

Achaemenid remains among latest finds at Hegmataneh

Iranica Desk

Iranian archaeologists have discovered an Achaemenid column base, remains of water management systems, and architectural structures from the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods during excavations at Hegmataneh in Hamadan Province.

According to ISNA, Yaqub Mohammadifar, professor of archaeology at Bu-Ali Sina University and director of the 25th season of excavations at the Hegmataneh World Heritage Site, said that a series of geophysical studies and mapping operations were carried out alongside the latest archaeological excavations to identify buried structures and complete

research data on the historic site.

Referring to the discoveries made during the first two weeks of the current excavation season, Mohammadifar said that the findings so far include an Achaemenid column base, water conveyance structures dating back to the Middle Islamic centuries, and architectural remains from the Qajar period and the early Pahlavi era.

New excavation trenches have been opened in different sections of the site to examine the results of geophysical surveys and improve understanding of the settlement's architectural layout.

He added that trenches have been excavated along

one of the studied axes and near an area where evidence of architectural structures had previously been identified. Additional trenches were also opened in the southeastern section of the site to evaluate geoelectric survey data and determine the nature of the recorded anomalies.

Mohammadifar explained that these trenches were positioned according to standard dimensions and based on the excavation grid established for the site. Their locations were selected based on the results of geophysical studies, with the aim of uncovering buried architectural evidence.

"Alongside the progress of the excavation work, detailed documentation

of layers and findings is being carried out through mapping and the recording of spatial data. Preliminary results indicate the high potential of these areas for identifying architectural remains and completing information about the spatial organization of the ancient city under study," he said.

He added that the results of these studies could contribute to a better understanding of the spatial organization of the ancient city of Hegmataneh, the arrangement of historical architectural structures, and the reconstruction of the ancient appearance of this valuable site.

Mohammadifar continued that excavation opera-



ISNA

tions and supplementary investigations in the 25th season are still underway. He said further discoveries are expected to provide

new information about the history and structure of this ancient city, while expanded studies may reveal additional data about

the physical structure, spatial organization, and historical development of the Hegmataneh World Heritage Site.

Six newly discovered inscriptions identified at Teymareh

Iranica Desk

Six newly discovered rock inscriptions written in the Pahlavi script have been identified at the valuable Teymareh rock art complex in Golpayegan, Isfahan Province, researchers have announced.

Mohsen Jamali, a Ph.D. student in archaeology and a researcher specializing in Iran's rock art, said the inscriptions were discovered following nearly two decades of field studies at Golpayegan's rock art sites. The six newly found inscriptions have been introduced, deciphered, and analyzed for the first time in a scientific study, according to chn.ir. Jamali described the Teymareh collection as one of

Iran's richest rock art sites. More than 36,500 rock carvings have so far been identified and documented across 32 locations in Golpayegan. Alongside the rock drawings, historical inscriptions are considered among the most significant remains of the collection, providing valuable information about the language, culture, and lifestyle of people during the late Sasanian period and the early Islamic era.

The researcher noted that nine Pahlavi inscriptions had previously been documented in Golpayegan in the book *Golpayegan Rock Art: A Passage Through History*. However, during recent field investigations, he identified six additional inscriptions that are now being



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published for the first time. With these discoveries, the number of known Pahlavi inscriptions at Teymareh in Golpayegan has reached 15. According to Jamali, all of these inscriptions are located near rivers, springs, streams, or seasonal water-

ways. He said that this proximity to water sources provides an important clue for interpreting their meaning. Discussing the findings from the decipherment of the inscriptions, Jamali explained that a common feature among many of them

is the repeated use of the word "Zohab," which in the Pahlavi language refers to a river or flowing water. Two inscriptions also contain the phrase "Zohab-e Mehman," which, based on Pahlavi linguistic sources, may be interpreted as referring to a seasonal, pleasant, and drinkable spring or stream. He added that a combined analysis of the inscriptions, their geographical locations, and the region's water resources suggests that the writings were likely not only memorial markers but also served as signs identifying water sources for travelers, hunters, herders, and nomadic groups. This interpretation is also consistent with the environmental conditions of the area.

Field studies, interviews with elderly residents of nearby villages, and research into local water-related terminology indicate that the importance of water resources has remained a continuous element of the region's local culture from ancient times to the present, Jamali said. He also noted that some village names in Golpayegan include the Persian word for water, while local historical accounts and legends related to Tang-e Gharghab and areas where water collects show meaningful connections with the content of these inscriptions.

Jamali said that most of the inscriptions were written in the cursive Pahlavi script. He emphasized that the

works hold considerable linguistic and archaeological value and could provide new insights into the spread of the Pahlavi language and script, the relationship between humans and the natural environment, and the role of water in the lives of people during the late Sasanian period.

He concluded that the existence of 15 Pahlavi inscriptions within the Golpayegan rock art complex highlights the exceptional importance of the region for historical and archaeological studies in Iran. These remains represent part of the country's cultural heritage, and their preservation, documentation, and continued specialist research are essential.

Martian Mountains offer surreal landscape in Chabahar

Iranica Desk

When the name Mars comes up, many people imagine images sent back by NASA missions — a dry, lifeless world marked by strange ridges and rugged terrain. Yet one does not need to travel millions of kilometers to witness a Martian-like landscape.

In southeastern Iran, between Chabahar and Gwatar, lies a remarkable mountain range known as the "Martian Mountains" or "Miniature Mountains." For years, this natural formation has been regarded as one of the country's most unusual geological attractions, Mehr News Agency wrote.

Located around 40 to 50 kilometers east of Chabahar along the coastal road to Gwatar, the mountains present a striking scene for travelers. On one side of the road lies the Sea of Oman, while on the other rise gray and white cliffs that appear as if carved with a blade and ruler. Deep grooves, sharp ridges, and a complete absence of vegetation create a



landscape rarely seen elsewhere in Iran.

Geologists believe that much of this formation originated from ancient marine sediments. Over millions of years, remnants of marine life, limestone deposits, sand, and clay accumulated in the region and were later shaped by wind and rain erosion into their present form. Even today, traces of prehistoric marine life can still be found in parts of these formations.

These characteristics have led experts to classify the area as a type of "badlands" terrain — a form of heavily

eroded landscape found in only a few regions around the world and known for its unusual appearance that attracts both scientists and tourists.

Similar landscapes can be found in countries such as the United States — particularly in the Badlands of South Dakota — as well as in parts of Chile, Australia, and Spain. However, what distinguishes the Martian Mountains of Chabahar is their unique proximity to the sea.

Unlike most examples worldwide, which are typically located in deserts or

arid inland regions, visitors in Chabahar can simultaneously view Martian-like mountains and the blue expanse of the Sea of Oman. This rare contrast between mountain and ocean is considered one of the region's key tourism advantages.

For many travelers, the appeal of the Martian Mountains is not limited to the destination itself, but also includes the journey. The Chabahar-Gwatar coastal road offers a scenic experience, bordered by the Sea of Oman on one side and miniature mountain ranges on the other. Together with attractions such as the pink Lipar Lagoon, mangrove forests, and Gwatar Bay, the route forms one of Iran's most stunning nature corridors.

In many countries, such scenic routes are developed as dedicated tourism highways, generating significant revenue. Experts believe the Chabahar-Gwatar corridor has the potential to become one of the Middle East's most prominent tourist routes.

The tourism potential of the region has also been



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acknowledged by officials. Former Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ezzatollah Zarghami described the Martian Mountains and the Makran coast as areas with "very high ecotourism potential," emphasizing the need for infrastructure development and tourism investment.

He noted that the Makran coast and the Martian Mountains could become among the country's most important tourist destinations in the future.

Local tourism authorities report that the Makran coast

currently hosts more than one million tourists annually, with further development of accommodation, recreational, and service infrastructure expected to significantly increase this number.

Iran's tourism industry has long been centered on well-known destinations such as the northern provinces, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad. However, a new generation of travelers is increasingly seeking different experiences — destinations that offer a sense of discovery, visual appeal for social media, and a close connection to untouched nature.

The Martian Mountains fit precisely into this emerging demand. The region appeals not only to nature lovers and photographers but also to adventure tourists, geology enthusiasts, and content creators. Many images taken here are often mistaken for photographs of Mars rather than a location on Earth.

While many countries invest billions of dollars in artificial attractions, nature in southern Iran has freely offered one of its most extraordinary landscapes. Yet the Martian Mountains still remain far from reaching their full tourism potential. If infrastructure development, media promotion, and tourism investment in the Makran coast are pursued seriously, Chabahar's Martian Mountains could soon stand alongside the region's most iconic natural attractions — a place where visitors can begin their day among Mars-like hills and end it by the ocean waters of the Sea of Oman, experiencing a journey rarely matched anywhere in Iran or the world.