001 was promptly restored and is still intact. Part of the project is focused on its tower and entrance chambers, which have been destroyed.

He stated: "We also want to renovate a residential building that could be an example of the houses of the people of Konar Sandal at that time."

Three excavation workshops are currently engaged in exploratory activities to gain insight into existing structures and provide valuable information for planning extensive excavation next year.

## Historical artifacts

He noted that a cow figurine and a metal nail have been unearthed, which hold less significance compared to previous finds. These items are valuable primarily from a technical and scientific perspective.

Sajjadi emphasized, "Our goal is not merely to uncover objects, but rather to discover the roots of civilization and culture in this region, and understand the communication networks, people's lives, societal management, and the evolution of their cities."

He said: "The peak of prosperity of this site, which was also connected to the ancient world at that time, dates back to around 4,400 to 4,600 years ago. A part of the region also dates back to 2,000 to 2,300 years BCE, which is about 4,000 to 4,300 years ago, and it was during this time that many objects were pro-

duced.

He continued: "Based on the findings in the Mahtutabad Cemetery, despite the looting, a series of documents and objects such as bones were found, which the archeologists were able to identify as evidence of an even older history, dating back approximately 6,000 years or the 4th millennium BCE.

Mahtutabad is located 30 kilometers south of Jiroft, and 800 meters east of the Konar Sandal. Due to unauthorized excavations and looting of ancient artifacts, few traces remain for archaeological excavations.

The archaeologist added there are usually small villages that gradually grow and prosper. The development and transformation from a small village to a large city like Konar Sandal is a process that spans thousands of years.

He said that Baft in Kerman Province, hosting the ancient Yahya Hill, was a village, but Konar Sandal was a large city.

He also referred to the antiquity of the tablets and their inscriptions, saying, "The tablets which are single-language have not been deciphered yet. However, other tablets may be found and read helping these tablets to be deciphered."

## Wealth and prosperity

He emphasized that the difference between Konar Sandal and all its contemporary sites is its immense wealth. The people of Konar Sandal put all their wealth and valuable objects inside graves, thus outside of the graves nothing is found except for pottery shards, broken stones, and broken beads.

The abundance of wealth indicates that its inhabitants were rich, and this helped the art and industry of the region to make significant progress.

Seyed Sajjadi recalled that another reason for the existence of civilization and prosperity in the region is the presence of various mines.

## Collaboration for cultural heritage protection

He said that although the Cultural Heritage Organization of the province is making great efforts, it is not enough, and all institutions, even private entities, must contribute to the protection of cultural heritage.

"If we want the civilization of Jiroft and the Konar Sandal to be registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, everyone must cooperate," he concluded.

● wikipedia.org



● IRNA