

# Bahabad, a remote paradise in Yazd Province



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## Iranica Desk

Bahabad is situated in the east of Yazd Province, 200 kilometers away from the city of Yazd and 80 kilometers from the city of Bafq. It is nestled on a hill between two mountain ranges, bordered by Ardakan to the north, Bafq to the west and southwest, Tabas and Lut Desert to the east, and Kerman Province to the south. Bahabad experiences a semi-arid climate with an average annual rainfall of 9.153 millimeters. The western and southern parts offer mountainous and pleasant climates, attracting visitors for relaxation and leisure during the spring and summer seasons, irrespective of their proximity to the region.

It is the main river in Bahabad, flowing through the plain area in the northern part of the county. The surrounding lands of this river are a geological wonder, drawing university students and researchers in the fields of geography and geology for study and exploration. Stretching approximately 11 kilometers,

this river is primarily fed by rain, snow, and springs from the Banestan and Asfij mountains, eventually flowing into the Kavir Desert. Its location near a protected hunting area contributes to its rich biodiversity.

This river is called Shoor because of its salty water (Shoor means salty in Persian). This area is a unique aquatic habitat in the province, with the number of species exceeding 5000. This unique habitat is monitored daily by executive officers to prevent hunting and poaching violations. Furthermore, this area is one of the natural attractions of Bahabad, with a large number of visitors annually. The vegetation cover and the surrounding lands of Shoor River are also geographically significant, to the extent that desert hiking around the salty river is very inspiring and memorable.

The region's abundance of food, water, and shelter supports a diverse array of valuable species, including sheep, goats, gazelles, leopards, lynxes, jackals, as well as various birds and reptiles.

Chellekhaneh village, located along the Shoor River, is a natural and picturesque area. This historic village, found on the western shore of the river, remains uninhabited. Named after the forty houses that once stood within it, Chellekhaneh (Forty Houses) now sees local farmers cultivating wheat and pistachios on parts of its agricultural lands. The village is equipped with an irrigation channel that runs from the eastern mountains to the settlement, along with a tower that was once used for surveillance. In addition to its adobe and clay houses, Chellekhaneh features small caves carved beneath the cliffs, originally used for storing livestock and grains in ancient times. The cultural heritage and tourist attractions of Bahabad are among the least recognized tourist spots in the province, known mostly to the local community because of their remote location from the provincial center. It is crucial to prioritize the promotion of these attractions and utilize them to draw both domestic and international tourists to the area.

## Evolution of Islamic and Persian influence in Czech culture

Unlike their northern and southern neighbours, the Czech lands have never had any significant and intensive direct contacts with Islamic countries. As a result, the reflection of Islamic culture has not been as strong in Czech culture as it used to be in Germany, Austria, Hungary and Poland. For historical reasons, Czech society at large formed its picture about Islamic culture out of fear from an Ottoman threat.

Persian culture was too far to be reflected by lower social classes and thus it was perceptible for the upper classes only, though its influence was small even on this group. This situation would change only

in the 19th century when the phenomenon of international travels on the one hand and the establishment of modern museums on the other reached Czech society as well.

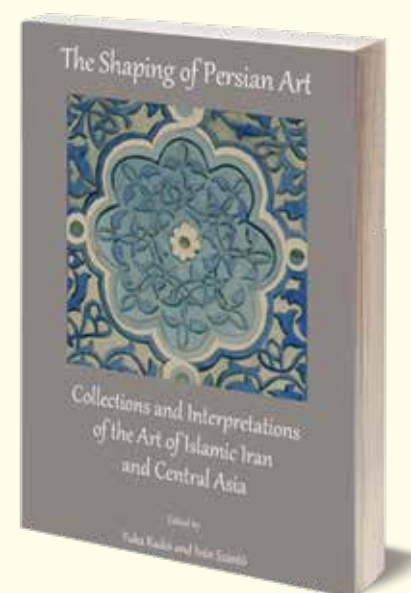
Among the earliest groups of oriental objects in the Czech Republic a few finds from the royal tombs at Prague Castle can be mentioned. The textile fragments which were recovered from the coffins of the wives and sons of Emperor Charles IV (1316-1378) include fabrics of Chinese, Persian or Central Asian origin, datable to the Mongol period. It is noteworthy that in 1314 or 1316 — a few generations before Emperor Charles IV — Pope

John XXII (ruled from 1316-34) sent Odoric of Pordenone (1274-1331), a Franciscan monk of Czech origin, to Beijing, the capital of the Mongol Empire. During his long journey, Odoric crossed Persia and Central Asia and he described the history, traditions, and cultures of these lands in his travelogue.

Although comprehensive collections of Islamic, including Persian, art did not emerge before the second half of the 19th century, there is at least one earlier example which cannot be overlooked. Without doubt, Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612), a passionate lover of art, takes pride of place among the early collectors of world art in

the Czech lands. His art cabinet at Prague Castle, the famous Kunstkammer (Kunstkammer), also included Persian objects.

Rudolf enlarged his collections through purchases and exchanges, as well as through numerous diplomatic gifts or spoils of war. Striving for more than the official diplomatic gifts Rudolf summoned his ambassadors to purchase new objects for him. Friedrich von Kreckwitz (died in 1594), a permanent imperial ambassador to the Ottoman court who had been stationed in Constantinople since 1574, supplied Rudolf with valuable objects, such as a collection of 206 Persian folios of manuscripts.



The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter titled, 'the reception of Persian art in the Czech lands', from a book titled, 'The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia' edited by Yuka Kadoi and Iván Szántó, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.