

Morvar Weaving: The Art of Davijan



TEHRAN -- The gentle rustle of willow rods greets the dawn in the winding alleys of Davijan, a centuries-old village near Malayer, western Iran. For the villagers, this sound is a reminder of their art, livelihood, and heritage.

Here, the traditional craft of morvar weaving or willow weaving persists despite challenges from raw material sales, seasonal work, and market intermediaries.

Davijan, historically called Dev-on, is nestled between two ancient fortresses, yet today its fame comes not from history alone but from the skillful hands of its artisans. From thin willow rods, they create beauty, weaving not just products but the soul of their land into every basket, cradle, and decorative piece.

Over 120 active workshops in the village carry forward this intricate craft, passed down through generations.

Morvar weaving is interwoven with the economy of the region. Artisans like Asieh, who has spent over four decades mastering the craft, maintain small workshops where patience and creativity converge.

In her workshop, under the soft glow of a yellow lamp, the rhythmic tapping of rods becomes a gentle symphony. Each finished piece—from small bread baskets to elaborate jewelry boxes—tells stories of hours of dedication and cultural preservation.

Women are central to this art. Young apprentices like Fatemeh spend months learning the delicate techniques, preparing to open their own workshops and create employment opportunities.

Asieh's team of over 25 women, both in her workshop and working from home, produces items for local markets and international orders, showcasing the craft's commercial

potential. Despite this, financial constraints remain a hurdle, and access to support and credit is limited.

Morvar itself is cultivated across more than 200 hectares in Malayer and surrounding villages, supplying about 70% of the country's needs. Around 30% of woven products are exported, mainly to neighboring countries.

The production process is meticulous: rods are cut, boiled, peeled, dried, and polished before they can be woven into items ranging from multi-tiered baskets to cradles and decorative furniture.

Yet the craft faces challenges. Many artisans work seasonally, balancing agricultural duties with weaving, and raw material sales often bypass the creators, allowing intermediaries to profit instead.

Local infrastructure for workshops, markets, and cooperatives is lacking, and unified pricing is rare. Although Malayer produces over seven million pieces annually and Davijan is offi-



cially recognized as a national village for the craft, market access remains a struggle, especially domestically.

Hope is on the horizon. A recent initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture promises credit lines for women artisans, while two new digital platforms aim to connect producers directly with buyers, bypassing middlemen. These efforts could transform Davijan's morvar weaving industry, empowering women, expanding markets, and ensuring that this centuries-old craft continues to thrive.

In Davijan, every woven rod is a testament to patience, culture, and resilience—a craft that not only shapes objects but preserves a legacy, connecting past, present, and future through the art of morvar weaving.

Shapur I Statue Unveiled in Tehran: ‘You Will Kneel Before Iran Again’

TEHRAN -- Crowds packed central Tehran on Friday for the unveiling of a statue celebrating an ancient Persian victory over foreign enemies -- a show of defiance toward Iran's modern-day foes in the wake of its recent 12-day war with Israel.

Thousands filled Enghelab Square to see the monument depicting the triumphant Sasanian king Shapur I looming on horseback over the kneeling Roman emperor Valerian, whom the Persian ruler captured in the third century AD.

Over Shapur's shoulder, multiple storeys high, stood a depiction of an ancient Persian warrior and a modern Iranian soldier, both grasping the same spear. Inscribed on their shields, the slogan: "You will kneel before Iran again."

"Such stories have repeatedly occurred through history, and the aggressors to Iran will suffer the same fate," Fatemeh Roshanbakhsh, 40, told AFP at the event.

The new statue was modeled on a stone engraving in southern Iran carved around the time of the original victory.

Student Moein, 21, said he had "studied about it in history books", adding that gatherings like Friday's "positively affect people's morale".

"Our nation has always been and will al-



A statue depicting Sasanian king Shapur I capturing Roman emperor Valerian during its unveiling at Enghelab Square in Tehran.

ways be victorious," Moein added.

Alongside the sculpture of Shapur, organizers hung banners portraying slain Iranian military figures, including revered Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) commander Qasem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a 2020 U.S. strike in Baghdad, and Amirali Hajizadeh, head of the IRGC's Aerospace force, who was martyred in the Israeli attacks.

In June Israel launched an unprovoked military aggression against Iran, martyring more than a thousand people, according to official figures.

Tehran reciprocated with missile and drone attacks on Israel, killing dozens of Zionists.

"Iran throughout history had generals that defeated the system of blasphemy and arrogance," psychologist Roshanbakhsh, clad

Eyvan: Where Sasanian History Meets Legendary Love

TEHRAN -- In the western reaches of Iran's Ilam Province, the county of Eyvan offers a remarkable convergence of history, architecture, and folklore.

Amidst its mountainous landscapes and winding rivers, Eyvan is home to lesser-known yet culturally and historically significant sites, where the ancient past is inseparable from local legends.

Two such sites—the Siah Gel Fire Temple and the Stone Arch of Shirin and Farhad—stand as testaments to the region's Sasanian heritage. These monuments not only showcase architectural ingenuity but also serve as enduring symbols in the local imagination, intertwining religion, ritual, and romance.

According to Habibollah Mahmoudian, a professor of archaeology, the Siah Gel Fire Temple is among the best-preserved religious structures from the Sasanian period in Ilam Province.

Situated near the village of Sar Tang alongside the Kangir River in the Zarneh district, the temple features a square iwan

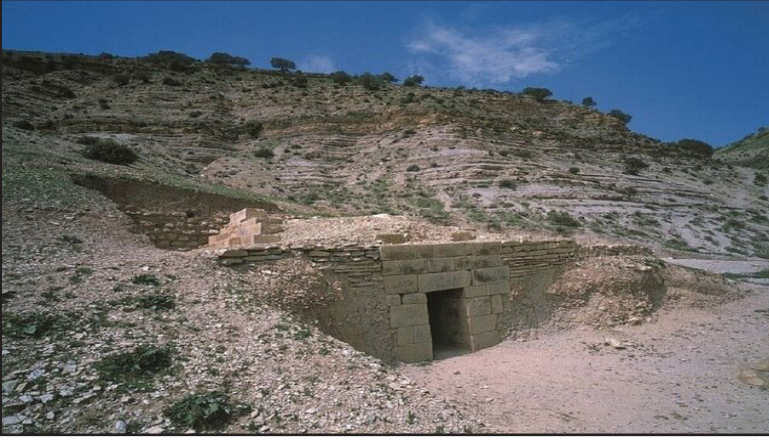
measuring 5 × 5 meters with a height of approximately 10 meters.

Its thick, one-meter walls enclose a central fire altar, while venting holes in the roof facilitated the escape of smoke from sacred fires. Historical evidence suggests the temple once included a courtyard and circumambulatory passageways for Zoroastrian worshippers.

Registered in 2000 (Iranian National Heritage No. 2793), the Siah Gel Fire Temple provides rare insight into religious architecture and ritual practice during the Sasanian era.

Located in the village of Chehel Zar'i within Tang-e Kushk, the Stone Arch of Shirin and Farhad is a Sasanian-era monument carved into a mountainside and oriented southeast.

Buried under earth and debris for centuries, it was excavated and restored in 2000. While some scholars identify it as a Mithraic sanctuary, local tradition links the structure to the legendary love story of Shirin and Farhad.



According to regional folklore, Farhad carved the arch during the day so that Shirin might rest there by night, giving the monument its enduring name.

Farzad Sharifi, director-general of Ilam's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, notes that the arch has become emblematic of love,

labor, and devotion in local culture, illustrating the interplay between material heritage and oral tradition.

Beyond its architectural landmarks, Eyvan boasts numerous natural attractions, including the Haft Qolou waterfalls, the Manesht and Mahkoul mountains, and the village of Satyān.

Veteran Filmmaker and Television Director Dies at 68



TEHRAN -- Masoud Rashidi, a stalwart of Iranian cinema and television, has passed away at the age of 68 following a long illness, succumbing to a sudden cardiac arrest on the morning of Saturday.

Rashidi's career, spanning decades, encompassed both short and feature-length forms, as well as some of the country's most enduring television dramas.

From early short films such as Forsat-e Sabz (Green Opportunity), Ta Enteha-ye Hozur (To the End of Presence), and Shift-e Shab (Night Shift) to feature works including Nish, Madaram Bash (Be My Mother), and Rooz-e Toolani (A Long Day), his oeuvre consistently displayed a keen sensitivity to human experience.

In television, Rashidi's hand shaped several of Iran's widely watched series, including Majaraye Aghaye Doosti (The Adventures of Mr. Doosti), Roozegar-e Vasl (Time of Union), Tanha Dar Tariki (Alone in the Dark), Baran-e Bahari (Spring

Rain), Golrizan, Ghalb-e Yakhi (Frozen Heart), and Haft Ganj (Seven Treasures). His work often balanced popular appeal with nuanced storytelling, reflecting the textures of contemporary Iranian life.

Rashidi also served as an assistant to the late Dariush Mehrjui on landmark films such as Hamoon and Banoo, experiences that would inform his own directorial vision and cement his place within the lineage of Iranian cinema.

The Iranian Youth Cinema Society, reflecting on his contributions, described him as "part of the great family of the nation's short-film cinema," a testament to both his artistic rigor and mentorship across generations.

Rashidi's passing marks the loss of a filmmaker whose work bridged television's immediacy with cinema's enduring contemplative frame—a voice of empathy and narrative subtlety that will resonate in Iranian screen culture for years to come.

Over 70,000 Fans Flock to Tehran Staging of Oliver Twist Musical

TEHRAN -- Hussein Parsai's latest theatrical spectacle, the musical Oliver Twist, has captured the hearts of more than 70,000 audience members, with standout improvisational moments by Hootan Shakiba in the role of Fagin generating widespread buzz.

Parsai's rendition of the classic tale is currently playing to packed audiences at the Tennis Stadium in Tehran's Enghelab Sports Complex. Due to popular demand, additional performances have been added for November 21, 22, and 23, with daily attendance reaching roughly 6,000 theatergoers.

The production has already made headlines for celebrity appearances behind the scenes, including a visit from acclaimed singer Alireza Ghorbani, which quickly went viral on social media.

To ensure audience comfort during the colder months, organizers have installed six new heaters and covered the stadium, demonstrating a commitment to blending scale with experience.

Yet it is Shakiba's spontaneous interactions as Fagin that have truly resonated with viewers. Using humor to address the audience on the ban against photography, Shakiba's quick-witted improvisation has sparked a wave of social media attention, highlighting the actor's remarkable creativity and stage presence.

Based on Charles Dickens' classic novel, Oliver Twist chronicles the hardships of a young boy navigating 19th-century London. The musical adaptation, penned by Lionel Bart in 1960, has become one of the most celebrated productions in theatrical history and was later adapted into an Oscar-winning musical film by Carol Reed in 1968.

Parsai's current production revisits his 2017 staging, which ran for 120 performances at Tehran's Vahdat Hall. The

new version features a full redesign, fresh artistic direction, and musical arrangements by Lionel Bart, dramaturgy by Muhammadreza Kouhestani, and a talented ensemble of actors, singers, and production staff.

While remaining faithful to the original story, this updated version emphasizes social inequality and life's harsh

realities through nuanced changes in the script and select musical numbers.

The cast includes over 150 performers and crew members, featuring Hootan Shakiba, Behnoush Tabatabai, Banipal Shomon, and Amir-Kaveh Ahanijan, with special appearances by Siamak Ansari and Kazem Sayahi. Young actors Rayan Sarlek, Parham Gholamloo,

and Arsham Jahanpanah bring Oliver and Dodger to life, under the artistic direction of Soheil Danesh-Eshraghi.

Produced by Jalil Kia under the Harir Honar Shargh Cultural and Artistic Institute, Oliver Twist stands as one of this fall's largest-scale musical productions, with Mahmoud Shobeyri serving as senior advisor.

Picture of the Day



Followers of the Yarsan faith gather in Toot-Shami village, Dalahu County, Iran, in mid-November to celebrate the ancient Khawankar ritual with sacred hymns and tanbur music after three days of fasting, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness and renewal of unity and compassion.

Photo by IRNA