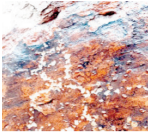




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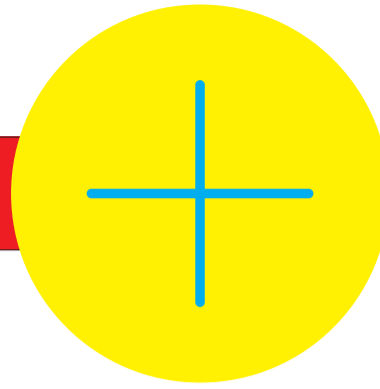
Sassanid petroglyph found in Fars Province



ILNA – A new petroglyph which dates back to the Sassanid era was discovered in the northern rocks of the city of Stakhr, in Marvdasht, Fars Province. Archeologist and history researcher Abolhassan Atabaki added that the discovery was made during a mountain hike.

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Lenj, an Iranian sailing vessel

Lenj is a sailboat equipped with an engine instead of a sail. (Therefore, it is not a sailboat!) It can have an open or semi-open deck, and vary in size and shape depending on whether it is used for cargo or fishing. The name lenj is said to be derived from the English word 'launch', and each one of these vessels has its own name, yet the name is often not written on the boat.

What is incredible is that they are, still today, entirely hand-built, following the same process and based on the same knowledge as centuries ago.

Lenjes have been around in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, and the Indian Ocean for centuries. Their origin dates back to the first half of the 18th century, and brings us to the northern coast of the Persian Gulf in Iran. Originally, the main ports for lenjes were located in Hormuzgan Province, in Bandar-e Kong, Bandar-e Lengheh and Bandar-e Laft. In Bandar-e Kong, the construction of lenjes started with the first settlement of people, surfiran.com reported.

These vessels were used for long sea-journeys, often several months long, and lenjes were said to be able to travel for a full

year without requiring important repairs. They were used for trading, but also for fishing and pearl diving. Starting from southern Iran, they would go to Mumbai, Basra, and Tanzania for trading goods. Lenjes have even been seen in China and the Mediterranean Sea.

Construction of lenj boats

Lenj boats are not only entirely hand-built, but they are also built without any plans, only based on the knowledge and experience



● [tasteiran.net](#)

of the builders. The latter are called "galaf". It usually takes only about five or six workers to build these massive boats, and the construction lasts about two years, depending on the size.

Building a lenj doesn't require a lot of materials. Builders first create the

boat's framework with wood before building the body of the vessel. The wood they use traditionally comes from India, and is called "sai". They also use different types of wood, all resistant to moisture, from trees such as jujube, berry tree, plane tree, mesquite, and gum Arabic tree.

To fix the pieces to each other, they use nails and bolts, and they apply pieces of cotton impregnated with coconut and sesame oil between the interstices. This technique is called "kalfat kooby" and is meant

to make the boat resistant to water. Yet, once a year at least, lenj boats must be repaired, as small holes are created on the wood by shells, slowly allowing water to seep in.

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

In 2011, UNESCO inscribed



● [surfiran.com](#)

Iranian skills of "building and sailing Iranian lenj boats" as an intangible cultural heritage. This is meant to preserve these skills, which are traditionally passed from father to son, and are slowly fading away. Not only are the construction skills considered an intangible world heritage, but also the whole traditional knowledge of constructing and sailing lenjes.

That includes the navigation technique and its terminology. Indeed, there is a very specific knowledge possessed by the captains of these vessels, called nahkoda, to be able to navigate based on the position of the sun during the day, and of the moon and the stars at night. Furthermore, there is an extend-

ed knowledge of weather forecasting, based on the observation of the wind, the color of the water, and the height of the waves... that is unique.

Besides navigation skills, the whole folklore and traditions around lenj boats is included in this intangible world heritage. This comprises oral literature about lenjes, navigation in the Persian Gulf, as well as festivals performed, for instance, when a lenj boat is for the first time set to the sea.

Music also has an important part, as specific songs and rhythms are used both during the construction of the boat by the builders and during navigation by sailors.

It is all these aspects that the UNESCO inscription

tends to preserve, as it is gradually disappearing as old knowledgeable people pass away.

Furthermore, wooden lenjes are slowly replaced by fiberglass, a cheaper but weaker material, and most construction workshops have been turned into repair shops in recent years.

Cultural influence

The extensive travels done by lenj boats in the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman have left an important mark over the culture of the southern Iran, in particular, on Hormuzgan Province, Qeshm and Hormuz Island, whence most sailors departed. Men used to leave their household for months, sometimes years, to travel to other parts of

the world.

They would primarily trade wheat, dates, dried fish, salt and pearls for other goods from India and Africa. When they would return, they would bring with them teakwood, ivory, and gold.

To their wives, they would bring colorful fabrics and clothes from India, which are now a part of the local women's clothing.

In this region of Iran food has been influenced by these sea travels and differs greatly from other regions. Spices from India are part of the mix used locally in southern Iran, known as "bandari".

These trade exchanges also influenced dialects spoken in Hormuzgan Province, with many words coming from Hindi and Swahili.

Iran's Rahbari performs in Russia

IRNA – Iranian musician Ali (Alexander) Rahbari staged a concert at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, Russia on January 20. The concert consisted of two parts, the first of which featured a violin performance entitled, 'The Thousand and One Nights,' composed by Fazil Sai, a famous Turkish composer; and the second featured Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. Rahbari will stage another performance at the Russian center on January 28.

Iran produces over 2.7m square meters of handwoven carpets

Iran produced 2,722,487 square meters of handwoven carpets in a nine-month period from the beginning of the Iranian year, starting on March 21 to December 21, said the head of Iran's Carpet Center. Farahnaz Rafe' added that the figure shows an increase compared to last year's figure, which stood at 3,328,315 square me-

ters, IRNA wrote. (By extrapolation, this year's figure would be 3,629,982 sq m.) Referring to the supportive measures in order to increase the production of carpets in the center, she added that the project of certifying the authenticity of carpets, installment sales of handwoven carpets in the digital sales ecosystem, holding the

conference of famous Iranian carpets are among the center's activities to support the handwoven carpet industry.

Rafe' concluded that not only local people who weave carpets, but also dyers, menders, and merchants involved in the process of carpet production makes the industry a part of Iranian identity.



Two flamingos stand in the water and hug their heads in an arc as the third one rushes toward them. Sorkhrud Lagoon, in Iran's Mazandaran Province hosts more than 50,000 flamingos this winter. ● [EHSAN FAZLI OSANLOU/IRNA](#)

