



Iran's Marashi Library to study Armenian manuscripts



The Ayatollah Marashi Najafi Library in Iran's Qom will start studying Armenian manuscripts as part of cooperation with Yerevan's Matenadaran.

A Matenadaran delegation recently visited the Ayatollah Marashi Najafi Library, the world's third largest Islamic library, and was received by the library's director Mahmoud Marashi Najafi, the son of its founder Ayatollah Marashi Najafi, armenpress.am reported.

During the meeting, the sides emphasized "the importance and willingness for cooperation, which will begin with the studies of Armenian manuscripts kept at the center," the Matenadaran Institute of Ancient Manuscripts said in a statement.



Over 5m foreign tourists visit Iran in 11-month period: UNWTO

The World Tourism Organization of the United Nations in its latest report said more than five million foreign tourists visited Iran in the first 11 months of 2023, registering a 42 percent growth compared to the same period a year earlier.

The international tourism body in a report revealed a boom in Iran's tourism industry in 2023, Tasnim news agency reported.

The report added that over 3.74 million foreign tourists had visited Iran from January to November 2022 and the number rose to more than 5 million in the first 11 months of 2023. The 42% growth in the arrival of foreign tourists to Iran in 2023 came as Iran's tourism industry experienced a significant slump during the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Only 880,000 foreign tourists had visited Iran in 2021, but the number grew to 4.11 million in 2022.

Cemetery dating back to Ilkhanid era discovered in NW Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Archaeologists uncovered a cemetery dating back to the Ilkhanid period in Iran's northwestern city of Zanjan.

The discovery, made during a rescue excavation at the Marash Dam reservoir in Maneshan County,

revealed the remains of four individuals buried on a gypsum floor. The burials, believed to be placed inside wooden coffins based on evidence such as wood remains, nails, and corroded metal fittings, are part of an octagonal structure (possibly a tomb) and surrounding graveyard likely from the Ilkhanid era, according to artifacts like pottery and glazed bricks.

Shaghayegh Hoorshid, head of the archaeological team, reported that the excavation, began in the winter of 2014, focused on the No. 5 area of the Marash Dam reservoir. Hoorshid explained that the recent excavation at Area No. 5, conducted four years after the initial exploration, uncovered the remains of a stone and gypsum cemetery. The team also identified two large waste pits associated with a pottery kiln, containing over 16,000 pottery fragments, many of which were burnt, melted, and reshaped.

The ongoing salvage excavations, managed by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism, aim to reveal more about the historical significance of the site, providing insights into the Ilkhanid period and other ancient eras present in the region.

Traditions and ethics of Iranian chivalry never die



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

Khosro Abar, a 61-year-old man, stands out as one of the people who are known as *Lutis* embodying a tradition of Iranian chivalry, endured for nearly a century. In a society where *Lutis* once held influence during the Qajar Era (1796 to 1925) and were recognized for their strength and presence, Khosro proudly gets dressed in the *Luti* attire, aiming to convey the true meaning of this term to the people.

The term "*Luti*" generally refers to a group of men and champions during the Qajar era who frequented *Zurkhanehs* (the ancient Iranian house of strength, is a unique and traditional venue for physical fitness and spiritual cultivation). *Lutis* were respected for their strength and athleticism, wearing distinctive attire consisting of a chapeau, black coat and trousers, white-colored shirts, and patent leather shoes. Their appearance featured a rugged face, and broad-shouldered physique. These people adorned themselves with Yazdi scarves around their wrists, large prayer beads, ring with agate

stones, and carried Zanjan knives and Kashan chains in their pockets or on their waistbands. While some viewed *Lutis* as popular champions, others saw them as troublemakers and villains. In reality, they adopted unique approaches and attitudes in their interactions with society and cultural matters, portraying themselves as individuals with contradictory personalities so that in old Tehran, some even referred to them as ignorant. Yet, among *Lutis*, there were those known for their gallantry. They adhered to ethical values, principles of decency, and courageously defended the weak against oppressors. Perhaps due to these characteristics, they can be considered the *Ayyaran* (vagabonds) of their time who had a tradition of assisting the needy people even before *Lutis* existed. They distributed confiscated possessions of perceived oppressors among the poor, resembling, in a Western context, figures like Robin Hood. Reflecting on his father's influence, Abar said, "I embraced the *Luti* attire, just like my father did." Khosro hails from a family of *Lutis*, expressing his passion for painting in the style of teahouse art, illustrating stories from the 'Shahnameh'

and religious events. In addition to his artistic pursuits, Khosro has been engaged in acting, participating in various theaters and TV series. Recalling his father, Khosro says, "My father came to Tehran in the early 1940s and settled in the Javadiyeh neighborhood. He worked in a grocery store and was known for his generosity, helping everyone in the community. He wore *Luti* attire - a white shirt, scarf, black coat and trousers." Khosro reflects on the simplicity and intimacy of people's lives in the past, stating, "Respect, courtesy, and modesty were more prevalent among people in the past. Children showed more respect to their elders. If someone had financial difficulties, neighbors would step in and be aware of each other's well-being. There was so much kindness among people. Life was more comfortable because people did not keep up with the Joneses. We ate very simple Iranian foods. Maybe on weekends or special occasions, we'd have *Qormeh sabzi* (a traditional Persian stew) or *Abgoosht* (rich lamb stew with legumes, tomatoes and potatoes).

But despite the hardships and simplicity, we were happy." Discussing the sacredness of the *Luti* hat, Khosro emphasizes the significance of not wearing the hat casually. He shares an anecdote about meeting a renowned *Luti*, Pahlevan Vali, who invited him to a gathering, where he was bestowed with the symbolic *Luti* hat. Khosro underscores the respect associated with dressing in the *Luti* attire, expressing concern about the misinterpretation of *Luti* people in contemporary culture. Addressing the misconception, Khosro clarifies, "The concept of *Luti* is not exclusive to Iran. The term may be used to describe some individuals in Iran, particularly in Tehran. However, it is a cultural concept that transcends a specific region. Even characters like Robin Hood could be considered *Lutis* based on their attributes. My goal is to revive and introduce the true values of *Luti* people by showcasing their integrity and principles. I've tried to instill these values in my own daughters, who, inspired by my behavior, wear *Luti* attire with respect and courtesy."

