

Abstract

A review of archaeological research aims and studies in Iran

Dr. Hassan FAZELI NASHLI

Iranian Center for Archaeological Research, ICHTO, Iran

The territory of Iran is a region rich in cultural growth and development, witnessing the appearance and fall of civilizations from the Paleolithic to the present.

Societal expansion and the cultural reaction to such expansion has been one of the important characteristics of human societies during all epochs in Iran and has been a favourite topic of researchers performing both historical and archaeological studies.

Unfortunately, historical and archaeological research in Iran has had an uneven recent history. After the Islamic Revolution in 1978 and during the subsequent imposed war between Iran and Iraq, archaeological researches came to a standstill as defence became the main priority of the Iranian government and people.

After the end of this war, the patterns of archaeological research changed and archaeological activities all over Iran commenced. Non-Iranian archaeologists and researchers once again returned to Iran and began their studies. These archaeologists are divided to two groups: those who attempted to reinitiate work begun prior to the Islamic Revolution, and those who set out to investigate new questions.

The revival of archaeological research after the Islamic Revolution, was not restricted by the Iranian government and included work encompassing all periods. In both the intellectual domain and in the domain of field work, Iranian archaeologists had a very important role in the resurgence of archaeological research, building on the foundations of earlier efforts and ushering a new generation.

Another important characteristic of Iranian archaeology has been a focus on rescue archaeology. After the war between Iran and Iraq, economical reform caused rapid development including such activities as construction of communication networks, dams, and industrial cities. These activities threatened to destroy archaeological and historical sites. So the Iranian government initiated joint expeditions involving cooperation between Iranian and non-Iranian archaeologists. This kind of joint work has had positive results and has been followed by other important projects. In this article, the author will review the archaeological activities of the Iranian Cultural, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.