

Mashhad stone carving art in need of revival

Iranica Desk

A handicrafts expert says reviving the art of stone carving is not only a cultural responsibility toward citizens, but also an opportunity to introduce it at national and international levels. Speaking to ISNA, Maryam Momtazian said the traditional stone carving art in Iran's Khorasan Razavi Province has significantly faded in recent years and is close to being forgotten, adding that Mashhad has the potential to offer a unique and lasting souvenir of this kind.

She noted that the connection between younger generations and stone carving has become very limited and, in some cases, completely lost. "If greater attention is given to this indigenous art and if creative industries support it, it could first establish a sustainable link between handicraft enthusiasts and practitioners, and ultimately help strengthen the economic cycle of the sector," she said.



Momtazian added that, to help address the issue and strengthen stone carving in the handicrafts market, innovative products could be developed using Mashhad serpentine stone, which is not only durable but also has distinctive and even therapeutic properties. She said she has ideas in the field of creative industries that could produce positive outcomes.

She emphasized that the goal of these proposals is to revive this valuable art and reconnect younger generations with modern applications of stone carving. In this regard, she said she has held numerous discussions with institutions such as the municipality, the city council, and other relevant bodies, and is actively pursuing the implementation of



● mashhadrokhshar.ir

the plan. The artist stressed that handicrafts today require more attention and support from responsible institutions than ever before. She noted that such support — especially in creative industries related to handicrafts — has been emphasized by experts and officials, including managers of science and technology parks,

but still needs to be strengthened. She added that despite difficult economic conditions, it is still possible through effort, innovation, and proper planning to both improve the livelihoods of industry practitioners and contribute to broader economic development and job creation.

Referring to cities such as Isfahan, she said experience shows how

a local art can become a cultural identity and tourist attraction. She noted that live demonstrations of artistic production can create meaningful cultural engagement while also increasing sales opportunities. She added that Mashhad once had a stone carving bazaar, but this heritage has disappeared, and today even many local children are unaware of it.

Momtazian identified resistance to innovation and the need to prove practical value as key challenges for creative ideas in handicrafts. She said acceptance of new ideas requires not only originality but also a clear understanding of their function and benefits.

She concluded that in the fields of handicrafts, tourism, and cultural heritage, promotional and media support plays a crucial role. However, she said such support is currently insufficient and needs to be strengthened. Despite existing challenges, she remains optimistic about the future of the project and believes it has investment potential.

Ancient mound near Dastena under archaeological study

Iranica Desk

A field trial excavation program is being carried out at an ancient mound site northeast of Dastena, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, to determine the extent of the archaeological remains and propose a protective buffer zone, with financial support from the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, said the head of the archaeological survey team.

Mohsen Heydari said the excavation is being conducted under an official permit from the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and with the approval of the Archaeology Research Center. He is leading the project as a faculty member of the Archaeology Department at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, chtn.ir wrote.

He explained that the archaeological site is located 35 kilometers from Shahrekord, 550 meters northeast of Dastena, and east of the Bibi Hajer shrine and Dastena Cemetery. The site lies on the southern slopes of a high series of hills known as Mount Bibi Hajer, which stretches from east to west.

Heydari noted that the site has suffered irreversible damage in recent years, with parts of its central area being leveled and

excavated. He added that, due to a project to expand the road connecting Dastena to Shalamzar and the possibility of further destruction of parts of the site, defining the archaeological boundaries and protective zone was prioritized.

"Without detailed archaeological studies and a clear understanding of the extent of the remains, there is a risk of irreparable damage to archaeological deposits and cultural remains," he said. According to the archaeologist, the main objective of the field program is to accurately identify the site's boundaries and propose a protective buffer zone, creating a legal safeguard to prevent preventing further destruction of the surviving archaeological remains, particularly from human activities.

Heydari added that small 1-by-1.5-meter test trenches are being excavated within the surrounding area to identify the spread of cultural and archaeological deposits. The work aims to clarify the extent of the remains and provide a basis for protecting the site.

The site, registered as "Imamzadeh Bibi Hajer and the adjacent mound," dates back to the Middle Islamic period particularly the Ilkhanid era and was listed as a national heritage site in 2005 under registration No. 12410.



● chtn.ir

Sisakht becomes growing ecotourism destination

Sisakht, a city in Iran's Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province and often described as the jewel of the Zagros Mountains, has long been known among nature lovers and travelers as the "Land of Snow and Sunshine." This enchanting city, combining the soothing cold of the snow-covered peaks of Mount Dena with life-giving springs, has created a unique paradise that bears no resemblance to routine travel experiences.

This is a place on Earth where snow, sunlight, and rock embrace each other to create a symphony of life. Sisakht, known as the "Land of Snow and Water," with its extraordinary wealth of thousands of plant species and roaring springs, is not only a tourist destination but a living miracle of nature that captivates every visitor with its grandeur.

What distinguishes this region from other parts of Iran is its exceptional vegetation cover, with more than a thousand plant and medicinal species. This remarkable biodiversity has the slopes of Mount Dena and the surrounding areas of Sisakht into a natural pharmacy and a collection of some of the world's rarest plants, whose fragrant aroma fills the hiking trails.

Lake Kuhgol, with an area of about half a hectare and a depth of 15 meters, is considered the poetic highlight of this natural landscape. This clear mountain lake, located at high elevations in the Zagros range, shines like a turquoise gem and reflects the sky in its waters.

Located in the heart of the Dena Protected Area, Kuhgol serves as a rich habitat for wildlife including ducks, mallards, cranes, storks, and many other native bird species. The sight of these birds flying over the lake and through wild vegetation creates remarkable scenes for photographers and nature enthusiasts.

After a 30-minute hike through wildflowers and the scent of thousands of medicinal plants,



● Kuhgol Lake ● karnaval.ir

visitors reach one of the most breathtaking natural attractions in the Zagros Mountains. This hiking route itself is considered a recreational and ecotourism attraction.

Mishi Spring, complementing the beauty of Kuhgol, presents another scene of wonder in the "Land of Snow and Water." Flowing along a long, relatively steep valley, it creates a striking landscape among the rocky terrain.

A stream of clear water, resem-



● Mishi Spring ● IRNA

bling strands of pearls, runs through the valley and carries life-giving water downstream. The sound of flowing water forms the natural music of this landscape.

Beyond supplying drinking water to Sisakht, the spring serves as a vital source for irrigating extensive orchards of apples, grapes, and walnuts in the region, producing high-quality agricultural products that are

known both nationally and internationally.

The Director General of the province's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization described Kuhgol and Mishi Spring as among the most popular and strategic attractions of the province during spring and summer.

He added that the region's diverse natural beauty, including towering mountains, dense forests, flowing springs, and rich plant diversity, has turned

it into one of the key tourism destinations in the country.

He noted that pleasant, clean air and easy access due to proximity to the tourist city of Sisakht have significantly increased the appeal of the area for both domestic and international visitors.

He also highlighted the availability of standard seating areas, sanitary facilities, food shops, cafés, and restaurants

in the recreational zones to ensure visitor comfort.

Tourists, he said, can also stay in eco-lodges and licensed guesthouses in Sisakht and surrounding areas for a safe and comfortable experience.

In addition, a vibrant handicraft and local souvenir market operates in the Mishi Spring recreational area, where visitors can purchase rare medicinal plants and organic local products.

To reach this natural paradise, travelers first arrive in Yasuj, the capital of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, and then travel approximately 35 kilometers northwest to reach Sisakht. From there, a further five-kilometer journey leads to the magical Kuhgol region.

With additional attractions such as the mysterious Deh Sheikh Cave, the ancient stepped village of Kareyak, and the scenic city of Sisakht, the city welcomes more than 40,000 domestic and international tourists annually. This strong tourism flow highlights its potential to become an international tourism hub.

Given the growing interest from global travelers, this hidden paradise is open to nature lovers worldwide. Visitors are invited to travel to Sisakht and experience firsthand the splendor of its thousand plant species and the flowing waters of Dena, creating lasting memories in their travel journals.