

To Restore or to Remember? Dilemma Facing War-Damaged Heritage



TEHRAN — In the aftermath of the terrorist U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, cities face a profound question: what should be done with the traces left behind? Should damaged spaces be swiftly rebuilt to restore normalcy, or should portions be preserved as memorials to conflict?

Muhammad Hussein Talebian, former deputy minister of cultural heritage, architect, and heritage expert, has said that war damage becomes part of a historical site's identity and cannot be overlooked.

"When a significant event occurs at a historical monument, that event becomes part of the site's history," Talebian stated. "In the future, it must be considered as part of that place's narrative." Talebian pointed to international examples, including Hiroshima, where buildings that served as witnesses to the atomic bombing have been preserved alongside a museum that narrates the events with precision. Similarly, in Warsaw, portions of the city were rebuilt while other sections were preserved as witnesses to war—some achieving World Heritage status.

He also drew on Iran's experience, noting that during the Iran-Iraq War, numerous locations witnessed historically significant events. In recent years, efforts to

register and protect war-related memorials have begun and continue to progress.

Talebian recalled the reconstruction of Bam Citadel following the devastating earthquake. At the time, he managed the site, and temporary pathways were designed to allow visitors to observe the destruction up close. Later, while restoration plans were implemented, a decision was made to preserve portions of the damage as symbols and witnesses to the disaster.

"These events reflect the hostility of adversaries toward Iran's history, civilization, and cultural identity," he said.

Talebian emphasized that restoring war-damaged monuments requires sensitivity, as restoration is not merely technical but cultural. Specialized groups must determine which sections should remain as war markers, how they should be protected, and to what extent they should be exposed to the public.

He noted that new technologies, including light and sound displays, can recreate historical narratives—as already demonstrated at Persepolis, where visitors can observe the process of fire and destruction from Alexander's era.

(Continued on Page 7)

Karbala and Eternal Echo of Martyrdom in Iran's Cultural Memory

TEHRAN -- Hekmatollah Mollasalehi, Emeritus Professor at the University of Tehran, interprets the commemorative traditions associated with Karbala as enduring civilizational structures of meaning through which Islamic societies have preserved ethical consciousness, collective identity, and spiritual continuity for more than fifteen centuries.

From this perspective, the rituals of mourning, poetry, narrative transmission, and ceremonial remembrance connected to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ibn Ali, Muslim ibn Aqil in Kufa, and the members of the Prophet's household under the leadership of Zaynab bint Ali are not merely devotional practices. Rather, they constitute long-term cultural systems in which historical events are transformed into symbolic frameworks of moral reflection and collective memory.

Mollasalehi situates these traditions within a broader comparative horizon of ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean civilizations.



In Mesopotamia, ritual lamentation associated with the myth of Dumuzi (Tammuz) represents one of the earliest structured expressions of mourning, linked to cycles of death, disappearance, and renewal.

Similar mytho-ritual structures can be identified in ancient Egyptian, Canaanite, Anatolian, Aegean, and Hellenic cultures, where narratives of suffering, loss, and

regeneration formed central components of religious imagination and communal ritual life.

Within Iranian cultural memory, the figure of Siyavash occupies a distinct position as a human archetype of innocence, justice, and moral integrity. Unlike Near Eastern fertility deities such as Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, or Osiris, Siyavash is portrayed as a noble human prince

whose unjust death becomes the basis of ritual mourning traditions known as Siyavashan.

In this interpretive framework, Siyavash symbolizes loyalty, ethical steadfastness, purity, and resistance to injustice, forming one of the central tragic archetypes in Iranian mytho-historical consciousness.

Across these civilizational traditions, mourning is not understood as a purely emotional or private response to loss. It functions instead as a structured cultural language through which societies articulate fundamental questions of justice, suffering, mortality, and transcendence. Ritual lamentation transforms historical or mythological loss into enduring ethical meaning, ensuring continuity between collective memory and moral imagination.

From a comparative religious standpoint, occasional parallels

(Continued on Page 7)

New Productions, Strong Sales Mark Iranian Theater Week



TEHRAN -- Tehran's performing arts sector recorded combined box office revenues exceeding 1.05 billion tomans across five active productions, alongside a series of institutional events, new premieres, and extended runs in the capital's

major theater venues, according to official statistics released through June 18.

Among the most commercially successful productions, "Bi-Houdeh" ("Futile") led overall earnings with more than 414 million

tomans from 26 performances at Qashqai Hall, drawing 1,827 spectators.

"Abri ba Ehtemal-e Rizesh-e Baran" ("Cloudy with a Chance of Rain"), staged at Charsou Hall, concluded its run after 31 performances and over 1,100 attendees, generating approximately 242 million tomans.

Other notable productions included "Azhdahak" at the Theater Workshop, which attracted 1,617 audience members, and "Babayi Bekhand" ("Smile, Dad") and "Derakht-e Gilas" ("Cherry Tree") at the Honar Hall, both contributing steadily to overall attendance figures.

Collectively, the five productions attracted more than 5,300 theatergoers, reflecting sustained audience engagement across mid-size and institutional venues in Tehran's professional theater circuit.

In parallel programming at the City Theater of Tehran, the fifth edition of "Friday at City Theater" (Jomeh-ha-ye Theater Shahr) was held during the mourning period of Imam Hussein (AS).

The program featured a screening of the documentary "Tamrin-e Akhar" ("The Final Rehearsal"), directed by the late Iranian filmmaker Nasser Taghvaei.

(Continued on Page 7)

Handicrafts Week Draws 1,760 Artisans to 115 Events



TEHRAN -- Iran's Handicrafts Week featured a wide network of commercial and promotional activities aimed at strengthening market access for artisans, according to director-general for Marketing and Commercialization of Handicrafts at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Farzad Ojani.

Framed as a response to ongoing economic pressures affecting craftspeople, the program included 63 exhibitions, 22 temporary marketplaces, and 30 specialized seminars held across the country between June 9 and 17.

Ojani said the nationwide initiative was designed to address one of the most persistent challenges facing artisans: limited access to stable and sustainable sales channels.

He noted that most events began on June 9 and continued through the end of the week-long program,

involving coordinated efforts by provincial cultural heritage offices.

In total, 1,760 booths were set up across exhibitions and temporary markets, representing at least 1,760 artisans who participated directly in showcasing and selling their work.

According to officials, sales took place through both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) channels, reflecting an effort to diversify commercial opportunities for the sector.

Authorities said the initiative was intended to help mitigate financial pressures on artisans, which have reportedly intensified in the aftermath of recent economic disruptions.

Beyond the week-long program, the ministry also announced plans to expand the model through the

(Continued on Page 7)

Archaeological Survey in Taft Uncovers 172 Historical, Cultural Sites

TEHRAN -- A systematic archaeological survey conducted in the Nir and Garizat districts of Taft County, Yazd Province, has led to the identification and documentation of 172 historical and cultural sites across an extensive area of approximately 2,350 square kilometers.

The findings reveal new dimensions of the region's archaeological potential and significantly contribute to the development of a more comprehensive archaeological atlas of southern and south-western Yazd.

The survey project, supported by the Provincial Office of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Yazd, has brought to light a wide range of cultural remains, including fortresses and defensive structures, ancient mounds and habitation sites, water-management installations, historic buildings, cemeteries, and other settlement-related features.

Together, these remains reflect a long and continuous history of human occupation in the region.

According to Sahar Tafakkori, the project director and a graduate in archaeology from the University of Tehran, one of the most significant outcomes of the current field season has been the identification and documentation of numerous historical fortifications across Taft County.

These structures point to the strategic importance of the region

within historical networks of defense, administration, and territorial control.

Among the recorded monuments, the historic Fakhraabad Castle stands out as one of the largest and most prominent fortifications in Yazd Province.

(Continued on Page 7)



Picture of the Day



Haji Muhammad Aram tends to Akhal-Teke horses in Karyz Araz village, Maneh County, where he has spent more than three decades preserving and breeding the rare and prized Turkmen horse lineage passed down through his family.

Photo by IRNA