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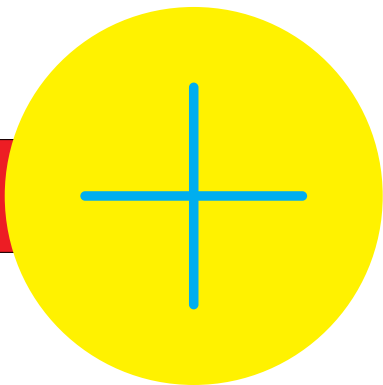
## Isfahan pottery workshops

The pottery workshops of Isfahan that had produced rather lack-lustre tomb markers during the 16th century later began to make vessels copying Chinese porcelain, similar, but inferior, to those of Kerman and Mashhad.



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# Iron Age Museum: A 3,200-year-old cemetery in Tabriz



PHOTOS BY AZIN HAQIQI/IRAN DAILY

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**EXCLUSIVE**

Don't make a mistake. There is no metal object in the Iron Age Museum of Tabriz, the capital city of the northwestern province of East Azarbaijan. It is a 3,200-year-old cemetery of the followers of Mithraism, which was unearthed during the construction of a shopping center near the Blue

Mosque in 2007. The cemetery is like an abandoned mine built under the earth, with a wooden bridge overlooking it. Mithraism is a religion based on the worship of Mithra, the god of the sun, justice, and war, in pre-Zoroastrian times. Known as Mithra in the Roman Empire during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, this deity was honored as the patron of loyalty to the emperor. Arash Dastar, an expert working in the museum,

showed me the wall of the cemetery and described each period of history with a layer of soil excavated in the area. On the wall of a hall there is a board on which a short description was written about each layer of the soil. The bodies of men were laid on their right cheeks, and women on their left cheeks. A number of pottery items were placed next to the dead bodies. They are so delicate and thin that it is hard to believe

that they were made 3,200 years ago. A few pieces of bone were left in a bowl; some may think that a week ago, the dish of food was placed next to a person who is sleeping like a fetus but he/she never touched it. Mithraism reached its peak during the Parthian Period. It covered Europe up to England and Spain, North Africa and part of Asia up to India. But when Christianity became the official religion

in the Roman Empire, Mithraism was severely suppressed. However, many of its rituals and beliefs remained and mixed with the new religion. Mithraism was the religion of brotherhood, loyalty, kindness and love. That is why its followers had to meet each other in the caves or underground structures called Mehr temples. They never revealed the secrets of their allies to anyone. In order to increase my

knowledge about Mithraism, I went to the Mehr Temple of Maragheh, another city of Azarbaijan Province. The temple has been registered on Iran's National Heritage List; however, there is no guide in the remote underground cave. No boundary was established for the valuable ancient temple. The amazing and mysterious rock structure was a place of worship for Mithraists, Zoroastrians,

Christians and Muslims in different periods of time. More amazing examples of rock architecture are located in Maragheh, one of which is a Buddhist temple, with several nested rooms, carved into several rocks. The Buddhist temple, inspired by the symmetrical lines of mosque and church architecture, was built by Ilkhanid kings. It is easy to find a historical structure in the area; wherever you dig in the area, a piece of history emerges.

## 1700-year-old plasterwork discovered in eastern Iran



ISNA

ISNA - The remains of a fire temple with wall paintings and plasterwork of the Sassanid Period were discovered in Bazeh Hur village in Iran's northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi, said the head of the archeological excavation. The findings of archaeologists indicate that this collection consists of cultural works and architectural remains of the Sassanid Period, Mey-sam Labbaf-Khaniki added. A member of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Labbaf-Khaniki said Chahartaq (Four Arches) of Bazeh Hur, which was registered as the first historical

monument of Khorasan Province on the list of national monuments in 1931, is located in the area. In the vicinity of the Chahartaq, there was a columned architecture decorated with unique plasterwork, he said, explaining that the interior of some of the spaces of Bazeh Hur fire temple were decorated with various wall paintings. The discovered plasterwork shows various human, animal, plant and geometric motifs, on some of which, traces of color can be recognized, he said. Although destructive human activities have caused severe damage

to the architectural decorations of Bazeh Hur fire temple, the discovered parts indicate the religious centrality of the fire temple in the northeastern region of Iran. He also said that architectural evidence shows that Bazeh Hur fire temple continued to operate until the 3rd and 4th centuries, and it was probably destroyed by a massive earthquake and was looted afterwards. Protecting the works and remains of the fire temple can provide an appropriate opportunity for researchers interested in the history and culture of Iran, he concluded.



A farmer works in a papaya garden in Iran's central city of Yazd where papaya planting in the country has been launched for the first time.  
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