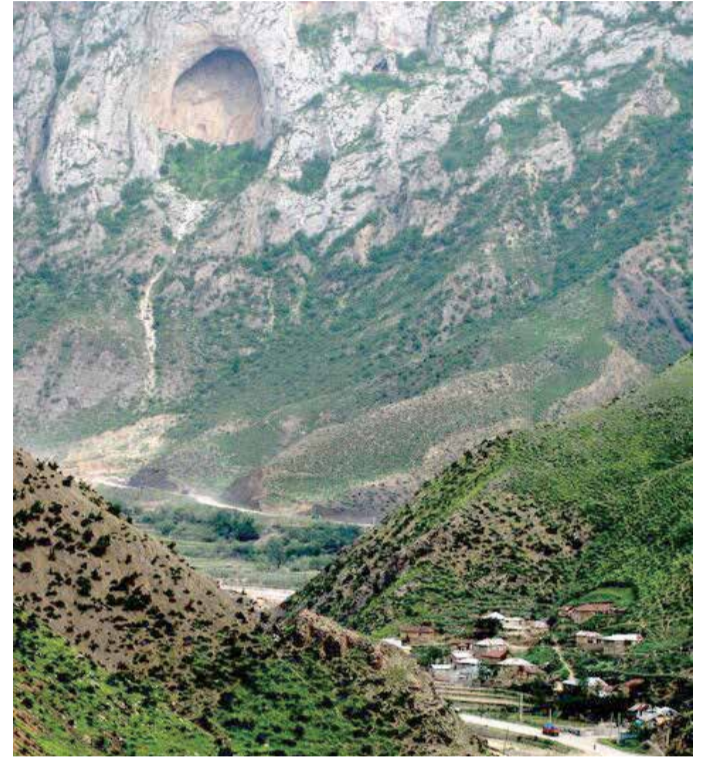


Significant discoveries unearthed at Espahbod Khorshid Cave in Savadkuh



Iranica Desk

Recent announcements from the exploration of the Espahbod Khorshid Cave in Savadkuh, Mazandaran Province, reveal significant discoveries by archaeologists, including a weapon manufacturing workshop, a furnace, architectural remnants from the Sassanid era, and a seal inscribed in Pahlavi script.

The report detailing the first excavation of the Espahbod Khorshid Cave and analyses of the findings was presented at a meeting organized by the Archaeological Research Institute, the Espahbod Khorshid Cave National Heritage Site, the International Association for Mediterranean

and Oriental Studies (ISMEO), the University of Oriental Studies in Naples, and the Scientific Council of Rome. This followed an announcement by ISNA.

Mehdi Abedini Araqi, the archaeologist and director of the Espahbod Khorshid Cave Research Center, provided insights into the findings from the initial excavation conducted on the western side of the arch and the first terrace. He emphasized that the historical Espahbod Khorshid Cave is situated in the mountainous region of Savadkuh, within the ancient Doab Gorge, atop Lakamar Mountain. The cave's entrance measures 100 by 85 meters, covering an impressive area of approximately 8,500 square meters. Histori-

cal records show it served as the last refuge for members of the Gaubarid dynasty, besieged by Caliph al-Mansur al-Abbasid's forces for nearly three years. The caliph's victory marked the collapse of the Espahbodan family in northern Iran, leading to the region's complete control by the Abbasids.

Abedini also mentioned that following the designation of the Espahbod Khorshid Cave as a National Heritage Site by the provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization in 2020, plans for the preservation and protection of this invaluable historical site entered a new phase. After approximately two years of monitoring, the first sea-

son of archaeological excavation was completed in 2023, accompanied by efforts to protect the architectural structures.

The initial excavation season focused on the first terrace of the western side of the cave, where significant architectural artifacts were uncovered. A workshop dedicated to weapon production was discovered along with a Sassanid-era furnace used for crafting arrowheads, daggers, swords, and spears. Evidence of metalworking, such as ingots, surfaced, indicating the site's defenders were engaged in manufacturing military tools, highlighting the Espahbod Khorshid Cave's function as a fortress.

Further elaborating on the archi-

tectural remains, Abedini stated, "Among the discoveries are two exceptionally beautiful arches from the Sassanid period, one at the entrance to the next space. We plan to extract it from the soil in the upcoming season of excavations."

He also pointed out the presence of a skylight functioning as an arched window that illuminates the area behind it, along with a stunning niche adorned with intricate motifs, depicting a Sassanid horseman, a tiger, and a horse, accompanied by abstract human motifs. Additionally, a staircase with over 20 steps was identified, connecting the first and second floors.

Abedini stated that a seal inscribed in Pahlavi script was

recovered, and its cleaning has already been completed. The seal bears seven impressions, showcasing designs of a horse, a Simurgh (mythical bird), a rabbit, along with Pahlavi script.

"The furnace we discovered is dome-shaped and may have also been used for pottery production. It is not particularly large, measuring approximately three by three meters. The seal was found on the neck of one of the jars, and we suspect it is a local seal intended for redistribution rather than originating from elsewhere. Since seals typically indicate trading activity, we believe this seal was created at this site with the intent of being sent elsewhere," he concluded.

Restoration projects launched at Tappeh Mill in Shahr-e Rey



Iranica Desk

The director of the Rey National Heritage site, Ghadir Afroond, announced the launch of two significant projects aimed at protecting and restoring the heritage of Tappeh Mill in Shahr-e Rey.

In an interview with ISNA, he stated that after years of neglect and oblivion regarding the historical Tappeh Mill and the inappropriate and undignified condition of this ancient complex, various protective and restorative actions will be undertaken at the site.

This phase will involve the restoration of the Tappeh Mill site, including the plasterwork hall and its historical surroundings, as well as the construction of a wall at the entrance of the complex. This ancient complex, which includes the royal palace and hunting ground of the Sassanid era, was mistakenly referred to in the past as the Tappeh Mill Fire Temple or the Bahram Fire Temple and was registered in Iran's National Heritage List in 1955.

A large earthen mound topped with a magnificent structure of stone and unique brick and plaster decorations, along with

a portico, a large and deep reservoir surrounding it (now dry), and a vast and complex protective and service structure approximately 450 meters in length and 350 meters in width, creates a historical attraction at the ancient site of Tappeh Mill, located about 12 kilometers southeast of Rey.

This site may have last been restored in the 2000s. According to available information from that period, the plasterworks were cleaned and organized, and protective scaffolding was installed, allowing tourists to view the plasterworks and Sas-

sanid architecture from behind the scaffolding.

However, the continuation of the organization and restoration of this site has been neglected over time, and many tourists and visitors walk and sit on the architectural structures and Sassanid plasterworks without paying attention to the barriers.

Shahr-e Rey, also known as Rhages and Rhagae, was formerly one of the great cities of Iran. The remains of the ancient city lie on the eastern outskirts of the modern city of Shahr-e Rey, which is located just a few miles southeast of the capital

city of Tehran.

In ancient times, Shahr-e Rey was one of the primary centers of Zoroastrianism. Dating back to the Medes period, the city, known as a sacred land, lies on the route of the Silk Road. That is why it was one of the most prosperous cities of the world in various historical periods.

The 7,000-year-old Cheshmeh Ali (Spring of Ali), also known as Cheshmeh Surin, is an ancient site, which is one of the oldest in the country. Cheshmeh Ali is now a recreational center located near Toghrol Tower.

The tomb of Bibi Shahrbanu, the

wife of Imam Hussein (PBUH), is situated on a mountain with the same name, which lies in the northeastern part of the Shahr-e Rey.

A big hill is in the southern part of this mountain, which used to be called Tabarak Mountain, or Gabri Hill. An octagonal tower, known as Gabri Castle, is seen on the southern slope of the ancient hill, which catches the eye of every passerby.

A large temple-like ossuary is situated near the tower. Several other ossuaries, which are very old and unique, are on the hill as well.