

Amiriyeh welcomes families for 17th Golghaltan Ceremony

Iranica Desk

As the fragrant season of the Damask rose — known in Iran as the Mohammadi rose — sets in, the city of Amiriyeh in Semnan Province has officially kicked off the 17th edition of the national Golghaltan Ceremony on May 5, with a renewed focus on tradition.

The Golghaltan Ceremony, a long-standing cultural and religious tradition, was officially registered in 2010 as Semnan Province's first intangible heritage and the second nationwide, following the ancient festival of Nowruz.

Each year, coinciding with the blooming of Damask roses, Amiriyeh — dubbed the "Golghaltan Capital of Iran" — welcomes families from across the country who bring their newborns to take part in the ceremony. The ritual involves gently rolling infants, typically under one year old, in rose petals, a practice believed to bless them with purity, vitality, and protection, Speaking to IRNA, Mostafa Fouadian, mayor of Amiriyeh and secretary of the festival, said the ceremony is deeply rooted in local tradition. "Every year, newborns are placed among rose petals so that their bodies and souls are imbued with fragrance, purity, and blessing," he said.



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Fouadian added that this year's event emphasizes a return to more traditional practices, with ceremonies being held in local homes rather than centralized venues.

So far, five traditional houses have been prepared to host the ritual, with more expected to join in the coming days.

Registration for participating infants is being conducted on-

line through the official secretariat. Organizers have also issued guidelines to ensure the ceremony is held respectfully and in line with spiritual values.

Amiriyeh currently has around seven hectares of Damask rose cultivation, both in municipal and private gardens. Harvesting began in conjunction with the birth anniversary of Imam Reza

(PBUH), and approximately two tons of roses are expected to be collected for use in rosewater distillation and the Golghaltan Ceremony.

In addition to the main ritual, visitors can experience traditional activities such as rosewater distillation, Karbas (coarse wool) weaving, and baking of local bread at the city's historic castle.

Local beliefs hold that rolling infants in rose petals helps maintain their health and freshness, protecting them from illnesses, particularly allergies. Elderly women in the region also say the practice promotes healthy skin and contributes to a cheerful and robust disposition in children.

Residents of Amiriyeh say the tradition has been passed down through generations and remains a cherished element of the region's intangible cultural heritage.

Amiriyeh, with a population of over 3,000, is the center of Amirabad District, located 20 kilometers west of Damghan and 90 kilometers east of Semnan.



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Ancient mounds of West Azarbaijan reveal millennia of civilization

Iranica Desk

The ancient mounds of Iran's West Azarbaijan Province reflect the rich and turbulent history of this region. Each of these archaeological sites holds countless secrets, and discoveries made during excavations have often astonished archaeologists around the world.

These unique historical remains are like thick, unread books that that remain largely unexplored. By turning their pages through excavation, valuable insights into ancient civilizations can be uncovered, according to IRNA.

In essence, the ancient mounds are an endless treasure of cultural heritage belonging to both the province and Iran. They invite every visitor and traveler to reflect on history and connect with the events that once took place in this land.

Hasanlu Hill

The ancient site of Hasanlu Hill (Tappeh Hasanlu) in Naqadeh is internationally renowned. Iranian and foreign archaeologists estimate that the structures found here date back to around 800 to 1400 BCE.

The most significant discovery at Hasanlu is the Golden Bowl of Hasanlu, which is of great archaeological importance. It weighs 950 grams, is 21cm high, 25cm in diameter, and has a rim circumference of 61cm. It is currently kept at the National Museum of Iran in Tehran.

The bowl itself is estimated to be about 2,800 years old, dating to around 800 BCE. Its engraved motifs depict an epic narrative scene.

Located 12km southwest of Lake Urmia and 9km northeast of Naqadeh, between the villages of Aminlu and Hasanlu, this site

has been under excavation since 1954. Around 7,500 artifacts made of bronze, bone, and pottery have been discovered.

Architectural remains include large columned halls, long terraces, and both small and large rooms, as well as stone structures dating back to the fourth and fifth occupation phases, approximately 3,000 years old. Since 2003, Hasanlu has been designated as a national research base for scientific and technical studies.

Qalaychi Hill

Qalaychi Hill (Tappeh Qalaychi) is located in Qalaychi village, 12km northeast of Bukan. Archaeological excavations began in 1984,

Hajji Firuz Hill

Hajji Firuz Hill (Tappeh Hajji Firuz) is located in the eastern Suldoz Valley, 2km southeast of Hasanlu in Naqadeh. Excavations have revealed 16 occupation layers and 11 construction phases.

Evidence suggests that settlements from the 6th millennium BCE consisted of independent residential units, each with living rooms, food preparation and cooking areas, storage spaces, and large storage jars.

Children were sometimes buried beneath the floors of these houses. Walls were mainly built with packed earth and, in some cases, unformed mud bricks. Surfaces were occasionally coated with a mixture of mud plaster and gyp-

sum. A trace of red paint was found on part of a house wall, and some floors were coated with a reddish clay mixture. Painted pottery from Hajji Firuz is considered a defining cultural element of this period.

Gug Hill

Gug Hill (Gug Tappeh) is located 6km southeast of Urmia in a valley of the same name. The site measures 455 meters north to south, 600 meters east to west, and is 24.5 meters high.

One of the most important discoveries here is a bronze plaque depicting the Babylonian epic hero Gilgamesh, shown grasping two wild bulls within a circular frame. This artifact dates to the

8th century BCE.

Another important find is a cylindrical seal discovered at a depth of eight meters, bearing motifs of Babylonian deities, likely dating back to around 2000 BCE. It is currently housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Archaeological excavations have identified seven stratigraphic layers, from the lowest level dating to the 4th millennium BCE up to the 1st millennium BCE.

The nearby village of Gug Tappeh, due to its proximity to this archaeological site, has the potential to be developed into a historical park and tourist destination.

Kordlar Hill

Kordlar Hill (Tappeh Kordlar) is an-

over time.

The site is oval-shaped, covering approximately 2 hectares. Joint excavations by Iranian and Austrian archaeologists have revealed clay pottery and residential remains dating to the 1st millennium BCE.

Some historians believe the hill may be the earliest known site of urban settlement on the shores of Lake Urmia.

Bash Qaleh

Bash Qaleh is a historical site over 2,700 years old, located east of Urmia. Also known as Bash Qala, the site sits on a fertile plain near the Shahid Kalantari Road, close to Urmia's industrial zone. It has long attracted the attention of travelers due to its mound-like appearance amid green fields.

This fortress dates back to the first millennium BCE and belongs to the Urartian civilization. It was once a military stronghold used for guarding the region, complete with stationed soldiers and defensive structures.

The remaining architectural layout confirms its military function. Before the Islamic Revolution, German and Italian archaeological teams also conducted research at the site.

West Azarbaijan Province has more than 1,800 nationally and internationally registered historical sites. Among them, UNESCO World Heritage sites include Takht-e Soleyman in Takab, the Saint Thaddeus Monastery (Qara Kelisa) in Chaldoran, the Zor Zor Church in Maku, and the Abbasid caravanserai of Khoy.

These sites together highlight the extraordinary cultural and historical depth of the region and its importance in world heritage.



Hasanlu Hill
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Qalaychi Hill
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Hajji Firuz Hill
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other significant archaeological site located 25km east of Urmia, near village with the same name, about 1km from the road to Urmia Lake.

The remains are situated on a hill west of the village. Excavations have uncovered buried architectural remains.

These remains date from the 1st to 4th millennium BCE. The building materials mainly include mudbrick and packed-earth walls, which have deteriorated