

Tracing 12,000 years of human habitation at Chogha Golan



● IRNA

Iranica Desk

Chogha Golan Archaeological Site, located in Mehran, Ilam Province, is recognized as the oldest agricultural site in both Iran and the broader Middle East, according to an archaeologist Habibollah Mahmoudian. He emphasized that within the Golan region, a wealth of human settlement remnants from various historical periods have been discovered, painting an extensive timeline of continuous habitation largely supported by the steady flow of the permanent Kanjan Cham river. This water source has been instrumental in sustaining human life and settlement in the area over millennia. Mahmoudian highlighted that archaeological investigations reveal significant contributions from the late Ali Mohammad Khalilian, who conducted studies in Mehran from the 1980s

through the early 2000s. Khalilian successfully identified notable ancient sites within the region, including Chogha Golan 1 and Chogha Golan 2. Further reinforcing the historical significance of the area, in 2003, additional discoveries were made encompassing the ancient site itself, its historic qanat irrigation system, a caravanserai, an ancient mound, and remains from Islamic-period settlements. These findings have been comprehensively documented, leading to their nomination for inclusion on Iran's National Heritage List, ISNA wrote. In the same year, an exploration led by Mohsen Zeidi focused on the eastern area of the site, which naturally separates the Mehran and Dehloran plains. This survey uncovered archaeological sites from a wide temporal span, ranging from the Proto-literate peri-

od to the historical era. Mahmoudian went on to state that systematic excavations and surveys began in 2010 to create detailed mappings of the area. These efforts continued through two excavation seasons, and radiocarbon dating of collected samples revealed uninterrupted human habitation at Chogha Golan from roughly the mid-10th millennium BCE through to the end of the 8th millennium BCE. The archaeologist described that excavations at Chogha Golan unveiled early evidence of gypsum production alongside the remains of ancient architectural structures. Dating back between 12,000 and 9,500 years ago, Chogha Golan is identified as one of the earliest known sites associated with the beginnings of agriculture and settled rural life, not only in Iran but globally. During the second excavation phase, notable archi-

tectural remains were uncovered, including twisted room layouts constructed with adobe and clay walls, complemented by gypsum-coated floors. As a specialist in prehistoric archaeology, Mahmoudian shared that thousands of specimens from wild barley, wild wheat, lentils, chickpeas, beans, and animal fodder were excavated at the site. Isotopic carbon analysis dated these botanical finds between 9,800 and 11,700 years ago, underscoring a remarkably extended duration of habitation which was unprecedented in the Neolithic era. This era marked humanity's critical transition from a lifestyle based on hunting and gathering wild seeds to the cultivation of crops and the domestication of plants and animals. Mahmoudian emphasized that Chogha Golan's location within the peripheral plains of the Zagros Mountains was pivotal

to early human agricultural endeavors, as it is here that some of the first known attempts to domesticate wild plants occurred. From a botanical perspective, this research has yielded a pioneering discovery of 30,000 plant remains representing 75 different species groups spanning approximately 2,000 years. The evidence reveals nearly 2,200 years of cultivation of wild plants alongside the emergence of the first domesticated plant species at Chogha Golan. Throughout this extensive period, wild varieties of barley, wheat, lentils, chickpeas, beans, fodder, and other key agricultural products — the direct ancestors of today's crops — were cultivated and consumed by the inhabitants. The site, referred to as Chogha Golan 2, lies north of an ancient mound on the eastern bank of the Kanjan Cham River and spreads across an area of 1,800

square meters. It is bordered to the north and east by the Kanjan Cham River, to the south by Golan Mound 1, and to the west by a natural mound known as Maleh. On the western edge of Chogha Golan 2, a sophisticated qanat system consisting of 62 wells is present, with each well spaced at intervals of five to eight meters. The spring feeding this qanat is located at the southwestern corner of the Golan mound and remains visible today. Mahmoudian also noted that on the surface of the archaeological site, foundation remains of buildings constructed using dry-stone masonry can be observed. In the northern corner of Golan 2, stone construction remnants align along the ridge of the eastern riverbank, though their exact purpose and function remain unknown, leaving intriguing questions for future archaeological inquiry.

Iranian culinary heritage reflected in beloved 'Cutlet'



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Cutlet is one of the most popular and delicious traditional yet fast foods in Iran. It can be served as the main course, appetizer, trip food, or hot and cold sandwich. With a unique flavor and aroma, it evokes all childhood memories of Iranians. This beloved meal is typically served without rice and is enjoyed simply with bread. The ingredients of Cutlet include minced meat, potato, egg, onion, and various seasonings. It is worth noting that there are several variations of Cutlet made with different ingredients; these include chicken Cutlet, fish Cutlet, eggplant Cutlet, and more. The dish is also popular in other countries, though often prepared with a higher fat content. The most common method of preparing this dish begins with peeling and grating potatoes. Then, the minced meat is added to the mixture. Eggs are sometimes included to help bind the ingredients together more effectively. Next, salt, pepper, and turmeric are combined with the mixture. The paste is thoroughly kneaded by hand to ensure all the ingredients are deeply incorporated. Afterward, the mixture is chilled in the fridge for about half an hour. In the final step, it is fried in a pan with hot oil until golden and cooked through. Different types of meat can be used to prepare Cutlet, such as mutton, veal, chicken, or turkey. It can also

be made vegetarian by replacing the meat with mushrooms and soybean, allowing vegans to enjoy this delicious dish as well. Cutlet holds a special place in Iranian households, often made with family recipes passed down through generations. It is cherished for its versatility, as it can be adapted to various tastes and occasions — from casual family meals to festive gatherings. Due to its convenient preparation and satisfying taste, Cutlet is also a popular choice for packed lunches, picnics, and street food vendors across Iran. Such Iranian foods reflect a rich culinary heritage filled with flavorful, comforting dishes made from simple, wholesome ingredients. Like Cutlet, many traditional Iranian foods emphasize fresh spices, regional produce, and versatile preparation methods that appeal to diverse tastes and dietary preferences. Iranian cuisine also values the balance of texture and flavor, with dishes often combining tender, crispy, and aromatic elements, as exemplified by Cutlet's crispy fried exterior and soft, flavorful interior. Moreover, foods like Cutlet are emblematic of Iranian hospitality, often served with fresh herbs, pickles, or yogurt-based dips, enhancing their taste and providing a refreshing contrast. This holistic approach to food-making highlights the cultural importance of meals as moments for connection, celebration, and preserving heritage in Iran and beyond.



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