

## Minister: Iran Exit From ICOMOS 'Fake' News



TEHRAN -- Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ezzatollah Zarghami here Wednesday denied news about Iran's withdrawal from the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and Historical Sites and Monuments (ICOMOS) as "fake".

"The ICOM and ICOMOS are two international non-governmental organizations, and due to their non-governmental field of work, their membership fees have been paid by natural persons every year," Zarghami told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

"Therefore, the new revision that took place in the rules has nothing to do with Iran's continuing with or withdrawal from

these two organizations," he said.

"Some people do not know what ICOM and ICOMOS are, but say that Iran has withdrawn from the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and Historical Sites and Monuments (ICOMOS)," he added.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is comprised of professionals, experts, and representatives from local authorities, companies and heritage organizations, and is dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of the architectural and landscape heritage in France and throughout the world.

## Tehran Art Bureau Exhibits 'Life After War in Syria'



TEHRAN -- An exhibition titled 'Return: Photos of Life After the War in Syria' debuted on Sunday at the Iran Photographers Gallery No. 2, located in Tehran's Art Bureau.

Comprising 49 images captured by five Iranian photographers, the showcase includes the diverse spectrum of emotions experienced by Syrian citizens in the aftermath of war.

Among the showcased works are snapshots depicting resilient scenes of young individuals engaged in play amidst the remnants of war-torn neighborhoods, symbolizing the enduring spirit of the Syrian people.

Photographer Amir Rostami, a participant in the exhibition, shared insights into his experiences during two extensive trips to Syria in 2018 and 2019, capturing the profound attachment of Syrians to their homeland, even amidst the devastation.

Meysam Maleki, another contributing photographer, recounted his encounters in the Yarmouk district, witnessing the effects of conflict on Palestinian refugees and the resilience of those working to rebuild despite challenges.

The exhibition will remain on display at the Iran Photographers Gallery No. 2, situated in Art Bureau on Somayeh Street, between Qarani and Hafez streets,

until May 16, inviting visitors to contemplate the resilience and humanity captured within each frame.

## 'Cultural Customs and Traditions of Nowruz' Published in Italian



LONDON (IRNA) — An Italian publication has brought out the first Italian edition of 'Cultural Customs and Traditions of Nowruz' by Persian writer Reza Shabani.

The book, 'IL NOWRUZ LE SUE TRADIZIONI', has been published by Italian publication "Il Cerchio" in collaboration with the Iranian Culture Center in Rome, Iran's cultural attaché in Italy Muhammad-Taghi Amini told IRNA.

Amini said the book is available in reputable bookstores for Italian readers for €25.

Nowruz is the beginning of the Iranian or Persian New Year celebrated worldwide.

It is a festival based on the spring equinox, which marks the first day of the new year in the Iranian Solar Hijri calendar, on or around March 21 on the Gregorian calendar.

# 2,500-Year-Old Fortress Unearthed Outside Birjand

TEHRAN -- While excavating in a lightly explored eastern region of their home country, a team of Iranian archaeologists unearthed the remains of a solid circular adobe structure that featured six separate towers.

The ancient structure, which was constructed on a man-made mound known as Tappe Takhchar-Abad, has been dated to the sixth century BC, during the era of the legendary Achaemenid Empire. This means the building and its towers are at least 2,500 years old.

The astonishing fortress was discovered near the city of Birjand in the province of South Khorasan in northeast Iran. It is an architectural relic from ancient times when Iran was a center of remarkable civilizations, showcasing the ingenuity of Achaemenid builders and their mastery of adobe construction techniques during the period of the Achaemenid Empire, which thrived from 550 to 330 BC.

"The evidence of pottery, building plan and absolute dating indicate that the Takhchar Abad building was constructed in the late Iron Age/Achaemenid period," the Iranian archaeologists wrote in an article published in *Antiquity*. "This building was abandoned c. 500-400 BC, until the Parthian period (second and third centuries AD) when it was re-occupied; finally, it was filled and covered during the third-fourth centuries AD."

Excavations commenced in the Khorasan region in 2009 and have persisted to the present day. However, because of remote and barren nature of the area only four excavation seasons have ever been completed. The latest Achaemenid find represents perhaps the most dramatic discovery to be made at this long-neglected location.

The towers and accompanying structure occupy the apex of the elevated formation known Tappe Takhchar-Abad, which sits on a deserted plain on the outskirts of Birjand. Tappe Takhchar-Abad is a semi-cone-shaped mound that has a diameter of 138 feet (42 meters) and a height of 13 feet (four meters).



Its Achaemenid builders surrounded the site with a 36-foot (11-meter) wide trench that was supplied with water from a nearby reservoir, so it could function as a protective moat.

Archaeologists unearthed the circular building, which was made from adobe and pisé (rammed earth), during the most recent excavation season. When they were finished digging what they'd revealed was a structure with a diameter of 59 feet (18 meters) that featured six solid towers and walls that were as high as 10 feet (3 meters) at their tallest points.

Interestingly, the building had not been covered by the forces of nature but had instead been intentionally buried and filled with sand approximately 1,700 years ago. The burying process had taken place in two stages, as tests showed the building was filled up to a height of six feet (almost two meters) with alternating layers of brick, sand and stones.

The latest digs at Tappe Takhchar-Abad revealed that after the structure had been filled and covered the first time, new buildings were constructed directly over it. This would have taken place during the latter stages of the Parthian period (247 BC - 224 AD), when the lands of eastern Iran were controlled by the Parthian Empire.

Circular structures have been found in the surrounding region before, and traditionally these structures have always been credited to the Parthians. But the latest evidence

shows that the Achaemenids built older versions of these round buildings, presumably creating the model that the Parthians later followed.

However, this architectural style didn't actually originate in the Achaemenid culture. Even older circular structures have been discovered at several sites excavated in Bactria, an ancient Iranian state to the east of Greater Khorasan that included the lands of modern-day Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In fact the building on Tappe Takhchar-Abad closely resembles an Iron Age/Achaemenid-period circular structure with towers known as Garry Kyariz I, which is located 42 miles (67 kilometers) northwest of Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on lands that would have been adjacent to Bactrian territory in ancient times.

"The construction of circular buildings and sites is an architectural tradition of the late Iron Age/Achaemenid period in Greater Khorasan, apparently originating from Bactria where the majority of such sites are found," the study authors wrote, confirming the importation of this building style from the east.

At the height of its power, the Achaemenid Empire included land stretching from the River Syr Darya in central Asia all the way to Egypt in the far west. Most of what is known about the Achaemenid culture comes from excavations in southwest Iran, where the empire was based. Nevertheless, up to now archaeological excavations have been few and far

between in the Greater Khorasan region of eastern Iran, even though it is known that the Achaemenids had an active and robust presence in this area.

This is why the unearthing of the circular structure and its towers in South Khorasan is generating so much interest in the archaeological community. The existence of the trench surrounding it makes it clear that this was some kind of fortress or guard post, which could have kept a watch out for invaders who might have threatened the village of Takhchar-Abad.

In addition to what was discovered at Tappe Takhchar-Abad, recent excavations inside the village of Takhchar-Abad resulted in the recovery of a diverse collection of pottery pieces. Some of these have been linked to the Late Iron Age and the early Achaemenid period (from the seventh through the sixth centuries BC), while the remainder came from Parthian settlers who lived in the village several hundred years later. This has helped the researchers pin down the timeline of when the village was occupied, and by whom.

When excavations resume at Takhchar-Abad, Iranian archaeologists will continue their search for artifacts that shed light on the cultural, social, economic and spiritual practices of the Achaemenids and the Parthians, who represented two of the most powerful and influential empires to arise in the ancient Middle East.

## Picture of the Day



Boy on a donkey in Hargalan, Ajabshir in northwest Iran.