

Palm-leaf broom craft faces decline in Qasr-e Shirin

Iranica Desk

In the old and expansive palm groves of the border city of Qasr-e Shirin in Kermanshah Province, a deeply rooted local craft has long been woven into everyday life. Once an essential part of rural livelihoods, culture, and the household economy, palm-leaf broom weaving (Jarū-Bāfi) is now steadily fading under the pressure of lifestyle changes and the spread of industrial products.

This traditional craft is closely tied to the region's palm trees, reflecting a long-standing relationship between people and nature. Historically, every part of the date palm — from leaves to trunk — was used, leaving nothing wasted. Palm leaves were widely used to produce baskets, mats, hats, and especially brooms, forming one of the most important home-based handicrafts in the region, according to IRNA.

The origins of broom weaving in Qasr-e Shirin date back to periods when local life was entirely dependent on palm groves. At that time, date palms were not only a source of fruit but also a comprehensive provider of daily necessities. The craft evolved into a household activity carried out alongside farming and livestock rearing,



with families producing tools for their own use.

The production process involves collecting pruned palm leaves, drying them in the sun, and carefully weaving them together using natural twisting and knotting techniques. In many traditional cases, no thread or industrial material is used, preserving the craft's authenticity. The result is a lightweight, durable, and fully natural broom that was widely used in households.

In the past, women in rural areas played a central role in

this craft, working at home or in palm groves as part of their daily routines. Today, however, much of this traditional lifestyle remains only in the memories of older generations.

With modern lifestyle changes, industrial production, reduced reliance on handmade goods, and youth migration, broom weaving has seen a significant decline. Many household workshops have closed, and the transfer of skills to younger generations has become increasingly difficult.

Experts in handicrafts believe

the craft still holds strong potential for revival due to its low production cost, easy access to raw materials, and fully natural composition. They also point to the strategic location of Qasr-e Shirin — near the official border crossings of Khosravi and Parvizkhan — and the presence of Iraqi travelers and tourists as an opportunity to expand marketing and sales.

According to cultural heritage officials, training young people, supporting home-based businesses, and establishing

permanent handicraft markets could help revive the craft and reintegrate it into the local economy. However, rising costs and inflation have made handicrafts a low priority in household spending, further weakening production incentives.

Qasr-e Shirin, historically a palm-growing region, still hosts extensive date palm plantations, some over 80 years old. The city shares a long border of about 186 kilometers with Iraq and currently has around 900 hectares of palm groves, of which 650 hectares are pro-

ductive, supporting more than 15 varieties of dates.

Beyond agriculture, these palm groves also play an important environmental role as green belts and ecological shelters, while offering potential for agritourism and sustainable economic development.

Once a symbol of self-sufficiency and harmony between people and nature, palm-leaf broom weaving in Qasr-e Shirin now stands at a crossroads between preservation and oblivion.



IRNA

Echoes from empty villages in Sistan and Baluchestan Province

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Among walls that still stand, the absence of people is more striking than the ruins themselves. Tamarisk branches stretch across dusty alleys, and windows look outward with no human eyes left to meet their gaze. This is the story of a sorrow — a life pulled from the earth, leaving behind only memories and traces of what once was.

These images do not tell the story of a sudden exodus. They tell of a slow and gradual departure. A village emptied not in a single day, but over years. The houses remain. The lanes remain. Even signs of life can still be found. Yet life itself has quietly slipped away from these frames. This photo essay pauses on the details, seeking to narrate a tragedy that unfolded in silence, according to IRNA.

Several villages in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province were gradually abandoned after years of recurring drought, sandstorms, and severe water shortages. Today, little remains but crumbling structures. Amid the destruction, the dry branches of tamarisk trees have wrapped themselves around abandoned homes, as if they are the last signs of life unwilling to leave this land behind.

Drought in Sistan and Baluchestan is no longer a temporary threat; it has become a chronic crisis. Ongoing disputes over water rights to the Hamun wetlands have devastated agriculture and local livelihoods, triggering widespread migra-

tion from villages surrounding the city of Zabol. Many residents have already left, while those who remain are slowly being pushed out of the social and economic fabric of community life.

Today, ruined homes and withered tamarisk trees stand as



reminders of a forgotten way of life. Documenting these scenes is an attempt to warn of the fate awaiting villages that are quietly fading into silence. The village's narrow alley was once a path of return — a route where footsteps echoed in the evenings and lights guided families back to their homes after dark. Today, it resembles a continuous line of memories. The mud-brick walls still stand, but there are no signs of recent passage. Silence dominates the scene. Not the silence of peace, but the silence of absence. This alley is no longer a destination; it

is a corridor of remembrance. Every stone seems to carry a story of departure.

The wooden door remains half open, as if its last owner left in haste, promising, "I'll be back." Its paint has peeled away, and the lock has not turned in years, yet the door was never



fully closed. This frame tells the story of homes that were abandoned rather than destroyed. In some, belongings still remain, while the walls continue to hold the warmth of memory. The absence of people is more visible than any crack or decay. The door symbolizes a departure once thought temporary, but which became a lasting absence.

When nature moves in

Along the edges of the village, tamarisk trees have quietly spread into places that were once cultivated fields and bustling spaces of human activity.

When people retreat, nature advances. This image captures the contrast between staying and leaving. The tamarisks have remained. They have rooted themselves deeply and cast their shade without needing schools, jobs, or migration. Nature is not cruel in this



scene; it is simply carrying on. It is humanity that has been removed from the equation, leaving plants to fill the void.

Courtyard without voices

The courtyard still has its shape: walls, earth, perhaps a dry pool or a solitary tree. What is missing is sound — the laughter of children, evening conversations, the ordinary rhythms of life. More than anything, this image conveys loss. A courtyard that was once the heart of the home is now an empty space. It feels as though time has stopped here, waiting for someone to return,

open the gate, and breathe life into it once again.

Windows waiting for an answer

The window opens outward, but the world beyond is equally silent. This frame represents the house's gaze toward the



outside world — a gaze that has gone unanswered for years. Windows are symbols of connection. Here, that connection has been severed. The image evokes a long wait, one that may no longer hold any hope of ending.

Empty gathering place

A mosque, a school, or a building that once served as a meeting place now stands in silence. The walls remain, but the voices have disappeared. The image illustrates how a place loses its meaning when the community that gave it life is gone. The building survives,

but its purpose does not. It is a quiet symbol of the gradual collapse of a small society, where the absence of people is felt more deeply than anything else.

Village paused between past and future

The wide view of the village serves as the closing scene of this visual story. The houses are still visible. The land still exists. Yet life within them has faded. This image is not an ending — it is a pause. The village remains. It could one day live again.

For now, however, it stands in silence, watching its past drift slowly away through the frames. A past that has gradually receded, leaving behind only memories, empty homes, and the stubborn tamarisk trees that refused to leave.

Located in southeastern Iran, Sistan and Baluchestan is a province shaped by both water and its absence. For generations, communities in the northern Sistan region relied on the Helmand River and the Hamun wetlands for farming, livestock and daily life. But years of drought, recurring dust storms and shrinking water supplies have transformed the landscape. As fields dried and livelihoods disappeared, many residents left in search of work and stability elsewhere. The abandoned villages scattered across the region stand as visible reminders of an environmental crisis that continues to reshape one of Iran's most fragile borderlands.