



Iranica Desk

Sometimes, appreciating a work of art does not require looking at paint and canvas. It can be enough to take a closer look at a stone that has remained silent in nature for years and is now gradually taking shape under an artist's hands. Stone carving is one of those arts that takes form through silence and patience, transforming raw stone into a lasting work through the artist's skill, experience and creativity. This report introduces the art of stone carving and the work of Mohsen Shahsavand, a handicrafts artist from Tehran Province. The craft is part of Iran's traditional artistic heritage and still has the potential to play an influential role in contemporary life and architecture, according to chn.ir.

Stone carving is an ancient art rooted in Iran's culture and civilization. Its traces can be seen in historical buildings, columns, capitals, inscriptions, stone tablets, architectural ornaments and

Stone carving helps preserve Iran's ancient artistic heritage

numerous artistic works from different historical periods of the country. For a stone carver, stone is more than a raw material; it is a medium whose characteristics must be properly understood to bring the desired forms and patterns out of it.

Choosing the right stone is the first step in the craft. The artist must be familiar with the type, texture, hardness and other characteristics of each stone and select appropriate tools and carving techniques according to the nature of the work. The design and preparation process then begins, with the artist gradually and carefully removing material from the raw stone until the final form emerges.

Shahsavand is an active stone-carving artist who draws on his experience and skills to create designs and produce stone works. In his workshop, each piece of stone follows a different path, beginning with selection and preparation and ending with carving, shaping and finishing.

What stands out most in this process is the combination of skill and patience. Stone carving is not an art that can be completed in haste. Every stroke of a tool must be carefully calculated, as a wrong movement can permanently remove

part of the stone. This is why the artist's experience is particularly important in this field, while understanding how stone behaves, together with hand skills, plays a decisive role in the final result. Despite its long historical background, stone carving also has the potential to remain relevant in contemporary life. The use of carved works in architecture, urban design, decorative elements, artworks and functional products can help create a connection between traditional art and modern needs.

Specialized workshops such as Shahsavand's are not merely places where handicrafts are produced; they also serve as important settings for the transmission of knowledge and experience. Skills passed down from one gener-

ation to another over many years can gradually be forgotten if they are not practiced and taught in real production environments. Stone carving also has considerable potential for job creation and economic development in the handicrafts sector. Supporting artists in this field, creating opportunities for carved works to enter domestic and international markets, holding training courses and introducing the craft's poten-

tial can all contribute to its further development.

At a time when many products are made rapidly with the help of new technologies, stone carving serves as a reminder of the value of being handmade — the time an artist devotes to creating a work and the identity conveyed to the product through their skills. Perhaps this is what elevates carved works beyond being merely decorative objects and turns them into part of a community's cultural narrative.

One of the most important characteristics of Iranian stone carving is its deep connection with architecture and the country's cultural identity. Many of the patterns and forms seen in stone works are rooted in historical motifs, traditional architecture and visual elements of Iranian culture. From this perspective, preserving stone-carving skills is not merely a matter of supporting a profession; it is also an effort to safeguard part of the country's traditional knowledge and intangible cultural heritage.

Stone carving may initially appear to be a hard and rugged art, but behind the sound of tools and the resistance of stone lies a profound delicacy. By understanding the material precisely, the

artist does not fight the stone but works with it, allowing the final form to gradually emerge from within.

Supporting such workshops, introducing artists and creating opportunities for training and the transfer of experience to younger generations can help secure the future of this art — an art that has existed alongside Iranian architecture and culture for centuries and can still find a new place in handicrafts and applied arts while preserving its authenticity.



Reading Room

Avicenna's journey from science to search for truth

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The Wandering Physician: An Account of the Life of Avicenna, written by Mohammad Reza Tavakoli-Saberi, explores the life, ideas and intellectual pursuits of Avicenna, the renowned Iranian physician and philosopher.

Recently published by Morvarid Publishing House, the book offers a human and poetic portrayal of Avicenna, bringing together science, philosophy, love, suffering and the search for truth.

The story begins in Bukhara, the powerful capital of the Samanid dynasty. In the fourth century AH, Bukhara was one of the most prosperous, advanced and brilliant cities in the Islamic world and a major center of science, culture, trade and civilization. Located along the Silk Road, the city was also a multicultural center. Persian speakers formed the majority of its population, while Arabs, Turks, Turkmens, Chinese, Jews, Nestorian Christians and Zoroastrians also lived there.

Its bustling markets brought together merchants and scholars from different lands, helping make Bukhara one of the major centers of civilization of its time, according to IBNA. According to Tavakoli-Saberi, the title The Wandering Physician refers not only to Avicenna's numerous

journeys but also to his inner journey. Throughout his life, Avicenna traveled from Bukhara to Gurgan, Gorgan, Rey, Hamadan and Isfahan. Political turmoil, rivalries and the instability of the rulers of his time repeatedly forced him to leave one place for another. During these journeys, in addition to confronting political power, imprisonment and exile, he grappled with fundamental questions about truth, life, freedom and the meaning of knowledge.



From the author's perspective, Avicenna's life cannot be understood solely through his scientific achievements. He was a seeker who sought, through science and philosophy, to understand both the external world and the inner world of human beings. The Wandering Physician seeks to highlight this human dimension by portraying Avicenna's philosophical and mystical reflections, as well as his interactions with students, scholars, philosophers and mystics of his time, alongside

the political and social events that shaped his life.

Avicenna is regarded as one of the most renowned and influential scientists and philosophers of Iran and the Islamic world. His fame rests primarily on his contributions to philosophy and medicine, works that influenced generations of physicians and philosophers. Tavakoli-Saberi said Avicenna's life is also significant as an example for those pursuing knowledge. From childhood until

the end of his life, he remained committed to learning, research and teaching. Even while holding political positions and constantly traveling from one city to another, he continued his scholarly work and writing.

One of Avicenna's most important scientific legacies is The Canon of Medicine. The significance of this work lies not only in the breadth of its contents but also in Avicenna's effort to organize the medical knowledge of his time into a systematic framework. He collected

Mohammad Reza Tavakoli-Saberi



and classified medical knowledge from earlier traditions and incorporated his own observations, experiences and innovations. The Canon established connections between symptoms, diagnosis, causes, prognosis and treatment, creating a coherent system for medical education and practice. The influence of The Canon of Medicine extended far beyond the Islamic world. About 150 years after it was written, the work was translated into Latin in Spain. Following the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg, it was also among the early books to be printed. It was subsequently translated into various languages and remained a standard medical textbook at European universities for roughly six centuries. In the Islamic world, it continued to be taught until relatively recent centuries and today is studied mainly from the perspective of medical history.

At the same time, Tavakoli-Saberi stresses the need to distinguish between Avicenna's method of medicine and the scientific content of his medical theories. Some aspects of his medical thought, including the theory of the four humors and certain views on physiology and disease, were later abandoned as modern science advanced. Modern medicine explains many diseases that Avicenna attributed to an imbalance of the humors through advances in physiology, biochemistry, pathology and microbiology, identifying causes such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi.

Nevertheless, Avicenna's approach to scientific inquiry remains significant from the perspective of the history of science. Careful observation, classification of symptoms, comparison of cases, testing treatments and revising views based on evidence were among the features of his approach that bear similarities to certain principles of modern medical science.

According to the author, if Avicenna were alive today, he would probably set aside many of the scientific theories presented in The Canon and use modern knowledge and technology to conduct research and develop new theories. Some of his philosophical ideas, particularly his views on natural philosophy and Aristotelian cosmology, would likewise be challenged by modern astronomy and cosmology.

Yet Avicenna's intellectual achievement must be judged within the context of his time. Working with the limited scientific tools and knowledge available in his era, he advanced the medicine and philosophy of his day to a level whose influence endured for centuries. His legacy therefore lies not only in the theories he proposed, many of which were later superseded, but also in his enduring commitment to observation, reason, learning and the pursuit of knowledge.

