

Distinctive customs of Baghleq village and its cemetery



Iranica Desk

Villages have always been at the heart of human life. In Iran, there are over 45,000 villages, and some stand out due to their unique and remarkable features. The village of Baghleq, situated in North Khorasan Province, is home to one of the most distinctive cemeteries we have ever encountered. The people of this Turkmen village observe specific customs and traditions when it comes to burying the deceased. The Baghleq Cemetery is located in a village of the same name, which is a small community in the central district of Raz and Jargalan in northwest North Khorasan Province. The Baghleq Cemetery is regarded as one of the oldest and most unique cemeteries in both the province and the entire country. It is a noteworthy tourist attraction in North Khorasan Province. Unlike typical cemeteries, Baghleq Cemetery has no grave-stones; instead, the details of the deceased are written on wooden plaques. This distinctive feature creates the impression of a garden with its trees cut down at first glance.



Located just outside the village on a clay hill, the cemetery was constructed away from residential areas due to the local belief that the dead deserve respect and that no one should walk over their eternal resting place. The Turkmen community sees participating in funeral ceremonies and offering prayers for the deceased as their duty, so they attend these ceremonies regardless of whether they knew the deceased or not. Visiting the Baghleq Cemetery is completely free. For a more peaceful and comfortable experi-



ence, it's best to choose a specific day for your visit. A thorough exploration of the cemetery will take about an hour. The village of Baghleq is situated in a mountainous area, so you should expect slightly different weather conditions compared to Bojnord. Consequently, the cold of autumn and winter can make traveling to the village and visiting the cemetery challenging. Spring is a great time to visit, but be prepared for the possibility of scattered showers or downpours. Therefore, summer is generally considered the best

time to visit the Baghleq Cemetery in North Khorasan Province. Besh Qardash Park is located 10 kilometers from Bojnord along the Bojnord-Esfarayin road. The water from the park's springs is known for its numerous healing properties and is used to treat gastrointestinal, liver, gallbladder, and urinary system disorders. This recreation area features beautiful pools and grounds, and due to its historical significance, it is one of the most popular tourist destinations. Besh Qardash Park has been registered as a national heritage site in Iran.

Baba Aman Park is one of the oldest and most beautiful tourist parks in Iran, recognized as a key attraction in North Khorasan Province. Each year, it serves as a resting and recreational spot for millions of tourists and pilgrims visiting Mashhad. Spanning 250 hectares of lush vegetation and featuring pools filled with spring water, this park has become one of the prominent sights in Bojnord, North Khorasan Province. Notable attractions in the area include the Baba Aman Spring, the Baba Aman Shrine, the local wildlife, and the nearby Atrak River.

Role of chigh in Iranian nomadic life

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The history of anthropology shows that since the time of early humans, people have utilized resources from their environment — such as tree branches, foliage, goat and sheep wool, wood, and animal hides — to protect themselves from cold, heat, wind, rain, and other elements while maintaining clean and organized living spaces. Sajjad Nazari, a cultural heritage expert, wrote that Iran, with its rich ancient culture, is no exception. "Today, we see the construction and production of handcrafted tools rooted in the distant past.

One such tool, still produced today and with various applications, is *chigh*. Its ongoing traditional production from unchanged raw materials highlights its significance and versatility. Nowadays, we even observe its mass production in certain areas." Chigh is used to cover the walls of nomadic black tents and is made from reeds that grow wild in the nomads' living areas, along with goat hair. It prevents the entry of heat, cold, wind, rain, and dust into the tent. The hollow reeds act as thermal insulators, and when it rains, increased humidity causes the reeds to expand and bind together, resisting water infiltration.

Additionally, the fatty layer in goat hair helps prevent water from penetrating. Chigh is a handcrafted item made by nomads, used both individually and as a barrier around black tents. It also serves as a partition within the tent. The finest examples of this weaving are crafted in vibrant colors featuring authentic and traditional patterns by some nomadic tribes in the province. Due to its beautiful color composition and high-quality weaving, chigh has been installed as the entrance display at the national handicraft exhibition. The main materials used in its

production are reeds, goat hair, and sheep wool, which can be found near rivers and streams in certain areas of Ilam province's watersheds. These materials are harvested using sickles. Goat hair and sheep wool are readily available since the livelihood of nomadic people relies on herding. Regarding the reeds, one of the key raw materials used, they are cut from the reed beds and transported to the workplace to dry. Once dried, the reeds are cut into specific sizes based on the intended use of the chigh. For example, if the chigh is required for a location that demands greater strength, whole reeds are

used. The size of the reeds is determined by the intended application and the height of the chigh. If the chigh is primarily decorative or designed for transportation, lighter reeds are preferred for easier handling. Typically, the reeds are halved lengthwise, and this splitting process is performed with sharp tools like knives to minimize the risk of breaking. Regarding the processing and preparation of other raw materials used in chigh weaving, such as goat hair and sheep wool, this work is also carried out by nomads and villagers. If the chigh is intended for practical use, both goat hair and sheep wool are uti-

lized. The harvesting methods for these raw materials are quite similar. Goat hair, after being sheared, is used to bind the reeds together. In contrast, after shearing the sheep's fleece, the wool undergoes dyeing processes. After preparing the wool fibers, the dyeing process begins. Dyeing involves applying color substances to specific fibers or woven goods under controlled conditions of temperature and time. It is crucial to use natural fibers, such as wool, which are classified as animal fibers. When selecting a color, factors such as absorption capability, uniformity, durability, and stability are also considered.

