

Lut Desert: Inside Earth’s Natural Laboratory of Extreme Heat



TEHRAN -- A decade after Iran’s Lut Desert was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, scientists and researchers are highlighting the region’s extraordinary value as one of the planet’s most important natural laboratories for studying climate, geology, biodiversity, and sustainable tourism.

Marking the 10th anniversary of Lut Desert’s global registration, researchers gathered at an online scientific symposium organized by the International Desert Research Center of the University of Tehran and the Lut World Heritage Site.

The event examined the desert’s unique geological formations, extreme climate conditions, ecological adaptations, and future opportunities for research and responsible tourism.

Located in southeastern Iran, the Lut Desert is recognized as one of the hottest places on Earth. Yet beyond its extreme temperatures, scientists say the region remains a largely unexplored landscape containing valuable clues about geological processes and environmental change.

Nasser Mashhadi, a University of Tehran geologist and geomorphology researcher, described Lut as a natural museum of wind and water-driven landscapes. Its remarkable features include vast sand dunes, alluvial plains, and its famous yardangs—wind-carved formations known locally as kaluts. Some of these formations are considered among the largest and most continuous examples of their kind in the world.

Researchers emphasized that Lut’s geological diversity provides opportunities for scientific studies, education, and the development of geotourism. The desert’s landscapes offer a rare opportunity to observe the long-term interaction between climate, erosion, and the Earth’s surface.

Hesam Ahmadi Birgani, a University of Urmia researcher, highlighted the broader potential of Iran’s desert regions, noting that around five million hectares of the country consist of sandy landscapes.

He said that deserts should not be viewed only as environmental challenges but also as opportunities for sustainable economic development, including nature tourism, dark-sky tourism, and community-based initiatives.

Lut’s extreme climate has also made it a key location for climate research. Hamidreza Naseri, head of the International Desert Research Center at the University of

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Tehran Symphony Orchestra Brings Story of Ashura to Life

TEHRAN -- The Tehran Symphony Orchestra will present Eclipse, one of the most significant contemporary Iranian orchestral works, offering a powerful musical interpretation of Ashura and the tragedy of Karbala through the language of symphonic music.

Composed by Muhammad-Saeed Sharifian, Eclipse will be performed on August 6 and 7 at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall under the direction of guest conductor Arash Amini, with the participation of a choir led by Behrang Shagharkar.

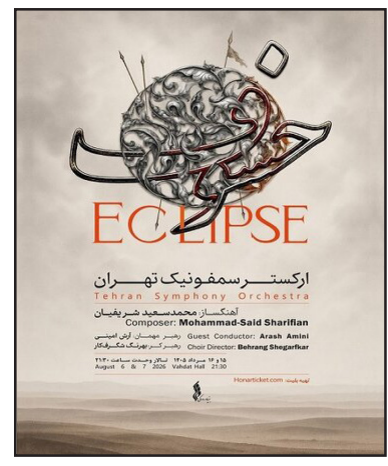
Recognized as a landmark work in Iran’s contemporary symphonic repertoire, Eclipse draws inspiration from the events of Ashura—the seventh-century historical episode that holds profound spiritual and cultural significance for millions of Muslims, particularly within the Shia tradition.

Rather than offering a direct retelling of the events, the composition transforms their emotional and philosophical dimensions into a large-scale musical experience.

Through the combined forces of orchestra and choir, Sharifian explores themes of mourning, sacrifice, devotion, resistance, and the pursuit of truth. The work uses the dramatic possibilities of symphonic music to reflect on the universal human questions embedded in the Ashura narrative: the struggle between darkness and light, oppression and dignity, and loss and hope.

The title Eclipse carries a sym-

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On National Day of Suhrawardi, Scholars Revisit Philosophy of Illumination

TEHRAN -- More than eight centuries after his death, Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi continues to illuminate philosophical debates far beyond the era in which he lived.

On the occasion of Iran’s National Day of Suhrawardi, scholars from across the country gathered in an online symposium organized by the Association for Cultural Works and Honors to explore why the 12th-century philosopher’s ideas remain relevant in an age shaped by technological progress, cultural uncertainty, and a growing search for meaning.

Known as the founder of the Philosophy of Illumination (Hikmat al-Ishraq), Suhrawardi occupies a singular place in Islamic intellectual history. Executed in Aleppo at the age of 38, he developed a philosophical system that sought to reconcile rational inquiry with mystical experience, arguing that truth is attained not only through logical reasoning but also through



spiritual illumination.

Opening the symposium, Mahmoud Shalouei, president of the association, described Suhrawardi as a thinker who transcended conventional intellectual boundaries by uniting philosophy, mysticism, theology, and ethics within a single worldview. His enduring contribution, Shalouei said, lies in presenting wisdom as both intellectual

the arrival of Islam, integrating elements of ancient Persian wisdom with Islamic revelation and Greek philosophy.

Rather than viewing Iranian history as divided into pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, Mollasalehi suggested that Suhrawardi demonstrated how these traditions could coexist within a unified philosophical vision.

The French philosopher Henry Corbin famously regarded Suhrawardi as a pivotal figure in reviving the spiritual dimensions of Iranian thought, an interpretation echoed throughout the symposium.

Speakers described his writings as evidence of an enduring dialogue between cultural heritage and religious philosophy that continues to shape Iranian intellectual identity.

Central to Suhrawardi’s philosophy is the concept of light—not

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The Unexpected Journey of a Bosnian Lover of Persian

TEHRAN -- When Anisa Grabus first encountered Persian, she was not searching for a new academic path. She was studying Bosnian language and literature at the University of Sarajevo, unaware that a language with centuries-old roots in her country’s cultural history would eventually reshape her own life.



recalls. “I discovered that many words I thought came from Turkish had actually entered Persian from Persian.”

Words such as fenjan (cup), argavan (purple flower), jorab (socks), and shalvar (trousers) revealed a hidden connection between the two languages.

After completing her degree

Today, Grabus is a Persian language researcher and instructor in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She describes Iran as her “second homeland” and considers her first visit to the country an unforgettable journey—one that confirmed a connection she had built through years of studying its language, literature, and culture.

in Bosnian language and literature, Grabus made a decision that surprised her family: she enrolled again at university, this

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The Woman Who Refused to Let Century-Old Craft Fade Away



TEHRAN -- She had barely unpacked her suitcase before the room filled with color. Embroidered tablecloths, handbags, shoes, jackets, paintings, and garments emerged one by one, each stitched entirely by hand with silk thread.

Even the navy-blue coat she wore carried the same intricate embroidery. “I’ve worn this coat for five years,” she said, pointing to its sleeve. “Not a single thread has come loose.”

For Mahnaz Safari Mamaghani, craftsmanship is

more than artistry—it is proof of resilience.

In the northwestern Iranian town of Mamaghan, a little-known embroidery tradition has survived for generations, largely through the work of women whose names rarely appear alongside their creations. Safari has spent the past decade ensuring that both the craft and its makers are no longer overlooked.

Her journey began in 2016, not as an artist but as an accountant

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Picture of the Day



Members of the Bakhtiari nomadic community harvest wheat fields in Iran’s Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, as families work together during the summer harvest season.

Photo by IRNA