

Zanjan's knife-making as highly-reputed craft nationwide, abroad



Iranica Desk

Approximately 700 knife-making workshops are active across Zanjan Province, producing six million knives annually.

Announcing the above, Dariush Naderi, deputy head of Zanjan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, stated that the province is known as the hub for manufacturing metal handicrafts, including knives, copperware, and filigree.

He said that due to its high quality and unique design, Zanjan's knife-making art is renowned across the country and even internationally, according to chtn.ir. He noted that 116 knife-making licenses were issued in the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 21–December 21, 2025), reflecting the industry's significance in the province. He added that around 57 to 60 million

knives are sold nationwide each year, indicating strong public demand for various types of knives — such as fruit knives, kitchen knives, and cleavers.

"This shows that the industry holds significant potential for generating employment in the province," he said. For centuries, Zanjan Province has been renowned for its high-quality knives, crafted by skilled artisans. Historical evidence indicates that the tradition of knife-making in the region dates back to the era of the Salt Men, with knives discovered among archaeological artifacts, highlighting a long-standing legacy. Zanjan knives represent some of the earliest and most significant documentation of the local knife-making industry. They are celebrated for their distinctive qualities — elegance, balance, blade coating, and cutting power

— showcasing the craftsmanship of both past and present artisans. During the Safavid era, masters like Abdolghaffar Sekak greatly contributed to the prosperity of this vital industry. Additionally, credible records from the National Archives and Library reveal correspondence from 1944 CE listing the names and signatures of 31 Zanjan knife makers. Today, the knife-making industry in Zanjan continues to thrive, facing both challenges and triumphs. Some artisans have established notable reputations through their exceptional work, while others are dedicated to preserving this authentic craft for future generations. These artisans carefully consider their clients' preferences, producing a diverse range of knife models in various sizes and shapes. Some feature decorative handles, making them ideal for display in museums or as collector's items.

Torbat-e Jam set to thrive as tourist destination

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The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Torbat-e Jam, Khorasan Razavi Province, said that the city, with its great tourism potential, needs more accommodation facilities and ground has been paved for cooperation with the private sector's investors in this regard.

Faramarz Sabermoqadam said in interview with ISNA that the services provided in four rural ecolodges and one guesthouse, which are presently active in Torbat-e Jam, are continuously being evaluated. The assessment not

only contributes to improving services but also helps strengthen the region's tourism brand, ISNA wrote.

He noted that the accommodation units, as the key components of the city's tourism infrastructure, play a significant role in attracting travelers, saying that they should provide high quality services to ensure guests' satisfaction.

He stated that in the monitoring and evaluation process, various indicators are examined, including continuation of their activities, environmental hygiene, structural safety, guest satisfaction, the way required services

are received and provided, manners of dealing with tourists and the alignment of activities with legal regulations.

Sabermoqadam emphasized that in addition to evaluating the performance of accommodation units, specialized consultations and necessary trainings are also provided to their managers, noting if any violations are observed, legal warnings will be issued and the process of resolving the problems will be pursued.

"With the cooperation of users and officials, we hope to provide better experiences for travelers and enhance the status of Torbat-e Jam as a popular tourist

destination. We are trying to introduce Torbat-e Jam which hosts 67 nationally registered historical sites and landscapes as the tourism hub of eastern part of Khorasan Razavi Province," he said, adding that over 130 more ancient sites have also been identified across the city.

The border city of Torbat-e Jam, with 154 villages each having over 20 households, has a population of 230,000, of which 125,000 are urban dwellers. The center of the city is located 160 kilometers southeast of the provincial capital city of Mashhad and shares a border with Afghanistan to the east.



Khatoon; 6,000-year-old female skeleton buried with symbols of justice

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Archaeologists discovered a cemetery containing over 5,000 graves in Chega Sofla, a site in the southeastern part of Khuzestan Province, about a decade ago. Among the graves was the skeleton of a woman, nicknamed Khatoon, buried with remarkable order and respect. Two symbolic objects — a stone weight and a sword — were placed beside her skeleton, a combination evoking the image of the Goddess of Justice. According to ISNA, Chega Sofla was identified by a delegation from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago in Behbahan, Khuzestan Province, during the 1970s. Since then, the site has been recognized as one of the most important cultural landmarks in the Persian Gulf region. Archaeological findings indicate that the site dates back to the early 5th millennium BCE. Kamiar Abdi, an archaeologist, visited the artifacts unearthed at Chega Sofla in 2009, and the site was registered on Iran's National Her-



ing hooks. A stone weight was placed near her forehead. Studies suggest these items were buried with her to serve her in the afterlife. Khatoon was initially transferred to the Susa Museum, devoid of artifacts. The cultural heritage items were initially under the custody of the Ramhormoz Cultural Heritage Department. However, in 2021, the artifacts were transferred to the Susa Museum and placed beside her skeleton. She was not the only woman found in the ancient cemetery. The prominence of women in burial practices was one of the most striking aspects of social structure in this ancient Iranian society. Archaeologists have identified a total of 102 burials, more than half of which were belonged to women. Evidence suggests that women held a higher status and played decisive roles. One of the most recent burials in a brick-made grave included 11 individuals, with a woman among them. Furthermore, among the distorted skulls, female specimens outnumber male ones — a finding that paints a clear

picture of a female-centric social structure in this society. Archaeologists have determined that the people of Chega Sofla were skilled artisans: metalworkers, potters, stonecutters, spinners, and artists who lived in a fully self-sufficient manner. Findings indicate that this society maintained extensive connections with distant regions and imported raw materials such as marble from faraway places. Chega Sofla still holds many secrets yet to be uncovered, and archaeological research in the area remains incomplete. However, according to Moqadam, the site has suffered several attacks over the past half-century. Initially, British and American oil companies identified the area as a suitable location for temporary accommodation of their staff. After land reforms and the redistribution of land to peasants, small villages gradually occupied the site, with farmers building homes on it. In recent years, the site has suffered damage under the pretext of agricultural development and urban expansion.

itage List in the same year. After a prolonged hiatus, Iranian archaeologists returned to Chega Sofla in 2015 and uncovered more than 5,000 graves, 10 of which were constructed from bricks. Several mass burial tombs were also discovered, including two containing 52 and 120 human skeletons, respectively. Abbas Moqadam, the archae-

ologist who led the excavation team at the historical cemetery of Chega Sofla, stated, "In addition to individual graves, we have identified stone and brick mass burial sites. Evidence suggests that some skeletons were reburied in these tombs, while others remain in their original state." A 6,000-year-old skeleton was found in one of the individu-