Qaleh Geli sheds light on Iran's ancient past

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Located in Qaleh Afghan Village on the Khanmirza Plain, the ancient archaeological site of Qaleh Geli (lit. Mud Castle), known also as Qaleh-ye Afghan, preserves evidence of several historical periods, including prehistoric times, the Middle Elamite period and the Islamic era.

Historical sites are far more than collections of mounds, artefacts and surviving remnants of the past. They form an essential part of the cultural and historical identity of a region, telling the story of the way of life, civilization and heritage of the people who inhabited the land centuries ago, according to ISNA.

Across Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, numerous archaeological sites offer valuable opportunities to explore the region's past. These remarkable remains deserve protection not only to preserve the heritage of previous generations but also to pass on the region's historical identity to future generations.

The ancient archaeological complex of Qaleh Geli is one such historical treasure, containing evidence of different periods of human occupation. Archaeological finds and evidence from the site date back to prehistoric times, the Middle Elamite period and the Islamic era, making it an important part of the province's archaeological heritage.

Its preservation requires serious attention, continuous protection and effective measures to prevent encroachment and destruction. The importance of safeguarding such sites becomes particularly clear when we consider that any damage could result in the permanent loss of irreplaceable evidence about the region's history. The site has also been officially listed as a national heritage monument.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a visit to the archaeological site, Ali Asghar Norouzi, an archaeologist, highlighted the historical significance of Qaleh Geli in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province.

He said the archaeological complex is located in Qaleh Afghan Village and covers approximately 15 hectares, of which nearly four hectares comprise the main archaeological mound. The mound stands about 25 meters high.



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Referring to the history of the site's discovery, Norouzi said the archaeological mound had been identified before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, but its remains had not been comprehensively studied.

In 1996, archaeological test excavations were carried out to determine the site's boundaries. These investigations revealed the extent and significance of the archaeological complex. The discovery of a cuneiform inscription further enhanced its historical importance.

Norouzi described Qaleh Geli as the most important and largest archaeological site in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province.

According to studies conducted at the site, the mound was formed through the accumulation of successive layers of human occupation, including the remains of houses and other buildings constructed during different historical periods. Following their destruction, new structures were repeatedly built on the same location.

He said the archaeological evidence identified so far dates back approximately 7,000 years, adding that further research could reveal even earlier phases of occupation.

The site was inhabited and used repeatedly throughout different historical periods and, at certain times, served as one of the region's important centers.

Explaining its significance during prehistoric times, Norouzi said that approximately 7,000 years ago, Qaleh Geli functioned as a central settlement because of its size and importance, with various activities taking place there.

The remains of pottery kilns are among the archaeological evidence indicating the activities carried out at the site during that period.

The archaeologist also discussed the remains dating from the Elamite period, explaining that Elamite history is generally divided into the Old, Middle and Neo-Elamite periods.

He said that most of the archaeological materials identified at Qaleh Geli so far belong to the Old and Middle Elamite periods.

According to inscriptions and cuneiform texts discovered at the site, one of the kings of the Middle Elamite period made offerings at this location through a temple identified by archaeologists. These offerings were intended to secure the health and well-being of the king and his family.

Norouzi said this evidence demonstrates the site's considerable religious and historical significance during that period, suggesting that the Elamite king personally visited the location to perform religious rituals.

He further emphasized that archaeological evidence and research indicate that Qaleh Geli also held considerable political importance. At one stage in its history, the site served as an administrative and political center for the surrounding region.

Evidence also suggests that several generations of kings visited Qaleh Geli and that the site played a significant role in controlling and administering a substantial part of the High Zagros region.

Discussing the site's historical standing, Norouzi said Qaleh Geli had been an important regional center during the Elamite period but subsequently experienced a period of decline.

Nevertheless, archaeological evidence indicates that the site once again assumed an important central role during the Islamic era.

How clothing reflected social class in Qajar-era Iran

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Iran's historic bazaars during the Qajar era (1789-1925) served not only as major centers of trade and commerce but also as important social and cultural hubs. They were places where goods were exchanged, people interacted, news circulated and different segments of society came together.

In a written account, Mohammad Salehi, head of museums in Markazi Province, said the clothing worn by people in bazaars reflected their social standing, economic circumstances, religious beliefs, climatic conditions and prevailing customs, according to chtn.ir.

Examining the clothing of men and women in Qajar-era bazaars, he noted, offers valuable insight into Iran's social structure and clothing traditions during the period.

Men's clothing in Qajar-era bazaars varied according to social status, occupation, financial means and local climate. Nevertheless, certain garments were widely worn across different segments of society.

One of the most common items was the Qaba, a long robe generally worn over a shirt. Shirts, loose-fitting trousers and various types of outer garments were also essential components of men's attire.

In many cases, men wore a sash around their waists, which served not only as part of their clothing but also as a practical means of carrying small personal belongings.

The material and quality of garments varied according to individuals' financial circumstances, ranging from simple, inexpensive fabrics to finer and more costly textiles.

Headwear was another important element of men's clothing. Styles of hats changed throughout the Qajar period, with different types becoming popular among various social groups at different times. Turbans were also commonly worn by certain groups, particularly religious scholars.

Men's footwear was generally chosen according to their occupations and daily activities. Merchants, craftsmen and laborers typically wore simple, durable shoes, while wealthier individuals could afford better-quality footwear.

The clothing of merchants, shopkeepers, porters and artisans also differed according to the nature of their daily work.

Women's clothing during the Qajar period was influenced by religious beliefs, social conventions and prevailing cultural norms.

In many Iranian cities, women wore garments in public that covered their bodies and hair. However, clothing styles varied across regions and social classes.

The chador, a full-body outer covering, was among the most common garments worn by women in public. Face veils or coverings were also used in some regions and among certain groups of women, although their prevalence varied across cities and historical periods.

Underneath the chador, women wore garments such as shirts, skirts or trousers, with their styles, fabrics and decorative details differing according to economic and social circumstances.

Women from wealthy families generally had greater access to high-quality fabrics, elaborately decorated garments and a wider range of jewelry. By contrast, women from less affluent households tended to wear simpler, more practical clothing.

These differences reflected the close relationship between dress, economic circumstances and social standing.

Women's presence in bazaars also depended on the cultural and social conditions of each region. Some visited markets to purchase daily necessities, fabrics and household goods or to engage in economic activities.

Women involved in certain occupations and production-related activities also wore practical clothing suited to the nature of their work.

Qajar-era bazaars brought together people from a wide range of social backgrounds. Merchants, tradespeople, artisans, laborers, shoppers and travelers moved through these commercial spaces, each wearing clothing that reflected different lifestyles and circumstances.

The type of garment and quality of its fabric could sometimes indicate an individual's economic and social position. However, clothing alone cannot provide a definitive measure of a person's social standing.

Climate was another important factor influencing clothing choices. In colder regions, thicker outer garments were more common, while people in warmer areas generally wore lighter clothing suited to local weather conditions.

Fashion during the Qajar period was also influenced by cultural developments and contact with other countries. In particular, some changes in clothing styles became apparent among certain segments of society during the later Qajar period, although the extent to which these changes were adopted varied across social classes and regions.

Studying the clothing worn by men and women in historic bazaars provides valuable information not only about everyday life but also about social relations, class distinctions, consumption patterns and cultural developments.

Historical documents, travel accounts, photographs and surviving paintings from the Qajar period can help researchers reconstruct clothing styles and better understand how people dressed and interacted in the bazaars of the time.

Overall, men's and women's clothing in Qajar-era bazaars formed an important part of Iran's social and cultural identity. Men's garments, including the Qaba, shirts, trousers and various types of headwear, as well as women's chadors and underlying garments, were worn according to social, economic, cultural and climatic conditions.

Differences in fabric quality, tailoring, decoration and garment design also reflected the social diversity of the period.

The study of clothing in Qajar-era bazaars can therefore serve as an important area of historical and anthropological research, contributing to a deeper understanding of everyday life in Iran and the preservation of the country's cultural heritage.