

New finds reveal continuous human presence in North Khorasan



● IRNA

Iranica Desk

Archaeological research in Iran's North Khorasan Province has led to the discovery of 24 Paleolithic sites, shedding new light on the presence, movement, and long-term settlement of early human communities in the region.

The findings highlight North Khorasan's long-standing role as a geographical gateway between the Iranian Plateau and the plains of Central Asia. Thousands of years ago, this natural corridor functioned both as a passageway and a habitat for hunter-gatherer groups who moved across the region in search of water, food, and shelter, leaving behind enduring traces of their lives on these plains, IRNA wrote.

After centuries of silence, the soils of Esfarayen and Safi'abad have begun to reveal evidence of these early societies. Among the identified sites, five contain

remains from the Lower Paleolithic period, including cleaver-like stone tools dating back to the Middle Pleistocene. In terms of their technical characteristics, these tools are comparable to the well-known Kashafrud assemblages, suggesting that early humans in this region developed hunting and survival tools similar to those found elsewhere in northeastern Iran. The research also indicates a significant expansion of human activity during the Middle Paleolithic period, with 13 sites identified. The presence of Levallois industries at these locations points to clear cultural and technological connections between Esfarayen and other known Paleolithic sites across the central Iranian Plateau and northeastern Iran, reflecting a broad and interconnected network of human interaction, mobility, and coexistence.

The discoveries are not limited to earlier periods alone. Archae-



ologists have also identified one Upper Paleolithic site and five Epipaleolithic sites across the plains. Taken together, these findings demonstrate a continuous human presence from the Middle Pleistocene to the beginning of the Holocene, confirming that the Esfarayen-Safi'abad plain was not merely a transit route but a long-term habitat and refuge for human populations over thousands of years. The discoveries underline an important conclusion: the previous lack of evidence for hunter-gatherer communities in North Khorasan Province did not indicate an absence of

human occupation, but rather reflected a shortage of specialized and systematic Paleolithic research in the area.

Commenting on the findings, the head of North Khorasan Province's Organization of Cultural Heritage said that despite valuable evidence from sites such as Qal'eh Khan Hill and Pahlavan Hill, questions had long remained about the earliest human presence in the province. "These questions went unanswered due to the lack of targeted Paleolithic studies," he said. Ahmad Dinari added that the research began last summer, with the Esfarayen and Safi'abad

plains selected as the first target areas. He said the surveys resulted in the identification of 24 Paleolithic sites, pointing to extensive and sustained activity by hunter-gatherer groups in this part of northeastern Iran. According to Dinari, preliminary assessments show that five sites contain Lower Paleolithic evidence and Middle Pleistocene cleaver-tool industries comparable to the Kashafrud collections. He added that during the Middle Paleolithic period, the number of sites rises to 13, with distinctive Levallois industries linking them to well-documented sites in northeastern and central Iran. One Upper Paleolithic site and five Epipaleolithic sites were also identified, further confirming the continuity of human settlement in the Esfarayen-Safiabad plain from the Middle Pleistocene to the early Holocene. With their newly identified sites, the Esfarayen and Sa-

fi'abad plains now stand before researchers like an open book. Each stone tool, each sediment layer, and each archaeological trace represents a page in the long story of human history. Archaeologists hope that continued research will eventually allow them to map early human migration routes, settlement patterns, and lifeways in this region — enriching not only the history of North Khorasan, but also that of the entire Iranian Plateau.

The Paleolithic period is the oldest era of human prehistory and material culture, marked by the first known use of hand-made stone tools.

The town of Bam and Safi'abad have a population of around 22,000, while Esfarayen, with a population of about 120,000, is located 60 kilometers southeast of Bojnurd, the provincial capital. North Khorasan Province, with a population of about one million, comprises 10 cities in northeastern Iran.



● imna.ir

A century of Zari weaving on display in Tehran

Iranica Desk

The exhibition "Golden Wovens: One Hundred Years of Zari Bafi in Tehran" inaugurated on Tuesday with the aim of introducing and re-examining a century of contemporary Iranian Zari weaving. The event brings together a wide-ranging collection of Zari- and velvet-weaving works produced in Tehran, offering visitors an in-depth look at the evolution of this historic craft.

Zari-Bafi (Zari weaving) is a traditional Iranian craft of weaving luxurious brocade fabrics using silk threads combined with gold or silver.

The exhibition focuses on the revival of Zari weaving in the modern era — an art whose process of reorganization began in 1925 with the establishment of the Zari Weaving Institute at the Golestan Palace complex, chtn.ir wrote.

According to available historical documents, the institute

was founded by order of the country's highest authority at the time, with the objective of supplying essential equipment and ensuring the continuation and institutional support of Zari-weaving activities.

Works on display date from 1938 to the present day and showcase the craftsmanship of 85 master Zari and velvet weavers from different generations. Collectively, these pieces illustrate the technical developments, workshop practices, and aesthetic sensibili-

ties of Tehran's Zari weaving, situating them within the broader social and economic transformations of the past century.

Organizers of the exhibition state that the event seeks to document this artistic tradition, introduce its technical and aesthetic capacities to a wider audience, and emphasize the significance of Zari weaving within Iran's contemporary social and cultural history.

This exhibition will continue until January 28.

Plans unveiled to restore historic Sheybani Citadel in Mazhan

Iranica Desk

Plans for the restoration, revitalization, and future use of the Sheybani Citadel in the city of Mazhan, South Khorasan Province, have been placed on the agenda, officials said.

During a meeting with Ali Darabi, Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Seyyed Hassan Hashemi, the parliamentary representative of Birjand, said the historic fabric of Khush has been nationally registered and includes the Sheybani Citadel, which is in urgent need of res-

toration and revitalization, mehrnews.com wrote.

Hashemi also raised the issue of safeguarding nationally registered gardens in the province that are under the ownership of the Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization (Awqaf), stressing the importance of their proper protection and preservation.

For his part, Darabi highlighted South Khorasan Province's international attractions, noting that the province is home to 10 globally-registered elements, seven of which fall within the cultural heritage sector. These

include serial nominations such as Persian gardens, qanats, and caravanserais, as well as the traditional Tow-Bafi weaving art of Khorashad village in the handicrafts category, the target tourism village of Esfahak, and the Tabas Geopark.

Darabi added that the global registration of ancient windmills (Asbads) in Khorasan Razavi, South Khorasan, and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces is also on the agenda, noting that South Khorasan Province hosts the largest number of these historic structures.

The restoration, revitalization, and utilization of the Sheybani Citadel in Mazhan were among the key topics discussed during the meeting.

Alimardan Sheybani, the owner of the Qajar-era Sheybani Citadel, said the family-owned complex in Mazhan comprises 800 square meters of built space and covers a total area of 34,000 square meters. He expressed hope that, once restored, the historic citadel would be transformed into a multifunctional cultural, historical, educational, and accommodation complex.



● mehrnews.com