

Defining the historic boundaries of Batvand is crucial

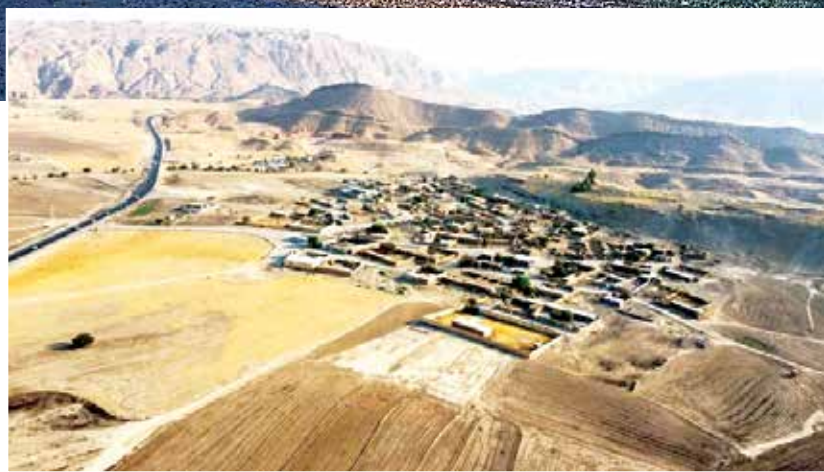


Iranica Desk

The Director General of Khuzestan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced the completion of studies aimed at defining the boundaries of the historical site of Batvand in Masjed Soleyman.

Mohammad Hussein Arastoozadeh stated that the Batvand Site has been documented in archaeological studies as a group of separate hillocks that together form an archaeological site. He explained that this area consists of scattered remnants located near each other, extending in an east-west direction opposite the village of Batvand, chtn.ir wrote.

He continued, noting that the remnants of the Batvand site are spread over a mountainous and rocky region, covering the summit, slopes, and lower lands of



the hillocks, within a span of about one kilometer.

Arastoozadeh added that the structure and distribution of the Batvand's artifacts are consistent and largely uniform throughout the area. As a result, they have been studied as a cohesive site to gain a better understanding of the ex-

tent and distribution of the settlement and related artifacts in the region, despite the site's size.

He stated that a separate registration file has been established for the historic sites of Masjed Soleyman, specifically for Batvand. However, given the proximity of the artifacts north of the village of

Batvand, it seems that these phenomena cannot be separated from one another and should be studied and registered collectively.

He further emphasized that the archaeological layers of the Batvand were formed on the natural terrain and the hillocks. He noted that the Shour River flows 750 meters south of the Batvand, and studies have shown that it contains evidence from the Parthian, Sassanid, and Islamic periods. However, due to its location near the village and the risks posed by local construction activities, it appears that parts of the site may have been lost over time.

Arastoozadeh pointed out the longstanding issues between village residents and cultural heritage authorities. The absence of an approved map for the boundaries of this valuable site means there is no legal document to reference

in emergencies or judicial proceedings. To establish the extent and boundaries of the Batvand Site within the village and agricultural lands, and considering its significance, the Khuzestan Province's Cultural Heritage Organization has prioritized the program to define the area and boundaries of this hill.

He stressed the necessity of conducting exploratory excavations to determine the boundaries of this important archaeological site, stating that having a map of the site's area and boundaries is crucial. This mapping is essential for addressing frequent requests for construction, renovation, or changes in land use, as well as for development activities from local government, the Housing Foundation, and other entities. Cultural heritage authorities need to rely on the area and boundary map to prevent further destruction of the remaining parts of the hill.

Unique features of the Golpayegan Minaret

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The Golpayegan Minaret in the city of Golpayegan, Isfahan Province, dating back to the Seljuk period, stands 18 meters tall atop a hill. In the past, fires were lit on its summit during the nights and on foggy days, allowing caravans to navigate their way into the city and avoid getting lost.

Mehdi Farasat, a cultural heritage expert, discussed the characteristics of this minaret in an interview with IRNA, stating: "This minaret, also known as the Fanous-e Sahra (Desert Lantern) or the Silk Road Lantern, is supported by an octagonal base and features two entrance doors located on the northern and southern sides."

He added that these doors lead to two staircases, each with 64 steps, with no visible connection between the two. The arrangement of the twin staircases is spiral and parallel, designed to accommodate an average-height person ascending the structure. Farasat speculated that, in ancient times, one staircase may have been used for ascending and the other for descending, IRNA wrote.

He further explained: "Each side of the minaret's base is adorned with beautiful brick

decorations and a tall archway, with half-columns carved from bricks at the edges. Above the entrance door, there is also an arch featuring intricately carved brick shapes, and at the base's end is a brick inscription in Kufic script, which includes verse 53 of Surah Az-Zumar, engraved on it."

Farasat elaborated on other features of the minaret, noting: "From the top of the polygonal base, the minaret rises in a circular form, its body dec-

orated with simple brickwork featuring geometric patterns. At the top, several windows are installed, surrounded by a wooden frame."

He continued: "Based on examinations and consultations with relevant experts, it is suggested that for the construction of the minaret, a pit was first created in the firm soil of the hill. The construction of column then began from the bottom of this pit, with foundations established around it to

provide support. These foundations are likely shaped like semi-crescents and resemble a nail with four protective arms surrounding it."

The only factor that could damage the minaret is the saturation of the soil around it with water, which could loosen its nail-like foundation. To prevent this, the designer wisely constructed it on a hill.

Otherwise, the minaret would have developed at least one crack over the years, considering the earthquakes and storms that have occurred in Golpayegan, however, this structure has proven resilient against various vibrations.

Farasat discussed the changes that have occurred in this building over time, stating: "Based on consultations and research from relevant experts and the examination of the architecture and construction of buildings from the Seljuk and Safavid periods, it is believed that the top section of the minaret was used as a place for observation and guidance during the Seljuk era. In the Safavid period, the windows and related space were blocked and covered with beautiful tile work." The Golpayegan Minaret is registered as a national heritage site in Iran.

