

World Heritage Scanned Nomination

File Name: 1077.pdf

UNESCO Region: ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

SITE NAME: **Takht-e Soleyman**

DATE OF INSCRIPTION: 5th July 2003

STATE PARTY: IRAN

CRITERIA: C (i) (ii) (iii) (iv) (vi)

DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:

Excerpt from the Report of the 27th Session of the World Heritage Committee

Criterion i: Takht-e Suleiman is an outstanding ensemble of royal architecture, joining the principal architectural elements created by the Sasanians in a harmonious composition inspired by their natural context.

Criterion ii: The composition and the architectural elements created by the Sasanians at Takht-e Suleiman have had strong influence not only in the development of religious architecture in the Islamic period, but also in other cultures.

Criterion iii: The ensemble of Takht-e Suleiman is an exceptional testimony of the continuation of cult related to fire and water over a period of some two and half millennia. The archaeological heritage of the site is further enriched by the Sasanian town, which is still to be excavated.

Criterion iv: Takht-e Suleiman represents an outstanding example of Zoroastrian sanctuary, integrated with Sasanian palatial architecture within a composition, which can be seen as a prototype.

Criterion vi: As the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary, Takht-e Suleiman is the foremost site associated with one of the early monotheistic religions of the world. The site has many important symbolic relationships, being also a testimony of the association of the ancient beliefs, much earlier than the Zoroastrianism, as well as in its association with significant biblical figures and legends

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS

The archaeological site of Takht-e Soleyman, in north-western Iran, is situated in a valley set in a volcanic mountain region. The site includes the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary partly rebuilt in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period (13th century) as well as a temple of the Sasanian period (6th and 7th centuries) dedicated to Anahita. The site has important symbolic significance. The designs of the fire temple, the palace and the general layout have strongly influenced the development of Islamic architecture.

1.b State, Province or Region: Western Azerbaijan Province

1.d Exact location: N36 36 14.0 E47 14 06.0

**Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization
I.C.H.O**

**TAKHT-E SOLEYMAN
FIRE TEMPLE OF KNIGHTS
(VIth-XIIIth centuries)**

**UNESCO
WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION
NOMINATION OF PROPERTIES FOR INCLUSION ON THE
WORLD HERITAGE LIST**

Synopsis

TAKHT-E SOLEYMAN **“Fire Temple of Knights”** **Fire Temple and Palatial Complex (VIth-XIIIth centuries)** **West Azarbayjan province, northwestern Iran**

Takht-e Soleyman reveals architectural achievements of outstanding universal values, which from artistic, religious, mythical, and historical points of view, emerge from a symbiosis of man-made and spectacular natural setting.

Takht-e Soleyman is the unique survival of one of the three principal fire temples of the Zoroastrian faith. Called Azargoshnasb (Atur-Gushnasp), and built by the Sassanian emperor Chosroès I (531-578 A.D.) around the sacred Avestan Chechasta Lake, it is the largest and the best-preserved vestige of its kind known in the world. The site was esteemed by the early Christian Armenians and was respected by the Muslims who identified it with Solomon's palace. Takht-e Soleyman knew its last grandeur at the time when the Shamanistic Mongols chose it as their summer place in the late 13th century, and built an imposing palace overlooking its magnificent lake. As at Persepolis and Pasargadae of the Achaemenid period (550-331 B.C.), Takht-e Soleyman is mingled with the Kingdom of Solomon's legends; here he had his throne, hence the name Throne (*takht*) of Solomon. The ruins at Takht-e Soleyman around its mythical lake are also connected to legends related to the birth of Zarathustra and the Child Christ.

The site is in the form of a fortified oval (marked 1 on the general map 1/50,000) surrounded by its specific buffer zone marked 'A' (which also includes number 5) on the same map. This area is in its turn protected by a landscape buffer zone marked 'B', the one it shares with 5 other sites. All these 5 sites are closely connected with Takht-e Soleyman and its fire temple as well as palatial compound, and form an ensemble. Some of these sites such as Zendan-e Soleyman (2 on the map) and Belqeys Citadel (4 on the map) are highly significant. The village of Nosratabad or Tazekand (C on the map) with its restricted expansion rules is also included in the landscape buffer zone of the site (B). Characteristics of Takht-e Soleyman's main site (n° 1) with its specific buffer zone (A) within the Landscape buffer zone (B):

Map ref. Number	1
Core zone area	10 ha
Specific buffer zone area	A: 385.5 ha
Landscape buffer zone	B: 7438 ha

Table 1. Areas and buffer zones of Takht-e Soleyman compound, Fire Temple, Palace, and lake

Takht-e Soleyman is proposed as a single nomination centred around its main oval fortified site (n°1) protected within its double buffer zones (specific 'A' and landscape 'B'). Aside from the fortified oval, the landscape buffer zone 'B' includes 6 other connected units (2 to 7) provided with their own specific buffer zones and an adjacent area 'C' allotted to Nosratabad village and its restricted expansion.

Proposal for the nomination of Takht-e Soleyman on the World Heritage List as a World Cultural Property

Identification of the Property

1a. Country (and State Party if different)

IRAN

1b. State of province or region

WESTERN AZARBAYJAN PROVINCE

1c. Name of Property

TAKHT-E SOLEYMAN

This is a name given to the site in the medieval and modern times, which means the ‘Throne of Solomon’, after the name of the biblical prophet who, according to ancient texts and legends, possessed supernatural powers. During the Sassanian period (224-641 A.D.), the site was called Azargoshnasb / Athur-Gushnasp (Fire of the Knights). The site was known to the historians of the early Islamic period as Shiz. During the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period in the 13th-14th centuries, the site was called Saturiq.

1d. Exact location on map and indication of geographical co-ordinates

The site of Takht-e Soleyman, at 47° 14' 06'' East and 36° 36' 14'' North, lies in the Balkhash mountains, at an altitude of about 2500 m above sea level, in the north-west of Iran about 45 km north/north-east of the modern town of Takab (fig. 1). The nearest village to the site is Nosratabad (former Tazekand) which is situated at about 1.5 km to the west of the main site of Takht-e Soleyman.

1e. Maps and/or plans showing boundary of area proposed for inscription and of any buffer zone

See the main map (1/50,000) attached to the end of the file. See also figs 1 and 3 and the Takht-e Soleyman guide map in colour plates.

Takht-e Soleyman is proposed as a single nomination centred around its main oval fortified site (n° 1) protected within its double buffer zones (specific 'A' and landscape 'B'). The landscape buffer zone 'B' includes 6 other connected ancient complexes provided with their own specific buffer zones (2 to 7 except for no. 5 that is included in A) and an enclave 'C' allocated to Nosratabad village and its restricted expansion.

If. Area of site proposed for inscription (ha.) and proposed buffer zone (ha.) if any.

Main site (No 1 on map 1/50,000 attached to the end of this file) and its specific buffer zone (A) within the Landscape buffer zone (B):

Map ref. number	1
Core zone area	10 ha
Specific buffer zone area	A: 385.5 ha
Landscape buffer zone	B: 7438 ha

The fortified oval site of Takht-e Soleyman covers an area of about 10 hectares (see no. 1 on the main map 1/50,000 attached to the end of this file). It is protected within its own specific buffer zone (marked 'A' on the main map 1/50,000 attached to the end of this file) which covers a surface of about 385.5 hectares. This specific buffer zone is itself included within a large landscape buffer zone 'B' which covers an area of about 74.38 km² (7438 ha) This landscape, or the 2nd buffer zone, includes 6 other adjacent sites and zones (marked nos 2 to 7 on the main map 1/50,000 attached to the end of this file). All the limits of the core or buffer zones have been approved by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization and are legally protected. They are shown on the map presented at the end of this file.

The 6 other connected sites within the landscape buffer zone (B) of Takht-e Soleyman mentioned above are:

Site	Map number	ref.	Core zone	Specific zone	buffer	Landscape buffer zone (B)
Zendan-e Soleyman	2		11 ha	101.9 ha		
Tape Majid	3		2500 m ²	39.12 ha		
Belqeys Citadel	4		6.25 ha	50.12 ha		7438 ha
Brick baking kiln	5		2500 m ²	-		
Stone quarry	6		-	426.25 ha		
Ahmadabad tumulus	7		2500 m ²	2.5 ha		

Table 2. Six adjacent complexes in the Takht-e Soleyman area.

2. Justification for Inscription

2a. Statement of significance

Takht-e Soleyman bears some legendary and fascinating identities. It has been supposed to be a mirror of the Paradise itself, Mark Anthony's touch-stone, the Parthian horsemen's Phraaspa or even the place where the Holy Graal was conserved. None of these legends has been proved by any real fact. Nevertheless, archaeological research shows that the site has to be identified with the location of the Sassanian fire temple of Athur-Gushnasp (Azargoshnasb) of the 5th and 6th centuries. It is the best preserved and most fascinating old fire temple complex known in the world. According to Avestan texts (sacred Zoroastrian book), Athur-Gushnasp was one of the three principal fire temple of the Sassanians; the location of the two other ones have not been so far discovered. Natural and archaeological features of Takht-e Soleyman are quite unique. It is the largest and probably one of the most ancient ritual places of the Zoroastrians ever discovered.

While the exact names and identifications of other Sassanian religious centres are not known and they are essentially situated in the southern half of the Iranian plateau, Takht-e Soleyman bears the exceptional testimony to the royal fire temple of Sassanian emperors in north-western Iran for which we possess firm archaeological evidence. Archaeological research at Takht-e Soleyman has provided important data on functional aspect of a Zoroastrian fire temple, the facts which are not or rarely known elsewhere. Takht-e Soleyman is, therefore, the unique extant testimony of one of the three principal fire temples of the Zoroastrian religion during the Sassanian period (3rd to 7th centuries A.D.).

Natural aspects of the site together with its religious and historic importance constitute another significant factor feature. The fire temple is situated in a mountainous setting marked by a small lake. The lake, which is supplied by sources operating as an artesian well, is undoubtedly at the origin of foundation of this site. It is interesting to notice that the surrounding plain watered by the source of Takht-e Soleyman is as green as it was described in the past by the medieval historians as the pasture for horses of the Mongol Ilkhanid army.

2b. Comparative analysis (including state of conservation of similar sites)

The site of Takht-e Soleyman is unique both in its artistic achievement and in its role not only in the formation of the Pre-Islamic religions of ancient Iran, but also as an image of the main religion (Zoroastrianism) in Central and South-Western Asia. It is the only extant temple of the three Principal Fire Temples of Zoroastrianism then the dominant religion in the pre-Islamic period in Central and South-Western Asia. (see also 3a). In spite of similarities in function, Takht-

Soleyman particularly differs from other fire temples such as those located in Fars (southern Iran). Comparison with later Zoroastrian sanctuaries in Iran, Southern Caucasus (Baku) and India also show parallelism. The sacred part of the small fire temple near Kerman (south-east Iran) with its rectangular hall and vaulted room, where a fire of second class was venerated until a recent time, illustrated such a case. Bahram's fire temple in Bombay with a very similar plan must also be mentioned in this context as well as the fire temple in Tehran built at the beginning of the 20th century.

From a natural point of view, the mountain called Zendan-e Soleyman (Prison of Solomon) situated at 2.5 km west of Takht-e Soleyman must also be mentioned. It has the same geological formation as that of the Takht and its lake, but its conical summit reaches a considerable height. The presence of a source at top of Zendan was undoubtedly the principal reason for the existence of constructions around the volcano-shaped summit of the mountain. These constructions belong to an earlier period than those of Takht-e Soleyman and had a religious purpose.

2c. Authenticity/Integrity

As regard to the authenticity of the site, there is no doubt that the site represents the Sassanian fire temple of Athur-Gushnasp (Azargoshnasp) as the name inscribed on stamp seal impressions (*bullae*) has been discovered in the course of excavations at Takht-e Soleyman. Moreover, all the geographers and historians of the early Islamic period identified Takht-e Soleyman **with the ancient location of Shiz** and dated it to the time of Chosroès I (Khosrow I Anushiravan, 531-578 A.D.), the most famous of the Sassanian emperors among the Muslims.

Indispensable restorations undertaken at Takht-e Soleyman in the course of archaeological excavations have not affected different structures of the monument. On the contrary, they have largely contributed to a better preservation and consolidation of those monuments which were in a bad state of conservation **such as the Fire Temple buildings or that of the Western Eyvan.**

2d. Criteria under which inscription is proposed (and justification for inscription under these criteria)

General statement : Takht-e Soleyman reveals architectural achievements of outstanding universal values, which from artistic, religious, mythical, and historical points of view, emerge from a symbiosis of man-made and spectacular natural setting.

2d/I : Takht-e Soleyman represents a masterpiece of human creative genius. The temple complex meets this criterion by virtue of the harmony of its symbolic values with the natural landscape which surrounds the site, and by the distinguished quality of its architecture. In their selection of the site, the original builders of the temple showed a high level of creative competence in their use of the sacred lake and its relationship to the Zoroastrian faith as well as the Pre-Zoroastrian beliefs in order to match with geological and natural settings in the line of their spiritual beliefs. The site is certainly the largest and probably one of the earliest ritual place of the Zoroastrians ever discovered in Iran or elsewhere. Takht-e Soleyman is the unique survival of one of the three principal fire

temples of the Zoroastrian faith belonging to the Sassanian period (3rd to 7th cent. A.D.). On the whole, the fire temple complex at Takht-e Soleyman is an inspiring manifestation of the spiritual beliefs of its builders, making full and successful use of its natural environment to create a harmonious work of art and spirituality. It has continued to inspire men down to the present day, whether they were Zoroastrians, Muslims or Mongols of all convictions with Shamanistic, Buddhist or Christian beliefs.

2d/II : The site of Takht-e Soleyman exhibits :

- An important interaction of human values over a long span of time within a vast cultural area of the world, and shows:

- Developments in architecture and technology, monumental arts, town planning and landscaping design.

Takht-e Soleyman historical and archaeological compound clearly demonstrates how the Iranians and those who surrounded them with the same or different beliefs were able to plan, engineer and use the landscape in accordance with their religion or conviction and philosophy regardless of their ethnicity such as those of the early Mongols who controlled nearly the whole known world in the 13th century.

The archaeological remains and evidences show the extent and intensity with which natural landscape was planned and used.

The architectural and landscape planning also demonstrates clearly the interaction between Pre-Zoroastrian and Zoroastrian beliefs in regard to the safeguard and significance of water and mountains.

Takht-e Soleyman is the unique survival of one of the three principal fire temples of the Zoroastrian faith belonging to the Sassanian period (3rd to 7th cent. A.D.).

Takht-e Soleyman - which means the 'Throne of Solomon' – has kept alive fascinating legends and beliefs such as those related to the biblical king / prophet Solomon or as the place where the Holy Graal was conserved. The mountain called Zendan-e Soleyman (Prison of Solomon) is also connected to the same biblical context.

The Sacred Lake at Takht-e Soleyman was already mentioned in the 4th century in an Armenian manuscript relating a legend about the birth of a child whose story mixed the birth and life of Christ with that of Zarathustra. The foundation of the fire temple around the Sacred Lake has been attributed to that belief.

The purely mythical lake Var-e Chechast (Avestan Chechasta), to where Afrasiyab the legendary king of the Turanians tried to escape from Kay-Khosrow the Persian, has also been identified with Takht-e Soleyman.

Sassanian emperors made pilgrimage to Takht-e Soleyman on foot after their coronation at Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia.

Takht-e Soleyman remains the largest and probably one of the most ancient ritual centres of the Zoroastrian faith ever discovered on the Iranian Plateau or elsewhere.

2d/III : Takht-e Soleyman bears an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition and to a civilization which has vanished (the Sassanians) but at the same time survives not only in present Iran but in much of South-Western Asia and especially in Central Asia (Mainly in Afghanistan, Tajikistan but also in Uzbekistan (Transoxiana) but also in India (the Parsees).

Regarding the fire temple, thanks to its early date, it provides a valuable insight to the early Sassanian religion of Zoroastrianism as an official and royal religion which followed the far more unconstrained Parthian period (3rd cent. B.C. to 3rd cent. A.D.).

Takht-e Soleyman is probably the best place for studying the development of Iranian art, architecture and landscape planning in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods. It is the most significant religious and cultural centre of the Sassanian period (3rd-7th cent. A.D.).

2d/IV : Takht-e Soleyman may precisely be considered as an outstanding example of creation of an architectural ensemble in close symbioses with its landscape illustrating significant stages in human history. It reveals one of the great artistic achievements of the Sassanian civilization, and witnesses the organization of landscape and religious activity in perfect harmony. Archaeological evidence makes it possible to observe how urban sites were related together and were integrated in their natural environment, and how this major spiritual centre of Iran was incorporated to the whole immense of the Sassanian empire.

2d/VI : Takht-e Soleyman is substantially associated with current beliefs and with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. Zoroastrianism was one the great religions of the universe and remains one of the oldest belief systems in the present world. Its influence on most of the 'Great Religions' has long been recognised by scholars. Aside from religious importance, its influence is perceptible in modern literature and philosophy, for instance in a distorted way in Comte Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur*

l'inégalité des races humaines or Friedrich Nietzsche's famous *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85). There are still Zoroastrians in Iran. They are one the most actives minorities in India (Parsees). Other Zoroastrians are now scattered around the world, in the USA and Canada for instance. The architecture that prevailed at Takht-e Soleyman is still reminiscent in the plan of fire temples in Iran as well as in India or even in southern Caucasia (the fire temple in Baku). It is still recognized as an archetype.

3. Description

3a. Description of Property

1- Takht-e Soleyman, the fire temple and the lake compound (see no 1 on the main map 1/50,000 attached).

The site of Takht-e Soleyman is a fortified oval built around a natural vast source (or a small lake) situated in a valley surrounded by mountain ranges (figs 2-3). Like the nearby and earlier site of Zendan-e Soleyman, the site owes its existence to a calcareous artesian well whose abundant waters rise from a depth of more than 100 meters. Its sediments have made the site rise more than 60 meters above the floor of the valley; the height rises to about 100m for the volcano-shaped dried-up source of Zendan-e Soleyman. At this place the well ran dry in protohistoric times (probably between 700-500 BC.) and left only an empty crater-liked bed about 80m deep that might have given the impression of an infernal cavity in which, according to legends, Solomon used to imprison monsters. Instead, the source at Takht-e Soleyman still flows today and forms a small lake. Through two canals, its water runs from that lake at a rate of 100 litres per

second, and is now used for irrigation and makes the extensive valley green and fertile. The lake is 120m long and about 80m wide. Studies carried out by German geologists show that the lake has an average depth of 64 m, but a spot in its northern part reaches 112 meters deep. The lake is being fed by several sources situated on its walls.

The Takht-e Soleyman lake was mentioned in the 4th century in an Armenian manuscript relating a legend concerning the birth of a child whose story is a mixed one of Christ's birth and that of Zarathustra. The foundation of the fire temple around the sacred lake is attributed to that legend. The lake is also mentioned by historians of the Islamic period. Despite the fact that archaeological excavations have revealed traces of an isolated and poor 5th century B.C. occupation (the Achaemenian period) and the scant rests of a later Parthian occupation dated to the 3rd century, the real history of Takht-e Soleyman as a religious centre begins with the construction of a series of regular buildings of mud bricks on stone foundations on the site. A few coins belonging to the reign of the Sassanian emperor Peroz (459-484 A.D.) and that of the Byzantine emperor Theodosius II (408-450 A.D.), and also some radiocarbon dating have provided a 5th century date for these constructions. Their plans determined subsequent organization of the later constructions. An enclosure wall of mud bricks 12m wide with an entrance in north has been dated to these early periods.

The discovery of a number of coins and seals belonging to the reign of Kavād I (488-497 and 499-531 A.D.) above the remains of the mud brick walls of the 5th century gives a date to the replacement of the mud brick structures by buildings of stone and dried bricks in course of the first half of the 6th century. It is proposed that this new construction might be due to a period of religious conflicts and rebellions within the

Sassanian empire mostly caused by the Mazdakians. It was at this time, namely the first half of the 6th century and after the end of civil conflicts, that the site became a royal Zoroastrian sanctuary under the last mighty emperors of the dynasty, Chosroès I (Khosrow I. 531-579 A.D.) and Chosroès II (Khosrow II, 591-628 A.D.). The fortified impressive surrounding oval wall in stone around the site was probably founded in this period. It is reinforced with 38 towers (fig. 4) and was 13m high. It can be more than 6m thick. Access to the interior of this enclosure built of quarried stone and covered with cut stones was made through two vaulted gates giving access to the holy area on the north and the south side (fig. 5). Curiously no traces of ancient doors closing the entrances has been noticed. So the impressive wall seems to have been more of a *temenos* than a real fortification. It was a symbolic enclosure for the ‘Sanctuary of the Warriors’. Excavations at several points of the wall and the row of seven niches above the gateway have shown that the big wall was probably erected in late Sassanian times, may be in the 6th century AD. No traces of older construction could be found. Therefore it is certain that the Parthian city of Phraaspa besieged by Mark Anthony in 34 B.C. cannot be located at Takht-e Soleyman, and is to be sought elsewhere.

Inside the fortified enclosure, two separated rectangles are organized, one to the north of the lake and the other around it. The building complexes in these areas are:

1. A fortified rectangle north of the lake with two groups of edifices, they are both probably temples (fig. 4).

2. A large standing building with an impressive eyvan (open hall on one side) both probably revealing an important palace.

3. A second rectangle around the lake; along its western edge lies most of the buildings of the Mongol period.

4. Peripheral areas with secondary constructions, administrative, and service buildings.

The plan of the Zoroastrian sanctuary at Takht-e Soleyman shows a strong traditionalism in its architecture consisting of a series of rooms, courtyards, eyvans, vaulted halls, corridors, and peripheral pieces (figs 4 and 6). The sanctuary is protected by fortified walls 4m thick, and, in contrast to the fortification walls, they are made entirely of fired bricks (20 x 29 x 6.5cm) held together by lime mortar. Nearly all the vaults of the passages have collapsed in this area. The core of the walls rises in some places as high as 7m, in other parts the destruction extends to the foundations. Some restorations were undertaken in these areas where the mortar between the joints is gone and cracks and fissures have caused serious damages to the structures.

The sacred area is divided by a long corridor into two distinct parts: one on the east, and the other on the west (figs. 4 and 7). The main complex, i.e. that of the east, is undoubtedly the most important ensemble of the area because it lies on the main axis of the oval plan which goes from the north gate of the enclosure through the middle of the lake forming the processional way (fig. 6). Moving from the south, access to the complex is established through a long vaulted open hall or eyvan situated immediately on north of the lake. Facing the lake, there is a rectangular podium 4m long and 1.50 m high with a monolithic staircase uncovered in the excavations. The stones of this podium, cut with an extreme precision, are of a very high quality and lead to the hypothesis that the podium might be identified as the Takht-e Taqdis or the legendary throne of Chosroès II

mentioned by Ferdowsi in the *Shah-Nameh*. After having passed the eyvan, at the centre of the complex, the room 'A', is a domed, square room on the main axis of the site. R. Naumann believes that in this cruciform room the holy fire was exposed during services and that the pilgrims could circulate in the four vaulted corridors that surround the central room and see the fire. In the adjoining cross-shaped room 'B', the fireplace in the centre, in form of a square basin, is still preserved. It seems that in four holes in its corners once stood stone altars; one of them was discovered in this room. The stone altars possibly held a platform, as one can see on the reverse of Sassanian coins. Four of these altars, each nearly 90cm, were discovered in several places of that area. This small cross-shaped room 'B' was certainly the holiest place in the temple, in which the fire was kept burning when not exposed in room 'A' during the religious services. However, some scholars think that the holy fire was in fact never exposed in room 'A'. The two above-mentioned rooms (A and B) in the centre of the temple are built of fired bricks only. In all other parts of the great building a well-cut limestone is used and only vaults and cupolas are built of fired bricks. On the east side of the fire place, there are two similar vaulted rooms (C and D), which, according to the excavators, may have formed the treasury of the fire temple to which the Sassanian kings used to send gifts and in which a copy of the *Avesta* was also kept. In the niches of these rooms holes to fix wooden shelves are still visible. A vaulted corridor connects room 'A' to a square courtyard (M). On the east side of this courtyard, there is a vaulted hall (E) that has been interpreted as the residence of the priests. At the intersection of hall 'E' and courtyard 'M', lies a small cross-shaped room.

According to the excavators, the western complex (on the west side of corridor 'KO1') is also a fire temple (fig. 7). It consists of a series of rooms in the south connected

to a group of buildings of which two basilical halls are quite impressive. The hall 'PB' and 'PA', each with three naves separated by two rows of rectangular or round pillars, were situated one after another. In the same axis is also situated a pavilion provided with a square room and three niches (probably a dining room). The pillars are all made of gypsum covered with fired bricks. The halls were decorated with stuccoes and reliefs. The two basilical halls through room 'PC' led to a cross-shaped room 'PD' that was also a fire temple or shrine. On the west of this group, lies a bigger vaulted cross-shaped room with a similar function as that of the room 'A' in the eastern complex.

Other secondary rooms must have been used as service quarters for the fire temples. The whole area is fortified and a doorway gave access to the northern gate of the site.

The southern square round the lake is marked by the presence of two monumental eyvans of which only one is partly preserved (fig. 9). The construction is called the West Eyvan by the excavators, and is the 'bench mark' of the site as it is visible from a considerable distance. The original Sassanian building replaced by this impressive construction was certainly smaller than the present eyvan which dates to the late 13th century (Mongol period). It is remarkably decorated with *moqarnas* and stuccoes. The West Eyvan, of which only the northern wall is preserved, is 10 m in width and 27 m in length. It has a series of annexed rooms and corridors. During the Il-Khanid (Mongol) occupation of Takht-e Soleyman site, the main body of the monument on the west side was enlarged with two octagonal towers (fig. 10) whose walls were finely decorated with glazed octagonal tiles and ceramics representing different animal and floral motifs (figs. 11 and 11 a-b).

A series of buildings dated to the 14th century lies along the western shore of the lake. An isolated building behind the constructions along the lake is also situated in the west. It is a large square building (20.5 x 20.5m) with four columns, of which bases and some parts of the shaft are still preserved (fig. 12). The walls are in red stone, and it was in a good state of preservation until a recent time. These walls were originally decorated with glazed tiles. A pre-Mongol date, probably Saljukid (12th century), has been proposed by the excavators for this monument. As suggested by Wolfram Kleiss, this construction may have been covered with a cupola (fig. 13a).

Excavations in the northern part of the sacred area (within the northern square) have revealed a series of ceramic kilns which produced glazed tiles and decorations for post-Sassanian monuments, especially in the Mongol / Ilkhanid period (13th-14th cent). Outside the fortified oval, on the north, some tests have revealed traces of occupation probably belonging to the processional way leading to the site (fig. 3).

Sedimentary stone wall of the stream known as the Azhdeha i.e. Dragon Stream (see map, fig. 3, Azdeha, 100m SE. of the Takht-e Soleyman compound. Colour plates, fig. 30).

In the south-western side of the external area of Takht-e Soleyman, 150m away from the enclosing wall, there are remains of a sedimentary wall built out of the deposits left by the stream's water with an exceptionally winding path appealing to the eye - hence its name : Dragon .It is 300m long and approx. 2m high.

This Stone Dragon stream brought water to a residential area under the Sassanians, but the locals believe that the stream was in fact a dragon that was turned into stone upon prophet Solomon's command. They also believe that rebellious devils were jailed in the Prison Mountain (Zendan) on his orders (see the next paragraph, 2).

2- Zendan-e Soleyman (see no 2 on the main map 1/50,000 attached; colour plates, 28, 29 and plan / section on the page next to the plates).

The hollow mountain known as the Zendan-e Soleyman is situated 3 kilometres to the west of Takht-e Soleyman. The height of this conical mountain above neighbouring lands is 97 to 107 meters and an enormous hole approximately 80 m. deep can be seen on its top with its opening diameter being approximately 65 m.

According to geological studies, the crater dates back to the Pliocene geological period. Later, there have been activities in form of spring and lake formation. These are the last evidences of a dormant volcano. Thus, springs flowing to the Aq-Darreh valley have warm waters containing many minerals, minerals that formed the mountainous mass of Takht-e Soleyman and Zendan-e Soleyman. The sedimentary layers of the springs are part of the natural Pliocene landscape. Travertine layers of the Zendan-e Soleyman Prison have piled up on Miocene rocks, tightly pressing the mortar in the southern edge of the basin, close to where the Tavileh Mountain stands. Attempt to precisely determine the age of the mountains and the Prison according to the piled minerals mass and the other geological hard materials has not been satisfactory because it is not known what changes

the springs have undergone in terms of temperature, quantity of water flow and dissolved sediments and gas.

Around the cone-shaped opening of the Prison Mountain, there are marks of a holy temple dating back to the first millennium BC. The remains of the architectural monuments around the opening of the Prison Mountain are, according to the artefacts found in the area, related to the Mannaeans who ruled in this region of Iran from 830 to 660 BC. It seems that the holy place was flourishing as long as the Prison mountain lake had water and that the place was deserted when the water dried up. Some of its architectural units however remained in use for a while to continue to watch over that spot. The drying of the water did not happen suddenly, rather, its level gradually decreased over a long time. The place had a terrace and chambers for the pilgrims and the Zoroastrian priests to reside in. It also had a holy courtyard with three entrances and a minor side door in the western side. A sloped stairway in the south-eastern side conducted to the main gate along the main uphill path from the east to the west in a diagonal form. Like the other gates, this gate was also provided with chambers with external and internal doors.

Another point to be noted about the Prison is the existing gas and the gas springs in its well. This powerful gas-bearing spring inside the well has with all its force thrown out stones tending to block its flow and has thus kept the highly placed mouth of the shaft open. One cannot distinguish the spring inside the opening from the top at a height of 80m because the ruins, sedimentary layers and the collapsed materials from the top into

the shaft do not let it be seen (see plan and section on the page after colour plates 28 and 29).

3- Tepe Majid / Majid Mound (see no 3 on the main map 1/50,000 attached).

Tape Majid mound is situated to the north-west of Takht-e Soleyman compound. It was studied by German archaeologists in 1963-64 and the results published in the *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1965 (see final bibliography). It appears that the circular mound is in fact a tumulus with a diameter of 50 m., but it has no cellar. No archaeological object was found on the spot during the studies, but as the tumulus is related to the site of Zendan-e Soleyman, it has been dated to the first half of 1st mill. BC.

4- Belqeys Citadel / Takht-e Belqeys (see no 4 on the main map 1/50,000 attached; colour plates, 32, 33 and plan / section on the page next to the plates).

The Belqeys Mountain, with its two closely located summits, is 3200 meters high and situated at 7.5km to the north-east of Takht-e Soleyman. On the highest part of this mountain there are remains of fortifications dating back to the Sassanian era (3rd-7th cent AD.). They have a close architectural and historical relationship with the monuments of Takht-e Soleyman. The ruins of Takht-e Belqeys were inspected in 1959 by Von der Osten and later studied and documented in 1966 and 1969 by the German archaeologist Dietrich Huff.

The Belqeys fortress is enclosed in an area approximately 60 x 50 m. According to the preliminary plan, the enclosing wall includes 9 buildings and there are also possibly 4 others. The gate of this monument may have been in the south-eastern side or close to the

southern angle. There is a square-shaped hall inside the enclosing walls provided with an eyvan on its south-western side.

In front of the structure, there is a multi-story terrace including long shelter-like chambers with dome-shaped ceilings. The architecture seems Sassanian and the bricks also have Sassanian dimensions. The yellow-coloured sandstone used in the buildings and the marks left on them are similar to those left by the Sassanian stone carvers too. All these indices make it more likely that the structure dates back to the Sassanian era.

These fortifications, in their general design with their veranda, hall and a round porch, not only could have been used as a palace, but also as a fire temple. Architecturally and geometrically, the direction of the buildings towards the ancient Takht-e Soleyman compound puts both structures in such a close relation that it becomes strongly possible to think of Takht-e Belqeys as a Sassanian fire temple.

Takht-e Belqeys is located on the highest mountain in the region, witnessing long winters but pleasant summers. The summit snow melts in late spring and early summer. The landscape is green with streams and colourful flowers. A seasonal lake forms and adds to the attraction of the region. Access to Takht-e Belqeys is now possible through the Takht-e Soleyman - Zanjan dirt road where special cars can take the passengers to somewhere close to the summit. A half an hour walk leads to the fortress.

5- Historical Brick backing kiln (see no 5 on the main map 1/50,000 attached, figs. 63 and 64).

Six hundred meters away from Takht-e Soleyman complex to the south, remains

of an Islamic brick kiln were found and excavated. It is dated to the Ilkhanid period (13th century AD.).

6- Sassanian extracting quarries (see no 6 on the main map 1/50,000 attached, figs. 40-42).

Old stone quarries of the Sassanian period are situated at about a km to the East of the nearby Takht-e Soleyman lake and fire temple. The extracted stones were used in the construction of the temple and its surrounding wall.

7- Tumulus near Ahmadabad village (see no 7 on the main map 1/50,000 attached, fig. 54).

A second tumulus (unexcavated) lies on top of the western slope of the huge mountain of Tavileyeh Soleyman (Solomon's Stable Mountain). The tumulus is in form of a small mound, and seems to be dated to the Ilkhanid period (13th-14th century).

3. b. History and Development

The site of Takht-e Soleyman was destroyed in A.D. 627 by the Byzantine army of Heraklius in a counter-attack to the Sassanian invasion of the Roman Empire. The Byzantines destroyed the Fire Temple and took away its treasures offered by the Sassanian emperors. The site was subsequently abandoned after the Arab invasion soon after.

Archaeological excavations have however revealed some traces of a 8th / 9th century constructions but it was not until the 13th century that Takht-e Soleyman regained

its importance as the palace of the Mongol Ilkhan Aba-Qaan (Abaqa 1265-82). The Mongols reoccupied and restored the main buildings of the Sassanians, i.e. those of the Fire Temple and the monumental Western Eyvan. The Ilkhanid period was undoubtedly the most prosperous re-occupation of the site after the fall of the Sassanian empire. Architectural remains discovered in the course of excavations have revealed masterpieces of Middle Persian art and architecture.

After the demise of the Ilkhans in mid-14th century, the site of Takht-e Soleyman, though still partly occupied, never recovered its importance. Inundating water from the lake washed gradually out the mortar from the joints of the lower parts of the Fire Temple. The cavities thus produced between the bricks caused irregular sinking of courses of brick and stone which resulted in vertical cracks and fissures in the masonry. The fall of the dome of the Fire Temple as well as the vault of the West Eyvan must have happened as a result of this process. A small occupation of the site in the 19th century was in its turn replaced by the new village of Tazekand (now called Nosratabad) at a distance of 1.5 km west of the Takht-e Soleyman (see enclave C on the main map 1/50,000 attached).

The site of Takht-e Soleyman was noticed in 1819 by the British traveller Sir Robert Ker Porter. In 1831, Colonel William Monteith in his journey to western Iran also visited Takht-e Soleyman. Then, in 1838, Sir Henry Rawlinson was the first to identify the large pile of ruins in the centre of the oval fortification as a fire temple. The site was later visited by A. Houtum-Schindler in 1881, A. V. Williams Jackson in 1903 and A. F. Stahl in 1907; they left descriptions of the ruins. Erich F. Schmidt surveyed Takht-e

Soleyman from the air in the summer of 1937 taking the first aerial photographs of the site, they are highly valuable. It was not however until October 1937 that Takht-e Soleyman was thoroughly investigated by Arthur U. Pope and Donald N. Wilber who made an architectural survey for the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology. The site was then explored by the Sweden archaeologists Hans Henning von der Osten and B. Almgren in 1958 on behalf of the German Archaeological Institute. H. H. von der Osten subsequently led the first campaign of excavation with Rudolf Naumann. Since then, a serious programme of study in fourteen campaigns of work at Takht-e Soleyman and its surroundings has been carried out by the German Archaeological Institute first under the direction of Rudolf Naumann and then that of Dietrich Huff.

3.c. Form and date of the most recent records of the site

The most recent archaeological reports on the site go back to the 1970's with the publication of the results of archaeological excavations by the German archaeologists. Two volumes of final reports accompanied by detailed annual reports have provided valuable basis for future studies on Takht-e Soleyman.

3.d. Present State of Conservation

A- Damages to towers and ramparts of enclosing wall in brief (see colour plates 5 to 16)

Effect of environmental conditions: According to the enclosed photographs, it can be observed that, thanks to the geographical direction and favourable exposition to

sunlight, the southern front of the tower has remained in good condition. The south-eastern gate, ramparts 1, 2 and 5 in this part are in good condition too and are considered to be the architectural evidence of the Sassanian era in this part of the compound.

The stone curve of the south-eastern gate is in a better condition compared to the portals of the Sassanian era and it will be used as a model for repairing and reconstructing the main gate of the compound (northern gate). This gate has been severely damaged and is in bad conditions.

The following factors have had direct impact on the damaging of the rampart and its towers:

1. Geographical conditions and long winters in the region, causing extreme temperature changes for many centuries, have provoked gradual erosion of the stones used on the facade and the destruction of their edges.
2. Continuous physiochemical interactions are among other damaging factors on the exposed cut limestone.
3. Since the place was deserted and received no attention, due to the lack of roofs, melted water snow and rain has penetrated into the walls. They have caused the collapse of a considerable part of the upper parts of the wall as well as other important damages. The penetrating water has also shortened the life of the mortar used in the building and has hastened the collapse of the big stones used in the facade of the walls and the towers.

4. Occasional flooding of the lake in the centre of the compound has caused damages too. According to existing evidences, there have been many violent floods during the past 14 centuries. They have washed away the mortar, seriously damaging the foundation of the constructions.
5. Earthquakes have been another major cause of destruction. Considering the height of the towers and the ramparts which reached 18 m and the heavy weight of the cladding layer, which was not properly connected to the main retaining wall, earthquakes have been one of the most important causes of the fall of stones from the facade of the wall or its collapse.
6. Devastation resulting from late Sassanian wars with the Romans and other attacks and revolts are among other causes of damages to the wall and its towers.

- Protective measures necessary to save the enclosing wall

1. In order to prevent further destruction of the towers and the rampart, in the first stage measures must be taken in order to protect and stabilise the collapsing parts of the wall. Gradients must be adjusted and the exposed parts covered with clay and straw as an appropriate insulator and a harmless material.
2. In order to prevent the penetration of moisture and also to examine the hidden parts of the enclosing wall, piles of earth at the foot of the rampart must be removed. The main piles, accumulated in four parts around the ramparts, are remains from the 19 years of archaeological excavation by the Germans archaeologists. The removal of dumps has already begun and must be pursued.

3. The consolidation and the stabilisation of the damaged and the collapsing parts of the internal and external facades of the towers and ramparts is necessary in order to prevent further degradation of the monuments until it is possible to undertake basic repairs.
4. Repair and reconstruction of the ruined parts of the rampart according to technical and documented evidence in places where, as a protective factor or in order to present the monument, such actions are necessary. These actions are based on plans approved by the Specialised Technical Council of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization.
5. Systematic collect of the fallen stones from the ramparts and the towers. These stones will be used in the restoration work. The operation for the search and the classification of the collected stones will be carried out under supervision of the appropriate experts.

Remark: Where there is no immediate need to repair the wall, stones will not be collected and will be let to remain in place as the soil itself constitute the best coating and protection.

When the adequate stones for the restorations are not found in the collects, they are to be obtained from nearby quarries where the Sassanians themselves extracted the necessary materials. This strategy has been followed in restoration of the southern parts of the. An optimum balance was reached as it can be seen on the pictures (colour pictures 6-8).

B- Damages to the West Eyvan (colour plates 2, 21-23)

As it can be seen from the enclosed pictures, the remains of the West Eyvan (Khosrow's Eyvan) have frequently sustained damages over time. Until 1938, both the longitudinal and side walls were in place, but the southern wall completely collapsed after an earthquake and the northern wall was ruined in parts. Despite the protective work carried out three decades ago, this part of the palace is not in a good condition. Therefore, a plan is being drafted for its basic protection and repairs. It will take effect after its completion and approval by the Technical Council of the Cultural Heritage Organization.

In addition, ruins have piled up 4 meters above the original Sassanian floor and, when reused by the Mongols, the new floor was made at this new level above the original Sassanian one. Therefore, the restorations in the Eyvan area have to be carried out in consideration and with utmost care in order to protect both the Sassanian and the valuable Mongol additions. Specialised and technical studies have to be undertaken.

In order to prevent the gradual collapse of the remaining parts of the Eyvan, some preliminary restorations were carried out six years ago on the southern wall of the Eyvan. To start the basic actions for the protection and the restoration of the remaining walls, archaeological studies have been conducted and action was taken for the repair and the revival of the walls especially in the northern side of the Eyvan.

Considering the vast amount of the operations as well as the technical requirements, it is clear that the organisation of the activities, the protection and the restoration of the Eyvan and the other installations such as the rampart and the towers of the enclosing wall are very time-consuming and costly. Progress in the operations will

require time, expertise and sufficient budget and also archaeological research. Emergency measures are being undertaken; priorities are also being studied for the most important cases in this unit.

C- Damages to the Azargoshnasb Fire Temple (colour plates 2, 21-23)

This part of the compound is its most prominent section as it forms its original nucleus. The quadripartite structure of this fire temple has received serious manmade and natural damages. The main part of its dome, arches, vaults and coatings has been ruined. After having removed the collapsed debris and the cuts and fills which covered the site, the German archaeological team working at Takht-e Sleyman noticed that a most important cause of the damages was due to the penetration of melted snow, rain and occasional flooding water of the lake into the mortar used in between the bricks of the monument. So far, preliminary measures have been taken to stop the penetration of humidity inside the architectural structures as a first measure of protection and consolidation. Plans for scientific and technical study of the damages have been accepted by the Technical Council of the Cultural Heritage Organization. The protection and the undertaking of major repairs in the Fire Temple require, in addition to the scientific planning, technical facilities and sufficient budgeting.

D- Damages to the Zendan-e Soleyman

The southern and the south-western side walls of the shaft of the Zendan-e Soleyman's crater have in parts (about 8 meters high) collapsed into the crater because of earthquakes. Other sections of these walls have separated from the main body of the mountain and will collapse.

Necessary Protections: In order to complete the scientific information on this historical as well as natural site, co-operation with the State Environmental Protection

Organization (Sazeman-e Mohit-e Zist) has been engaged in order to study its natural aspects. Serious measures must also be taken for the historical and technical documentation of this the area. Necessary information for visitors must also be prepared and an appropriate access path traced similar to the old one. This path must not interfere in inappropriate way with the old one.

E- Damages to the Takht-e Belqeys

Over time, harsh climatic conditions, especially long periods of snow and frost as well as repetitive earthquakes have had a devastating impact on the stability of the monuments of Takht-e Belqeys. The usage of relatively low-quality construction materials has also been a cause of ruin helped by the deterioration of the strength of the mortar. Due to these factors, now the major part of the architectural remains are in ruin. Further scientific and archaeological studies are required to determine the precise extend of the damages.

Necessary Protections: Takht-e Belqeys is in a mountainous region and remote area only attainable in summer time. Even in that season, only shepherds go there for grazing their flocks. Thanks to the existence of rare animal wild species, the area is under the protection of the State Environmental Protection Organization and therefore the complex is not under any serious threat. However, the ageing construction materials and especially the decomposition of the mortar into a useless powder under the harsh climatic conditions facilitate the decay of the monuments. Therefore, special attention must be paid for the collect of technical and scientific documentation on that monument. It must

also be cleaned and its collapsed construction materials classified. Consolidation of the damaged and fragile parts has a high priority.

Management

4a. Ownership

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran through the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO) of Iran,

Avenue Azadi, P. O. Box 13445-719. Tehran, Iran.

4b. Legal status

The Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO) is an independent directorate within the general administrative frame of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The protection of all historical monuments of Iran is ensured by ICHO.

4c. Protective measures and means of implementing them

Takht-e Soleyman was inscribed on the National Heritage List of Iran in 1931 under number 308. The site can thus benefit from a special programme of development devoted to important historical sites labelled 'National Heritage'. Core and buffer zones were defined for the site in June 1993 (see map 1/50,000). As for the implementation of physical protective measures, especial attention is being paid to the reinforcement of the rampart and its towers which enclose the site of Takht-e Soleyman. The south-eastern and

southern gates of the oval fortification have been closed. The defined buffer zones have been respected up to now by local people and they are watched over by local guardians employed by the provincial office of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization in Orumiyeh.

4d. Agency/agencies with management authority

The Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization through its provincial office in Orumiyeh which is the administrative centre of the province of Western Azarbayjan.

4e. Level at which management is exercised (e.g., on site, regionally) and name and address of responsible person for contact purposes:

The management is exercised by the provincial office of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization in Orumiyeh through three local guardians. Regular visits are being undertaken by the staff of I.C.H.O.'s provincial office in Orumiyeh. Mr.E. Heydari is presently responsible for the restoration work on the site while an excavation project is being considered by Mr. M. Mehryar.

4f. Agreed plans related to property (e.g., regional, local plan, conservation plan, tourism development plan)

Regional plans about the site concern mainly the maintenance of the restoration work. As regard to tourism development, it should be noted that the construction of the main road to Takht-e Soleyman from Takab and the creation of some facilities (hotel and restaurant in Takab) have contributed to the development of tourism in the area.

4g. Sources and levels of finance

As a 'National Heritage' monument (see for 4c), Takht-e Soleyman has recently benefited from the national project of development, mainly from its parts directed towards the development of tourism. The expenses for the restorations and the guarding of the site are mostly paid by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization.

4h. Sources of expertise and training in conservation and management techniques

Sources of expertise are limited for Takht-e Soleyman. There is only one specialist in restoration of stone monuments and he has to work simultaneously on several monuments in Iran.

4i. Visitor facilities and statistics

There are no tourist facilities in Takht-e Soleyman itself, but the town of Takab, 40kms to the south/south-west of the site, offers a suitable hotel with a restaurant. No statistics on tourists are available, but during the holidays local people from nearby villages or even from Takab visit the site. There are guiding boards along the road to the site and on the site. Number of foreign tourists visiting Takht-e Soleyman has increased during past years but remains very limited.

4j. Site management plan and statement of objectives (copy to be annexed)

Following the measures taken during the last decade by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, the following points will be in future considered or implemented:

1. Efforts to complete guide signs on the spot in both Persian and English in order to provide a brief description for each part of the compound to the visitors.

2. Preparation and distribution of guide booklets and maps in both Persian and English for the Takht-e Soleyman compound as well as the nearby monuments.

3. Preparation of a visiting course to form well-informed guides for visiting groups.

4. Establishment of a presentation room provided with appropriate facilities and items such as maps, documents, documentary films and slides for the use and information of visitors.

5. Preparation for demonstrating models to show architectural features of the buildings and the evolution of the site.

6. Publication of books and articles on the monuments of Takht-e Soleyman. Encouragement of researchers and students to take part in the preparation of scientific reports, articles and books.

7. Establishment and widening of further relations with mass media in order to present and encourage the public to visit the site.

8. Construction or development of welfare services for tourists including parking, light foodstuff shops, a telecommunication office and places to distribute or sale cultural products.

9. Negotiations with the appropriate governmental authorities or the private sector for the construction of guesthouses, restaurants or other welfare places in the vicinity but outside the protected area of Takht-e Soleyman.

10. Development and establishment of better facilities for I.C.H.O. employees and academics.

11. Discussions and negotiations with other legal authorities to carry out the above mentioned points some of which have already been undertaken; consideration of ways to win the financial support and the investments of the private sector.

Plan Proposed for the Continuation of Archaeological Research at Takht-e Soleyman

Takht-e Soleyman has been excavated for nearly 20 years by German archaeologists and 4 years by Iranian experts. The area is vast, the ruins are numerous and their preservation condition is critical. Serious measures have been taken in the past few years for the protection and rescue of the site. Emergency actions have constantly been pursued and necessary repairs in different parts have progressed in a satisfactory way. Technical personnel and financial credits have been made available. Residential facilities for personnel and academics have been arranged and restoration and/or research activities can now be continued.

The Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization and its experts have made their utmost effort to improve the maintenance conditions of archaeological and architectural remains and to continue the study of the monuments. However, compared to the cultural

importance and the high archaeological and architectural values of the site and because of the vastness of the area, these measures are sufficient. The need to continue scientific research and archaeological excavations by using modern methods and appropriate expertise is also necessary. To improve the situation, the following guidelines for the short and long-term priorities are under consideration and are proposed:

1. To continue the documentation and collect of scientific and technical data related to Takht-e Soleyman area and its monuments.
2. To continue the study of documents concerning the cultural aspects of the material found in Takht-e Soleyman.
3. To carry out geological study of the Sacred Lake at the centre of the compound.
4. To prepare plans to start geophysical surveying of the non excavated areas within the site.
5. To carry out archaeological excavations on well defined points and axis necessary for the progress of the master plans for the protection and the restoration of the site.
6. To pursue archaeological excavations where the digs were left in the past incomplete for different reasons.
7. To begin archaeological excavations outside the south-eastern gate of the oval enclosing wall of the main compound in order to remove the debris and the cuts and fills which cover the site as well as sediments piled up in that area (more than 4 meters in some parts). The aim would be to find the original Sassanian floor and to carry out major repairs in this highly important sector of the compound. The south-east gate of the site is

the only entrance which has remained in quite good condition, yet requiring protection and major repairs.

8. To continue archaeological excavations inside and outside of the northern gate in the enclosing wall in order to complete the available information. The documentation is needed for the restoration of this sector that is badly damaged. The connection between this entrance, the fire temple and the south-eastern gate of the main complex also needs clarification.

4k. Staffing levels (professional, technical, maintenance)

The staff is professional (architects, engineers., archaeologists, historians...) for planning, proceeding the control of the state of conservation of the site and for its development for tourism purposes for instance; it has a technical level of formation for regular restoration work and is locally formed for daily maintenance work and protection.

5. Factors affecting the site

5a. Development pressures (e.g., encroachment, adaptation, agriculture)

The development of the nearby village (Nosratabad) towards the site has been stopped and re-oriented (see enclave C on 1/ 50,000 map). The core and buffer zones (1 and A) of the main compound are thus protected. Elsewhere the situation is also satisfactory but because of the fragility of the monuments and the vastness of the areas under protection, agrarian or economic pressures may sometimes cause some degradation

before they are stopped. Careless visitors may also sometimes slightly deteriorate the buildings before the guards realize it.

5b. Environnemental pressures (e.g. pollution, climat, change)

Aside from the harsh climate (cold weather, heavy rainfalls and snows during the winter), which endangers the unprotected or fragile architectural structures, no other major environmental pressure is felt. The site is in the wilderness faraway from towns and economic centres.

5c. Natural disasters and preparedness (earthquakes, floods, fires, etc.)

No major natural disaster has been recorded during the past hundred years. The site is now well protected from floods.

5d. Visitor / tourism pressures

Tourism pressure has recently increased after the construction of an asphalt road from Takab to the Takht-e Soleyman site. This has unfortunately caused some hurriedly conceived and unwise protection measures such as the putting up of metallic barriers near the south-eastern Sassanian gate and the southern Mongol gate where these barriers have blinded the view and depreciate the aspect of the site. They have to be reconsidered and other suitable measures of protection for access to the site should be implemented.

5e. Number of inhabitants within site, buffer zone

Save for the guardians of the site, the scientific personnel and the restoration team, there are no other inhabitants within the core zones. As to the number of inhabitants in

the buffer zones, while the Nosratabad village is contained in its enclave (see C on 1/50,000 map), the number of people elsewhere in the landscape buffer zone (see B on 1/50,000 map) varies dramatically in the different seasons; from a negligible quantities in the harsh winter, it reaches an appreciable yet unknown number in spring and summer in the peak of agricultural season and with the movements of the shepherds.

5f. Other

N/A

6. Monitoring/Inspection

6a. Key indicators for measuring state of conservation

Three main areas of the site where the restoration works are actually concentrated can be chosen as key indicators: the Northern Gate of the site, the Fire Temple and the Western Eyvan for instances. These three areas represent about 70% of the visible remains inside the rampart and require major repairs. There is no estimation for the time needed for the completion of the conservation programme. However, the restoration of the West Eyvan which begun in 1973 is still in progress, but there has been a few years of interruption. The stability of the buildings depends narrowly on the maintenance of restoration work in the course of excavations as the removal of the debris, which protect the lower parts and the foundations of the structures, harms the solidity of the remains. Excavations must be accompanied by an immediate restoration work in order to stabilise the monument.

6b. Administrative arrangements for monitoring property

A regular inspection is carried out by the staff of the provincial office of Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization in Orumiyeh (West Azarbayjan Province). Annual reports are sent to the I.C.H.O.'s central office in Tehran.

6c. Results of previous reporting exercises

Early records on the site and its state of conservation go back to the 1930's during the first thorough study of Takht-e Soleyman by a team from the American Institute for Persian Studies. The first report of the excavation carried out by the Germans also provides documentation on the state of conservation of the site before the beginning of the major repairs. The technical report on the restoration work carried out by the German mission is presented in the report of H. Hugi of the Technical University of Zurich in 1974 (see bibliography).

Documentation

7a. photographs, slides, and where available, film/video

See the end of the file and the attached slides and documents.

7b. Copies of site management plans and extracts of other plans relevant to the site

N/A

7c. Bibliography

See the end of this text.

7d. Address where inventory, records and archives are held :

Archives Centre, Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, Azadi Avenue, P. O. Box 13445-719, Tehran, Iran.

8. Conclusion and recommended actions

Today, the main site of Takht-e Soleyman and its dependencies are almost in a good condition and state of conservation. Despite the efforts undertaken by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, the protection of the monuments remains a difficult task and needs even more attention. Two protection measures can be recommended:

1. The protected areas must be more often visited and controlled in order to discourage violation.
2. The hurriedly conceived barriers built for protection under tourism pressure (see above 5d) should be removed and replaced by adequate measures

9. Signature on behalf of the State Party:

Jalil Golshan

Research Deputy Director, I.C.H.O.

Edited version signed in Paris by C. Adle on permission given by Mr. M. Beheshti,
Director of I.C.H.O., and on behalf of Mr. G. Golshan.

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List of slides

1. Aerial view of Takht-e Soleyman taken by Erich Schmidt in 1935 (after Schmidt 1940)
2. Aerial view of Takht-e Soleyman taken by Georg Gerster in the 1970's.
3. General view of Takht-e Soleyman from the east, Zendan-e Soleyman Mountain in the background.
4. The lake at Takht-e Soleyman with the remains of the Great Eyvan (Eyvan-e Khosrow from the east.
5. The lake at Takht-e Soleyman with the remains of the Ilkhanid period. The Taviley-e Soleyman Mountain can be seen in the background right of the picture.
6. The ruins of the fire temple north of the lake with the Great Eyvan from the northeast.
7. The reception hall of the sacred complex at Takht-e Soleyman from the south.
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9. The south gate of the site.
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13. The Zendan Mountain from the northeast.
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15. The air of stone quarry with the Belqeys Mountain in the background.
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**Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization
I.C.H.O**

TAKHT-E SOLEYMAN

**FIRE TEMPLE OF KNIGHTS
(VIth-XIIIth centuries)**



Concise Managing Plan and Statement of Objectives

**UNESCO
WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION
NOMINATION OF PROPERTIES FOR INCLUSION ON THE
WORLD HERITAGE LIST**

TAKHT-E SOLEYMAN
West Azarbaijan Province, Iran
3rd revised version, May 30, 2002, Tehran.

Takht-e Soleyman was registered on 20 December 1937 under no. 308 as a historical site. On this plan, its oval fortified core zone is marked with a continuous line (no. 1), its specific buffer zone with a dashed and dotted line (A) and its landscape buffer zone (B) with a dashed line. B includes six other units each provided with its own specific buffer zones (2 to 7; in 6, the core and buffer zones coincide). An enclave C is allocated to Nosratabad village and its restricted expansion.

I- The main core zone 1 as well as the core zones numbered 2 to 7 are subjected to following rules:

1. No alteration is permitted. Constructions, digging wells or subterranean canals, tree plantations, excavations, earth fillings or civil engineering operations are strictly prohibited. 2. The Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO) leads restoration works, archaeological excavations and investigations. It may proceed to the establishment of the necessary installations for these purposes within the core zone.

II- The specific buffer zones are subject to the following rules:

1. It is permitted to carry out traditional farming in existing farms and on agricultural lands within their boundaries at surface level.
2. In the event of need to set up Installations such as electricity posts etc along the road which crosses southern parts of the specific buffer zones A.1 and 2, to connect Takab to Zanjan, ICHO's permission must be requested. The existing road, which is 25 meters wide, cannot be widened under any circumstances.

III- The Landscape buffer zone is subject to the following rules:

1. It is permitted to continue to carry out agricultural or gardening activities.
2. Industrial installations causing environmental pollution, mining or any activities altering the structure of the mountains or damaging the general landscape is forbidden.

IV- The expansion zone (the enclave C) is subjected to the following restrictions:

1. The enclave is allocated to the future expansion of Nosratabad (Lazekand) village only.
2. It is highly recommended that all constructions in this area be carried out in respect to local traditional architecture.

The limits of the sites and the protected areas of Takht-e Soleyman were fixed by :

Mr. Mohammad Mehryar and Mr. Mahmoud Mousavi's studies and reports as well as those submitted to the ICHO by its Office in the West Azarbaijan Province.
Mr. Mousavi's report was registered on the 18 April 1993 under no. 83.

- Limits of the landscape buffer zone
 - Limits of the core zones of the main architectural and cultural remains
 - Limits of site specific buffer zone
 - Limits of Nosratabad extension zone (enclave C)
 - Main road
 - Stone - Paved road
- A.** Main Takht-e Soleyman core zone
1. Oval fortified main core zone (Fire Temple Palace, lake etc.)
 - B.** Landscape buffer zone and its units:
2. Zendan-e Soleyman
3. Tepe Majid (Majid Mound)
4. Belqeys Citadel
5. Brick baking kiln
6. Sassanian extracting quarry mine (the core and the buffer zones coincide)
7. Ahmadabad tumulus.
 - C.** Enclave allocated to Nosratabad village and its future restricted expansion

Scale: 1/50000
0 8 km

TAKHT-E SOLEYMAN

FIRE TEMPLE OF KNIGHTS

Annex to the paragraph 4j **Site management plan and statement of objectives**

The present concise report is an appendix to the paragraph 4j (Site management plan and statement of objectives) of the proposal presented by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (I.C.H.O.) for the nomination of Takht-e Soleyman on the World Heritage List (see the above mentioned proposal, version August 2002, p. 36, paragraph 4j). The statement introduces the management plan for restoration and preservation of the site of Takht-e Soleyman prepared by Mr. Ebrahim Heydari, the managing director of the site. It has been written after his full management report in Persian submitted to the Cultural heritage Organization of Iran. The full text of the Persian report is also submitted in a separate volume together with this concise form of its contents. A full translation of the Persian text into English can also be supplied in near future if requested.

The site of Takht-e Soleyman is being managed by different offices of the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran in accordance with an approved project of restoration, preservation, and presentation of the site. The report in Persian contains two convergent activities that have been carried out for the site of Takht-e Soleyman:

a. an administrative part including different facilities and budgeting in regard to preparing the site for restoration and preservation work and tourism;

b. a technical part including restoration and preservation activities which have been conducted during the past years.

Plans for the development of the site in the future are discussed in the final part of the report.

In regard to historical aspects of the site of Takht-e Soleyman, information and discussion are to be found in the original text of the file under 2. Justification for inscription and 3. Description (see the proposal, *op. cit.*, version August 2002, pp. 6-7 and 24-26).

Director of the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran

Site management plan and statement of objectives

Prepared by the

Local Office of the Cultural Heritage Organization

in Western Azarbayjan

in cooperation with the Director of the Takht-e Soleyman Project

|

Local office at the site

The management of the site is being undertaken by the Local Office of the Cultural Heritage Organization in Western Azarbayjan in cooperation with the Director of the Takht-e Soleyman Project.

The table that follows shows the involvement of different activities for the site management.

<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Number of person</i>
Archaeologist responsible for archaeological research	1
Technical responsible for technical protection of the site	1
Museum guide	1
Responsible for presentation of the historical complex at the site	1
Guards	2
Driver	1
Accountancy manager	1
Ticket seller	1
Service (cleaning and maintenance)	2
Military guards	4

Table1. Task division at the site of Takht-e Soleyman

Site beneficiaries

1. Local farmers using the flowing water of the lake that irrigates their lands around the site: The water of the lake at Takht-e Soleyman has been an indispensable source for the development of agriculture in the area.
2. Tourists: It should be mentioned that the number of visitors has raised during the past years, that fact and the development of tourism must be taken in consideration.
3. Educational purposes and groups such as students and academics.
4. Research purposes: The site of Takht-e Soleyman is still a topic of scientific discussion and investigation on the history of the Sasanian empire and Zoroastrianism. It also embraces geological fields involving research on natural and environmental aspects of the site.
5. Believers and followers of the Zoroastrian faith: Takht-e Soleyman is the unique and most ancient place of the Zoroastrian faith which still survives. It is seen as a sacred place by the followers of the Zoroastrian faith.

Sponsors and protectors

1. The State: Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran.
2. Universities and educational organizations.
3. Local office and guards at the site.
4. Popular organization interested in the preservation of historical monuments.

Site Management

The management of the site of Takht-e Solyeman is assumed by the offices of the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran as follows:

1. Office of Protection and Restoration.
2. Office of Research.
3. Office of Presentation and Publication.
4. Technical Council.
5. Office of Finance and Logistics,

Proposed short term management program for Takht-e Soleyman : restoration and maintenance work, budgetary estimation.

The present estimation for the budget for restoration and maintenance work at Takht-e Solyem amounts to 1,065,000,000 rials per year (roughly \$135,000). For details see the table in the Persian text (p. 44). It includes expenses for:

1. Building materials (roughly \$ 4000).
2. Transportation means (roughly \$ 4500).
3. Man power, e.g. master masons, stone carvers etc..., 60 persons during six months (roughly \$ 42500).
4. Cartography and documentation (roughly \$ 32500).
5. Cartographers, archaeologists etc (roughly \$ 12500).
6. Compilation of the restoration laboratory (roughly \$ 10000).
7. Routine fees (service reparations, car expenses ..., roughly \$ 8800).
8. Material delimitation of the site(roughly \$ 6300).
9. Land purchasing within the site (roughly \$ 12500).

Proposed 5 years management program for Takht-e Soleyman : restoration and maintenance work, budgetary estimation.

The present estimation for the budget for restoration and maintenance work at Takht-e Solyem amounts to 12,000,000,000 rials (roughly \$1,500,000). For details, see the table in the Persian text (p. 45). It includes expenses for:

1. Building materials (roughly \$ 37,500).
2. Transportation means (roughly \$ 100,000).
3. Man power, e.g. master masons, stone carvers etc. ..., 60 persons during six months (roughly \$ 287,500).
4. Cartography and documentation (roughly \$ 187,500).
5. Cartographers, archaeologists etc. (roughly \$ 425,000).
6. Completion of the restoration laboratory (roughly \$ 125,000).
7. Routine fees (service reparations, car expenses ...), (roughly \$ 25000).

8. Continuation of the material delimitation of the site (roughly \$ 187,500).
9. Continuation of land purchasing within the site (roughly \$ 125,000).

Strong and attractive points of the site

Natural attractions of the site such as its beautiful landscape and environment. The mountainous area of Takab contains beautiful sights with snowy winters and a spring with flowing rivers, perfumed plants, farms, and wild flowers, starry skies in the night etc. There is also a geological setting with warm springs at the foot of Kuh-e Zendan.

There are also other historical sites beside the Takht-e Soleyman site itself such as cemeteries of the Parthian and Islamic periods, tumuli at Tepe Majid and Ahmad-Abad, ruins of a Sasanian fort on top of Belqeys mountain, the highest peak in the area, etc

Various plants and animals at Belqeys fort are being observed by experts from the Environment Organization of Iran, and the site is a protected area. Moreover, there is a seasonal lake close to the peak of the Belqys montain.

Precious metal, resources such as a gold mine at Zarshuran in the Anguran district, exist in the area.

Old stone and gypsum quarries are situated close to the site.

Takht-e Soleyman region is surrounded by other historical sites. The highly important mausoleum of Uljaytu, the Mongol ilkhan of the 14th century, is situated 150 km southeast of Takht-e Solyeman at Soltaniyeh and en route to that site. There is also the enigmatic cave at Karaftu (80 km west of Takht-e Soleyman).

There is also a set of geological sites such as those at Kuh-e Berenjeh. The moving grass on the moving waters near the village of Badrlu Lake are impressive too. The whole region constitutes in fact an interesting itinerary for visitors.

Weak points of the site

1. Mountain roads are not in a good condition.
2. Communication system is not regularly working.
3. Drinking water is not at its best standard.
4. There is no shop for selling cultural products.
5. Lack of hospital or nursery.
6. Deficiency of experienced and knowledgeable guide.

7. Small and very limited number of guide books and booklets for visitors.
8. Visitors' expectations are now greater than before and cannot be met.
9. Aside from State funds, there is no other financial resource.
10. Lack of repair centers and facilities for vehicles. No bank is available at the spot.
11. Lack of conformity between the new and traditional architecture in the region.
12. Insufficient protection of the site and its area by the police.

Synthesis (strong points versus weak points), propositions for the maintenance and the development of Takht-e Soleyman

1. Presentation of the managing and restoration projects to the specialists for consultation purposes.
2. Development of consultations for reaching a harmonious interconnection between the site and its economical and social environment.
3. Privileging direct investments without overlooking the indirect ones. And, extending the amplitude of the preservation and restoration activities in accordance with world standards.
4. Expanding the knowledge of the cultural value of the site for its better and efficient preservation.
5. Undertaking extensive effort to introduce the site among the public at large.
6. Improving means of presentation to the visitors for their better understanding of the site.
7. Better cooperation with local inhabitants.
8. Regular checking and evaluation of the results of the preservation activities.
9. Encouragement of the private sector for taking part in the management plan and the conservation activities.
10. Undertaking efforts to interest the Zoroastrian communities in the world to this most important fire temple of their faith and to promote fund-raising among them.

Propositions for the development of tourism and incomes

1. Printing post cards and catalogues.
2. Establishment of an internet site.
3. Publication of books, educational materials and tourists guides.

4. Providing and fixing panels indicating the access to the site along the roads.
5. Pose and placement of guiding panels on the site and on the roads.
6. Advertisement in the appropriate places such as hotels.
7. Presenting and introducing the site among the educated circles and students.
8. Cooperation with travel agencies in order to build up a tourist itinerary for the site.
9. Cooperation with different research and educational organizations in the country.

Necessary activities for the preservation of the site

Considering the vast surface of the site (10 ha just for the inner surface of the main fortified wall), the harsh climatic condition and man caused destruction, the following measures impose :

1. Regular technical maintenance of the remains and production of regular (seasonal and yearly) reports on the state of the site.
2. Estimation and evaluation of financial needs for the maintenance of annual activities.
3. Preparation of activity plans for the preservation of the site.
4. Regular conservation and restoration work as well as urgent interventions wherever needed.

Preservation and management activities carried out at Takht-e Soleyman

For the history and development of the site and its restoration see the Proposal presented by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (I.C.H.O.) for the nomination of Takht-e Soleyman on the World Heritage List (version August 2002), pp. 24-26, 42 and the technical report presented by Dr. H. Hugi on the restoration work carried out by the German mission of the Technical University of Zurich in 1974 (H. Hugi, *Takht-e Suleiman. Technische Gutachten zu Konsolidierung der Palastruinen*, October 1974, report kept in the Archive Center of I. C. H. O. Tehran).

Abridged tables reporting on the conservation and restoration work carried out at Takht-e Soleyman between 1993 to 2001 (1372-1380 Persian calendar) are reported in the Persian text, pp. 60-64. A full

description of these works given in the pp. 65- 91 of the Persian text is reported hereafter :

1993 (1372 Persian calendar)

1. Supply and equipment for the basement at Takht-e Soleyman.
Purchase of facilities and materials for the basement.
2. Restoration activities :
 - Collecting various fragments belonging to architectural decorations of the site, and uncovering as well as the cleaning of the area.
 - Cleaning architectural units round the lake.
 - Extracting stones from quarries and its transport to the site for the reconstruction of the enclosure between Towers 3 and 4.
 - Leveling part of the southern path leading access to the site in order to facilitate transportation.
 - Closing with dried stone walls the cracks and holes seen in different spots of the enclosure.
3. Research studies :
 - Documentation and collecting reports on the past 20 years activities in Takht-e Soleyman and translating into Persian the relevant parts of the non-Persian reports.
 - Establishing a technical archive.
 - Carrying out archeological surveys round the site.
 - Research on the original mortar used in the structures, and finding the relevant quarry. Preparing gypsum with traditional methods.
4. Preservation :
 - Removing fallen debris, waste plants on the walls, and covering the walls with *kah-gel* (traditional and non corrosive protective coating material made of mixed clay and straw).

1994 (1373 Persian calendar)

- A. Acquisition of supplies and equipment for the basement.
 1. Purchase of construction material.
 2. Completion of the building of the local office.
 3. Placing guiding panels inside and outside of the fortified oval wall at the site.

4. Order and purchase of an electrical installation and establishment of power.
5. Finishing parts of the house and sanitary service.
- 6-7. Bridging gaps along the access road to the site.
8. Placing a metallic roof on the Ilkhanid Hall (latter Council Hall).
9. Negotiation with relevant organization in Tehran for incorporating Takht-e Soleyman in the Iranian national electricity network.

B. Research :

1. Laboratory tests for extracting local gypsum at two localities southeast of Takht-e Soleyman.
2. Research and test on different kinds of mortar used in the structures of the site.
3. Archaeological investigations at different parts of the site.
4. Archaeological research in different part simultaneously with the restoration work.
5. Classification of archaeological objects and their study.
6. Continuation of gathering documentation.

C. Preservation (management and restoration) :

1. Restoring remains of the Islamic period.
2. Restoration work on the remains of the Octagonal Structures (northern and southern ones) behind the Grand Eyvan.

Comments :

1. Arrangement of the Ilkhanid structures west of the Lake, setting canalization and drainage for the evacuation of snow and rain water.
2. Partial reconstruction of the northern and southern Octagonal Structures with baked bricks up to 1 m.
3. Setting up a metallic roof on the Ilkhanid Hall for transforming it into a museum and exhibition hall.

1995 (1374 **Persian calendar**)

A. Equipment, acquisition of supplies and equipment for the basement at Takht-e Soleyman

1. Purchase of necessary equipment and machines such as a tractor and a mechanical shovel.
2. Setting up a metallic bridge for parking, setting up a metallic door at the entrance of the Southern Gate (Ilkhanid Gate), construction of a

kiosk outside the enclosure for selling sandwiches and cookeries to visitors.

3. Purchase of a water reservoir for water supply of the basement.

B. Conservation and protection :

1. Restoration of the depot of the German mission. General restoration of the basement, and setting up necessary structures.
2. Cleaning of the debris around the Ilkhanid Octagonal structures south of the lake for checking the plans given by the Germans.
3. Restoration work on the Ilkhanid ruins west of the lake: a. excavation for finding foundations; b. reconstruction of destroyed parts; c. appropriate preservation measures.
4. Restoration work on the Ilkhanid Octagonal structures (southern and northern); a. restoration and reconstruction of the walls belonging to the Octagonal structures; b. removing debris behind the Octagonal structures; c. restoration of their wall with travertine stone.
5. Removing debris and searching for foundations of the main enclosure wall: a. removing debris behind the walls between Towers 3, 4, and 5; b. setting up a metallic scaffold for restoration work on the walls; c. reconstruction of part of the enclosure with available material; d. extracting stone from old quarries for restoration of the southern wall of the enclosure; reconstruction of the collapsed wall at the same spot.
- 6-7. Reconstruction of the wall of the Ilkhanid Hall (Council Hall), and continuation of work on its metallic roof.
8. Continuation of reconstructing walls of the main enclosure wall (western side).
9. Setting a path for visitors and their access to different structures.
10. Preliminary work on the North Gate for its reconstruction: a. stabilizing fragile parts of the structure; b. work on the collapsed arc of the gate; c. arranging fallen stones of the structure.
11. Restoration of the fallen columns of the Column Hall of the Sasanian period.
12. Restoration work west of the Fire Temple.

1996 (1375 Persian calendar)

A. Equipment, acquisition of supplies and equipment for the basement at Takht-e Soleyman

B. Conservation and protection :

1. Continuation of restoration work on Tower 3.

2. Restoration of the interior façade of the main oval enclosure behind Tower 3.
3. Restoration of the vaulted roof of the Southern Hall of the Grand Eyvan.
4. Continuation of restoration work on the Ilkhanid Octagonal structures, and removing debris around these remains.
5. Restoration of the Northern Corridor, north of the Fire Temple.
6. Restoration of the façade of Tower 4.
7. Construction of a kiln for making traditional gypsum.
8. Restoration work on the rooms of the Fire Temple.
9. Archaeological research at the North Gate for finding its original floor and foundations.

1997 (1376 Persian calendar)

A. Archaeological research :

1. Excavation around the Ilkhanid Hall (Council Hall), according to the approved plan by the I.C.H.O., for finding its original form and to proceed to its subsequent restoration.
2. Excavation at the foot of Tower 4 of the main fortified oval wall, and uncovering the debris at the foot of Towers 5, 6, and 7 for finding their foundations and façades.
3. Topography and making plans of the platform of the Ilkhanid Hall (Council Hall), drawing of the main axis of the Ilkhanid period from southern wall to the lake.

B. Restoration work of the project :

1. Continuation of the restoration of the fallen façade of the main oval enclosure between the Towers 4 and 5.
2. Arranging excavated areas round the Ilkhanid Hall (Council Hall), and restoration of its platform with baked bricks.
3. Continuation of the restoration of the collapsed vault of the Northern Corridor, north of the Fire Temple.
4. Conservation work on southern part of the West Eyvan with original material.
5. Turning the original water course which was flowing under the Southeastern Gate of the Sasanian period in order to avoid more damages.
6. Uncovering debris outside the enclosure between the Towers 5, 6, 7, and 8.
7. Discovery of convenient gypsum stone quarry in Yaraziz village at a distance of 30 km from the site.

8. Baking gypsum and its transportation to the site for restoration activities.

1998 (1377 Persian calendar)

A. Equipment, acquisition of supplies and equipment for the basement at Takht-e Soleyman :

1. Extracting gypsum and its transport to the kiln at the site with a tractor.
2. Documenting discovered objects (drawing , photographing, etc.).
3. Drawing of the Ilkhanid tiles and reconstruction of their decorative motifs.

B. Restoration and preservation :

1. Restoration of the Tower 3 of the main fortified enclosure wall.
2. Limited restoration work on Tower 1.
3. Continuation of the restoration work on Tower 4.
4. Restoration work inside the enclosure behind Tower 6.
5. Continuation of work on Northern Corridor, north of the Fire Temple.
6. Restoration of the southern part of the Grand Eyvan.

C. Educational work and presentation

1. Making plans of the Tower 3 and 4 and their restored façade.
2. Making plans of the Northern and Southern halls of the Grand Eyvan.
3. Recording and plotting of all architectural structures north of the Fire Temple.
4. Drawing and documenting the present state of conservation of the north gate.

D. Research :

1. Uncovering inside the North Hall of the Grand Eyvan
2. Uncovering behind the North Hall of the Grand Eyvan.
3. Setting up a series of rails and wagons for removing debris from the Northern Hall of the Grand Eyvan.
4. Removing debris from the Northern Corridor and the restoration of its vault.

1999 (1378 Persian calendar)

1. Restoration of the Tower 4.

2. Restoration of the upper part of the façade of Tower 3 with gypsum mortar.
3. Completion of the restoration of the upper parts of the Towers 3 and 4.
4. Restoration of the damaged parts of the wall between the Towers 3, 4, and 5.
5. Uncovering debris at the foot of the Tower 2.
6. Restoration work on the vaulted roofs of the Fire Temple.
7. Continuation of filling up the cracks and holes in the main enclosure wall.
8. Constructing an evacuation canal round the platform of the Ilkhanid Hall (Council Hall).
9. Construction of holding walls for the protection of the Ilkhanid Hall (Council Hall).
10. Work on the octagonal structures of the entrance of the Southern Gate.
11. Arrangement and organization of part of the southern sector of the site, close to the Southern Gate, for facilitating transportation and access to the site.
12. Restoration work on the façade of the Southeastern Gate.
13. Archaeological excavation outside the North Gate.
14. Continuation of the uncovering of remains in the Northern Corridor.

2000 (1379 Persian calendar)

1. Completion of the restoration work on Tower 3 and restoration of its façade.
2. Cleaning the area at the foot of Tower 4 for finding its fallen stones for reuse.
3. Reconstruction of the façade of Tower 4 with its original material.
4. Making a 1/1 model of the arch of the Southern Gate for placing it in the Northern Gate for the rebuilding of its fallen arch.
5. Restoration work on the interior wall of Towers 1, 2, 5, 37, and 38.
6. Continuation of restoration work on the main fortified wall, East of the Ilkhanid southern gate, and completion of documentation concerning that sector.
7. Removing of the provisory buttresses of Towers 1 and 2.
8. Restoration work on architectural structures in the northern courtyard of the Fire Temple.
9. Archaeological research and excavation at the northern part of the Grand Eyvan, behind room WK, aiming at finding its façade and structures.
10. Continuation of restoration work on the material discovered during the German excavations.

2001 (1380 Persian calendar) :

A. Equipment, acquisition of supplies and equipment for the basement at Takht-e Soleyman.

B. Restoration and Preservation :

1. Continuation of reconstruction work on Tower 4.
2. Restoration work on the Northern Hall of the Grand Eyvan.
3. Construction of a parking outside the enclosure (main fortified wall, A) for visitors.

C. Management of the surrounding area outside the enclosure (the main fortified wall, A) :

1. Planning the construction of a cultural village, development of tourist facilities (hotels and restaurants) etc.
2. Plans for hiring experienced guides for visitors, printing guides for tourists etc.

D. Research programs on the causes of degradation of the construction materials and remains at Takht-e Soleyman:

Because of the harsh climatic conditions, the fragility and the state of preservation of the site, such a program is indispensable. An annual investigation on the agents causing damages and their effects on the monuments should be maintained.

E. Archaeological research :

The following actions must be taken in near future :

1. Continuation of documentation and library studies on different aspects of the site.
2. Technical documentation for necessary restoration work and protection of the site.
3. Geological surveys, especially on the lake.
4. Geophysical studies (electric, magnetic...) together with artographic surveying (1/200).
5. Archaeological excavation where the necessity (such as road buiding) imposes it.
6. Completion of archaeological excavations already undertaken.
7. Beginning of excavation outside the main fortified wall (A), mainly outside of the Southeastern Gate of the Sasanian period.

8. Excavation inside and outside of the North Gate of the main fortified wall (A) for preparing its restoration.
9. Archaeological research at the site of the Kuh-e Zendan-e Soleyman (temple dating from the 1st mil. BC) and at Kuh-e Belqeys (temple from the Sasanid epoch).

Plans for future activities

A. Management

I. short term, 1 year :

1. Preparing questionnaires to submit a set of question to the visitors in order to get a better knowledge of their wishes.
2. Improving the cafeteria area and food facilities.
3. Improving the sanitary service.
4. Improving the formation of the guides who work in the site.
5. Providing tourist guides, postcards ... to visitors.

II. Mid term: 3 years :

1. Construction of a hotel or a guest-house for visitors with funds coming from private investors under State supervision.
2. Expansion and improvement of the Exhibition Hall.
- 3-4. Improving road conditions and proceed to their widening and setting bilingual panels.
5. Construction of a video projection room at the entrance of the site for visitors.
6. Keeping up contacts with local organizations for obtaining their support for the preservation of the site.

III. Improving services :

Development of topics discussed here above in the programs of the year 2001, C and D.

IV. Cultural village ; ecological and educational park :

1. Preparation of plans for the construction of a cultural village made of traditional material outside the buffer zone of Takht-e Soleyman.
2. The local farmers must be encouraged to consider the whole area as a ecological and educational park and to improve their products within the traditional frame with respect for the ecosystem.

B. Projects

I. Mid term: 3 years :

a. Protection of the ecosystem, fauna and flora :

1. Protection of the variety of the fauna and the flora.
2. Establishing a botanical space and path.
3. Instructing local inhabitants for the preservation of the ecosystem and the vegetation.
4. Preparing statistics on fauna and flora of the region.
5. Research on traditional medicine of the region.

b. Promoting respect of local traditions

Takht-e Soleyman is a sacred place for the Zoroastrian community and as such it should be respected accordingly. Consequently, visitors must be introduced to the traditions of the Zoroastrian faith in order to respect its customs. Guides will play an important role.

d. Instruction :

α . short term: 1 year :

1. Instruction and formation of guides.
2. Informing and instructing visitors with the help of improved guides and booklets.

β . mid term: 3 years :

1. Placing appropriate and general panels for visitors inside and outside the site.
2. Placing detailed panels for each monument in appropriate places.
3. To cooperate with local organizations, leaders and people.

γ . Restoration and preservation in accordance with the authenticity of each remain in the different parts of the site.

Restoration activities should be carried out in respect of the authenticity of architectural structures. Traditional materials should be employed in the process.

C. Varied activities

I. Short term: 1 year :

1. General and regular cleaning of the site and the removal of the debris.
2. Covering of the buildings and external structures with *kah-gel* for their protection against the harsh climatic conditions at Takht-e Soleyman.

Kah-gel is a traditional and non corrosive protective coating material made of mixed clay and straw.

3. Removal of the vegetation and plants which start to grow on the buildings and whose roots causes the destruction and erosion of the structures.
4. Combating small animals whose increments can cause damages to the structures.

II. Mid term: 3 years

A. Activities on the site :

1. Preparation of a plan for the diagnosis of damaged structures and their causes.
2. Propositions for avoiding more damages.
3. Rapid documentation of the damaged sectors.
4. Proposition of a plan for the restoration of the damaged structures and the possible ways of restoring them.
5. Implementation of the restorations approved by the I.C.H.O.
6. Carrying out precise restoration.
7. Cooperation with local representatives for the protection of the core and buffer zones of the site.
8. To maintain emergency protections, consolidation and preservation, cleaning of the area, research and studies...
9. Launching of the project for the restoration of the Grand Eyvan, the Fire Temple, North Gate and the ruined towers.
10. Continuation of documentation about all aspect of the site.
11. Improving the equipment for the museum of the site.
12. Continuation of archaeological research.
13. Keeping up with technical documentation for the site.
14. Engaging actions to purchase part of the lands within the buffer zones in order to begin research in those areas.
15. Starting research for the documentation of the sites of Zendan-e Soleyman and Kuh-e Belqeys.
16. Encouraging the local farmer to employ traditional methods of farming and respecting the buffer zones.
17. Encouraging the farmers to respect the traditional and local forms of architecture.
18. Encouraging the local farmers to improve the quality of their products in order to present them to visitors.

B. Cooperation with farmers and villagers

Most of the surrounding lands at Takht-e Soleyam are in the possession of local farmers who are benefiting from the flowing water of the site. Therefore, attention will be paid to get their close cooperation in

the preservation of the site. In this respect the following activities will be undertaken :

α. Activities

a. Short term: 1 year :

1. Maintaining meetings with local farmers in order to encourage them to preserve and respect the ancient remains in their lands.
2. Explaining to the farmers the reasons for which why the buffer zones must be to respected.

b. Mid term: 3 years :

1. Introducing the farmers and villagers to their regional and national history in the aim of getting them interested in the protection of their environment and its historical remains.

Execution of the project

The complex of Takht-e Soleyman has been the object of excavations and restorations from 1959 to 1978. Due to its high importance, the complex was recognized in 1993 (1372 Persian calendar) by I.C.H.O as one of the ten Grand National Projects for preservation of historical monuments in Iran. In order to reach the aims defined in these Grand Projects for the restoration, protection and promotion of the chosen sites the following requirements should be met :

1. Preparation of programs for maintaining management and restoration activities together with the cost and budget estimations. If approved by the Technical Council of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, the execution of the program would become obligatory.
2. Overcoming the shortcomings of guiding panels on the roads and at the site. Augmenting the number of guides etc.
3. Supplying posters, post cards, booklets, etc.
4. Sending information to travel agencies.
5. Inviting educational organizations, schools, and universities to visit the site.
6. Soliciting experts for giving their opinion on a better presentation of the complex.
7. Offering for sale of cultural products and publications at the site.
8. Improving efforts to attract visitors and to increase incomes.
9. Preparing statistics on visitors and the monthly and annual incomes.
10. Putting all research, restoration, and presentation activities on a web site.

N.B. As the preparation of this kind of report is not customary in the [Iranian]administration, its preparation has not been easy to perform. It certainly contains some shortcomings which will be overcome in the next editions of this report.

Ebrahim Heydari
Director of the Takht-e Soleyman's Grand National Project
27/08/2002 (6/5/1381)

Concise report prepared in Paris and signed on behalf of Mr J. Golshan.
Paris, 05/09/2002

APPENDIX

**Law of the
Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization Charter
No 3487-Qaf
Dated July 19, 1988**

Article 1. *Definition: Cultural heritage is comprised of relics from the past which indicate man's motion in the course of history and the knowledge of which forms the ground for learning about his identity and cultural line of development, thus providing for man's admonition. The Iranian National Heritage Organization, established by virtue of the law ratified on 10-11-1364 and hereafter referred to as the Organization, shall be administered in accordance with this charter.*

Article 2. *Aim: to learn from man's cultural movements and perpetuation and elevation of the identity and characteristics of the society.*

Article 3. *Duties of the Organization: The duties of the Organization concerning the cultural heritage, which include research, supervision, conservation and revival, and presentation, are as follow:*

1. *Preparing, organizing and implementing research programs on relics from the past.*
2. *Investigating and identifying historic sites, mounds, monuments and ensembles and preparing their comprehensive inventory and the archaeological map of the country.*
3. *Effecting archaeological researches and scientific excavations.*
4. *Carrying out ethnographic surveys, ethnological, anthropological and biological researches and studying local cultures in the country's various regions.*
5. *Carrying out research in the field of traditional arts and bringing about the means necessary for their conservation and development.*
6. *Recording the country's valuable movable and immovable cultural-historic relics in the Inventory of National Artifacts and relevant lists.*
7. *Exclusively carrying out all judicial affairs concerning the cultural heritage and entering penal lawsuits against trespassers of laws governing the country's cultural heritage as claimant or, depending on the case, as private plaintiff.*
8. *Taking necessary measures for the restitution of Iranian cultural properties at national and international levels through relevant authorities.*
9. *Identifying and appropriating all properties having cultural-historic values and counting as cultural heritage which have been confiscated by responsible institutions.*
Note. All courts, customs offices, police forces and governmental departments such as those somehow involved in the confiscation of goods have the duty of submitting items having cultural-historic value to the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization.
10. *Preparing and implementing projects necessary for the surveillance, conservation, repair, restoration and revival of valuable cultural-historic artifacts, monuments and ensembles.*
11. *Giving opinions on all master- and detailed developments plans in relation with cultural and historic regions, giving the final approval concerning valuable cultural-historic sites, townscape and locales in the cases mentioned and preventing any destruction in them.*
12. *Determining the perimeter of recorded historic monuments, ensembles, sites and tumuli and the particular architectural and design standards within the perimeters.*
13. *Introducing valuable cultural-historic artifacts through museums, exhibitions and the like.*
14. *Creating, developing and administering museums throughout the country.*

15. *Creating the Documentation Centre of the country's cultural heritage (including scientific reports, monuments' plans, photographs, etc.) in view of offering scientific and research-oriented services in this field.*

16. *Presenting and expounding the values of cultural heritage at the national and international level by printing and publishing collections of studies and researches accomplished and using audio-visual means and mass media.*

17. *Compiling, drafting and publishing the Encyclopedia of Iranian Historic Artifacts and Monuments.*

18. *Developing research activities in various cultural heritage fields and encouraging researchers, artists and master-craftsmen.*

19. *Developing and implementing educational courses in order to prepare expert personnel in various fields related with cultural heritage in coordination with the relevant bodies.*

20. *Encouraging the people to participate in activities concerning the identification, conservation and revival of the cultural heritage and its supervision.*

21. *Creating and developing cultural heritage associations throughout the country. Note. The modalities of these associations' creation and scope of duties will be determined by the Council of the Organization.*

22. *Establishing scientific and cultural contacts and exchanges with relevant organizations and institutions at the national and international level, particularly Islamic and neighbouring countries, and holding necessary congresses and seminar cycles.*

23. *Cooperating with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in internal and external tourism affairs.*

24. *Offering counsel, research, technical and educational services. Selling cultural products. Collecting entrance fees in monuments, sites, museums and exhibitions and accepting donations, contributions and the like.*

Article 4. *Pillars of the Organization: The Organization rests on two pillars; 1) The Council of the Organization; 2) The Director of the Organization.*

Article 5. *The Council of the Organization: In view of a greater coordination between the cultural heritage affairs across the country, the Council of the Organization is constituted as follows:*

1. *The Minister of Culture and Higher Education (Director of the Council);*
2. *The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance;*
3. *The Minister of Interior;*
4. *The Minister of Justice;*
5. *The Minister of Foreign Affairs;*
6. *The Minister of Housing and Urban Planning;*
7. *The Executive Manager of the Radio-Television;*
8. *The Director of the Organization (secretary of the Council).*

Note 1. In case of equal votes, the view accepted will be that of the group comprising the Director of the Council.

Note 2. The sessions of the Council will ordinarily be convened at least twice yearly upon the proposition of the Director of the Organization and with the invitation and under the direction of the Minister of Culture and Higher Education

Note 3. The Council may invite individuals whose presence is indispensable to take part in the sessions. These individuals shall have no right of vote.

Note 4. A session will be official with a quorum of five members and the decisions of the Council shall be binding with the votes of at least four members present at the session.

Article 6. *Duties of the Council: The duties of the Council of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization are the following:*

1. *Determining general policies, on the basis of the law of the establishment of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization and the Charter of the Organization.*
2. *Examining reports of other organizations and expressing opinions on them.*

Note. All the ratification of the Council will be promulgated bearing the signature of the Minister of Culture and Higher Education.

Article 7. *The Director of the Organization: The Director of the Organization will be appointed by the Minister of Culture and Higher Education's mandate.*

Article 8. *The Organization's units across the country: The Organization can, with the assent of the Minister of Culture and Higher Education, establish its units wherever necessary throughout the country, in accordance with their location and with the assent of the Organization of Administrative and Employment Affairs. These units shall be responsible, under the supervision of the director of the Organization and in accordance with the ratification of the Organization, for cultural heritage affairs within their perimeters of activity.*

Article 9. *As from the date of this law's ratification, all contradicting laws and regulations are annulled.*



Takht-e Suleiman (Iran)

No 1077

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Islamic Republic of Iran
Name of property: Takht-e Suleiman
Location: Western Azerbaijan Province
Date received: 14 November 2001

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is an archaeological *site*.

Brief description:

The archaeological site of Takht-e Suleiman, in north-western Iran, is situated in a valley of a volcanic mountain region. The site was the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary, as well as having an Anahita Temple, in the Sasanian period (6th to 7th centuries CE), partly rebuilt in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period (13th century). The site has important symbolic significance. The designs of the fire temple, the palace and the general layout have had significant influence in the development of Islamic architecture.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The nominated site is situated in Azerbaijan province, within a mountainous region, ca. 750 km from Tehran. The site is formed of plain, surrounded by a mountain range. It contains a volcano and an artesian lake as essential elements of the site. The nominated area has a landscape buffer zone, covering ca. 74 km² (about 8 km by 16 km), enclosing the following nominated properties with their specific buffer zones:

- Takht-e Suleiman ('Solomon's throne'), the main focus of the nomination;
- The mountain to the east of the previous served as quarry for the construction of the site;
- Zendan-e Suleiman ('Solomon's prison'), a small volcano with ancient shrines around the top;
- Tepe Majid, an archaeological mound culturally related to Zendan-e Suleiman;
- Belqeis Mountain with a citadel (named after Bathsheba, Solomon's mother);

The area has only been partially excavated, and there is archaeological potential especially in the buffer zone, and also outside. The so-called Ahmad Abad Tumulus to the west of Zendan-e Suleiman has been indicated as an example. The landscape buffer zone also comprises a small village with its potential expansion zone.

Takht-e Suleiman: The site is formed of an oval platform, rising about 60 m above the surrounding valley. The platform measures about 350 by 550 m. It has a small calcareous artesian well, which has formed a lake ca. 120 m deep. From here, small streams bring water to surrounding lands. The Sasanians occupied the site starting in the 5th century, building there the royal sanctuary on the platform. The sanctuary was enclosed by a stone wall 13 m high, with 38 towers and two entrances (north and south). This wall apparently had mainly symbolic significance as no gate has been discovered. The main buildings are on the north side of the lake, forming a nearly square compound (side ca 180 m) with the **Zoroastrian Fire Temple** (Azargoshnasb) in the centre. This temple, built in fired bricks, is square in plan. To the east of the Temple there is another square hall reserved for the 'everlasting fire'. Further to the east there is the **Anahita temple**, also square in plan. The royal residences are situated to the west of the temples. The lake is an integral part of the composition and was surrounded by a rectangular 'fence'. In the north-west corner of this once fenced area, there is the so-called Western Iwan, 'Khosrow gallery', built as a massive brick vault, characteristic of Sasanian architecture. The surfaces were rendered in lime plaster with decorative features in *muqarnas* (stalactite ceiling decoration) and stucco.

The site was destroyed at the end of the Sasanian period, and left to decay. It was revived in the 13th century under the Mongol occupation, and some parts were rebuilt, such as the Zoroastrian fire temple and the Western Iwan. New constructions were built around the lake, including two octagonal towers behind the Iwan decorated in glazed tiles and ceramics. A new entrance was opened through the main walls, in the southern axis of the complex.

It is noted that the surrounding lands in the valley (included in the buffer zone) contain the remains of the **Sasanian town**, which has not been excavated. A **brick-firing kiln** dating from the Mongol period has been found 600m to the south of Takht-e Suleiman. The mountain to the east was used by the Sasanians as a **quarry** for building stone.

Zendan-e Suleiman: This hollow, conical mountain, an ancient volcano, is situated some 3 km to the west of Takht-e Suleiman. It rises about 100 m above the surrounding land, and contains an 80 m deep hole, about 65m diameter, formerly filled with water. Around the top of the mountain, there are remains of a series of shrines and temples that have been dated to the first millennium BCE.

Belqeis Citadel: The Belqeis Mountain is ca 3,200 m high, and is situated 7.5 km north-east of Takht-e Suleiman. On the highest part there are remains of a citadel (an area of 60 x 50m), dating to the Sasanian era, built in yellow sandstone. The explorations that have been carried out so far on the site indicate that the citadel would have contained another fire temple. Its orientation indicates a close relationship with Takht-e Suleiman.

History

Historical background: The Persian Empire was founded by the Achaemenid dynasty (6th to 4th centuries BCE). Subsequently, a new empire was established by the Parthians (2nd BCE to 3rd CE), who were conscious of their Persian identity, even though under strong Hellenistic influence. The following Sasanian Empire (3rd to 7th CE), re-established the Persian leadership in the region, and was successful in forming a counterforce to the Roman Empire. Basing on the Achaemenid heritage and the impact of the Hellenistic-Parthian period, the Sasanians developed new artistic and architectural solutions. Their architecture had important influence in the east as well as in the west; it became a major reference for the development of architecture in the Islamic period.

Religious context: Fire and water have been among the fundamental elements for the Iranian peoples since ancient times. Fire was conceived a divine messenger between the visible world and the invisible (gods). Water was the source of life. Volcanic regions were thus of particular interest, especially when there was the presence of water as it was the case of Takht-e Suleiman.

Zoroastrianism is an Iranian religion, and has its origin in Prophet Zarathustra, who probably lived in the 7th century BCE or earlier. This religion is characterized by its monotheistic aspect related to Ahuramazda, and it recognizes the conflict between good and evil forces. Ahuramazda was worshiped by the early Achaemenids, whose rituals took place in the open on fire altars, without any temples. With the revival of new nationalism, the Sasanians established Zoroastrianism as a state religion, building fire temples for the cult. Zoroastrianism has had an important influence on Christianity and Islam, and it is still a living religion, practised in Iran, India and Central Asia.

The Sasanians also recognized the cult of Anahita, the goddess of earth, associated with water. A temple of Anahita is included in the complex of Takht-e Suleiman.

The early period: The volcanic site where the Sasanians built their sanctuary, Azargoshnasb (Fire temple of the Knights), later called Takht-e Suleiman (Throne of Solomon), has been subject to worship for a long time. The hollow, volcanic mountain, called Zendan-e Suleiman (the prison of Solomon) is surrounded by the remains of temples or shrines, dated to the first millennium BCE. These are associated with the Manas, who ruled the region from 830 to 660 BCE. The crater was once full of water, but has later dried out.

The Sasanian period: With the arrival of the Sasanians (5th century CE), Zendan-e Suleiman lost its importance in favour of Takht-e Suleiman, where construction started in mid 5th century CE, during the reign of the Sasanian king Peroz (459-484 CE). The site became a royal Zoroastrian sanctuary under Khosrow I (531-579) and Khosrow II (591-628), and it was the most important of the three main Zoroastrian sanctuaries. The other two have not been identified so far.

The construction of this temple site coincides with the introduction of Christianity as the main religion in the Roman Empire. The need to strengthen Zoroastrianism can thus be seen as an effort to reinforce national identity as a counterpoint to Christianity in the Roman world. The

importance of Takht-e Suleiman was further increased with the introduction of the cult of Anahita. The royal ensemble was surrounded by an urban settlement on the plain. The site was destroyed by the Byzantine army in 627, a counter measure to the Sasanian attack to their territories.

Mongol period: The site regained importance in the 13th century, when the Ilkhanid Mongols rebuilt part of it as a residence for Ilkhan Aba-Qaan, then the ruler of Iran. The reconstruction phase included the fire temple and the western Iwan, as well as new structures around the lake. The Mongol rehabilitation shows cultural continuity, which is particularly interesting in the revival of Zoroastrian faith in the middle of the Islamic period. Due to its natural and cultural qualities, the site has been associated with various legendary and biblical characters and issues, such as Solomon, Christ, earthly paradise, Holy Graal, etc.

Later phases: After the Ilkhanid period, from the mid 14th century, the site was abandoned and gradually fell into ruins. It was rediscovered by the British traveller, Sir Robert Ker Porter in 1819, followed by other explorers. In 1937, the site was photographed by Erich F. Schmidt, and surveyed by Arthur U. Pope and Donald N. Wilber. In 1958 it was explored by Swedish archaeologists. The first systematic excavation was undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute under R. Naumann and D. Huff, in the 1970s.

Management regime

Legal provision:

The nominated properties are under the ownership of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Takht-e Suleiman was inscribed on the national heritage list of Iran in 1931, and it is subject to legal protection under current legislation: Antiquity Law (1309/1930), Law of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization Charter (n. 3487-Qaf, 1988).

Management structure:

The main excavation on the site has been carried out by the German Archaeological Institute, who has provided the relevant documentation. At present, the preservation and development activities and the management of the nominated area are the responsibility of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization. The provincial office of the ICHO in Orumiyeh is responsible for archaeological excavations and takes necessary safety measures for preservation in the buffer zones. A separate unit has been created for field management within ICHO, namely *The Directorate of the Takht-e Suleiman Development Project*. The purpose of this unit is to give impetus to the decision making mechanism and integrate the activities of various departments, following the example of the successful project scheme at Zogha Zanbil. A five-year management plan has been adopted for Takht-e Suleiman, in 2002. The first section of the plan clarifies the organization and the budget, the second section defines the strengths and weaknesses of the site providing for its maintenance and development. The third section summarizes the activities since 1993, and the fourth section provides the plan for a sustainable preservation and presentation programme in the coming years.

Resources:

The resources for the conservation and maintenance of Takht-e Suleiman are provided mainly by ICHO. The Organization is currently searching for additional funds to sustain the management of the site. The number of visitors is not expected to increase much in the foreseeable future. The current facilities for the reception of visitors are fairly basic, but the future plans foresee an improvement as part of the programmes for the conservation and improved presentation of the site. The pace of development in this region is relatively slow, but the management plan foresees initiatives for raising the awareness of local authorities and the public about the values of the site and the aims and importance of sustainable development.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The State Party presents Takht-e Suleiman as one of the most important ancient sanctuary sites in the country, characterised by the presence of fire and water (volcano and artesian wells). The site has been a place of worship at least since the first millennium BCE. The main feature is the Zoroastrian Fire Temple that was built by the Sasanian kings. It was the most important of the three main Zoroastrian temples of this period, and dates from the 6th century CE.

The State Party proposes the site to be listed on the basis of *criteria i, ii, iii, iv and vi*:

Criterion i: the site shows creative competence in the use of the sacred lake and its relationship to the Zoroastrian faith and Pre-Zoroastrian beliefs in order to match with geological and natural settings.

Criterion ii: the site demonstrates how different people were able to plan, engineer and use the landscape in accordance with their religion and philosophy regardless of their ethnicity, from early times to Sasanian and Mongol periods. The site was associated with legends and beliefs (Solomon, Christ, Zarathustra); Sasanian kings made pilgrimage to the site after their coronation at Ctesiphon.

Criterion iii: The site provides a valuable insight to Zoroastrianism as an official and royal religion, and the development of Iranian art, architecture, and landscape planning in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods.

Criterion iv: The site reveals one of the great artistic achievements of the Sasanian civilization, and witnesses the organization of landscape and religious activity in perfect harmony.

Criterion vi: Takht-e Suleiman is substantially associated with beliefs of outstanding universal significance, including Zoroastrianism, one of the oldest belief systems today. Its influence on most of the great religions has been recognized.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the ensemble of Takht-e Suleiman in September 2002.

Conservation

Conservation history:

The ancient shrines on the mountain skirts of Zendan-e Suleiman were abandoned in the antiquity and fell into ruins. The sanctuary of Takht-e Suleiman was destroyed by the Byzantine army in the 7th century CE, after which it was not used until its partial reconstruction in the Mongol period in the 13th century. From the mid 14th century the site was abandoned, and it was gradually turned into ruin due to natural forces of decay. The first systematic excavation was undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute in the 1970s. The site is currently under the care of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, who is responsible for its consolidation and restoration.

State of conservation:

The calcareous water pouring from the artesian source and the occasional flooding of the lake have raised the ground level by several meters since the Sasanian period. The water has washed away mortar from the joints and weakened the foundations. The hard climate, snow, ice, and earthquakes have provoked erosion and collapses, aggravated by physiochemical causes, contributing to the collapse of brick and masonry structures. The thick outer walls have lost the upper parts, and the stones have fallen to the ground. The damaged, massive brick structures with their heavy vaults have intrinsic weakness due to their weight. Only small areas remain of surface decoration, which was originally made in stucco, *muqarnas* (octagonal decorative tile) or ceramic tiles. The shrines around the Zendan-e Suleiman and the Belqeis Citadel are in a similar ruined state. The land surrounding the core areas has archaeological potential. It is understood that a Sasanian town existed in the valley, which is now cultivated by local farmers. Furthermore, there are numerous mounds of potential archaeological interest, only partially explored so far.

Management:

The ICOMOS mission to the site considered the management to be organized in a reasonable manner, but recommends that special attention be given to the tools required to carry out the proposed projects. Attention should also be given to guarantee sustainability of the financial resources in the long term.

Risk analysis:

The main causes of decay of the architectural remains relate to seismic action and the atmospheric problems due to heavy winters, water and frost. While tourism is not a major activity at present, there is possibility for increase in the future, which needs to be taken into account in planning and management. There may thus be risks in the buffer zones due to development pressures and the construction of visitor facilities in and around the sites. Furthermore, there is potential conflict between the interests of the farmers and archaeologists, particularly in the event that excavations be undertaken in the fields of the valley.

Authenticity and integrity

Regarding the authenticity of the site, evidence has confirmed the site as the main Zoroastrian sanctuary of the Sasanians. The place is an archaeological site excavated only recently; the restorations and reconstructions are relatively limited so far. A section of the outer wall near the southern entrance has been rebuilt recently, using mainly original stones recovered from the fallen remains. Part of the brick vaults of the palace structures have also been rebuilt, using modern brick but in the same pattern as the original. As a whole, these interventions can be seen as necessary, and do not compromise the authenticity of the place, which retains its historic ruin aspect.

The landscape of the area surrounding Takht-e Suleiman has evolved over time, obtaining its own visual integrity characterised by its rural and agricultural nature. There is also clear structural and functional relationship between the different elements within this ensemble. This concerns also the Belqeis Citadel, which is situated further away from the rest. The citadel however was built in the same period as the main sanctuary, and its location and orientation suggests that it had religious significance related to this. The small village, situated between Takht-e Suleiman and Zendan-e Suleiman, has become an integral part of the visual integrity of the landscape. It is noted however that strict control is required regarding the character and volume of any new constructions, taking into account also their surface materials and colour.

Comparative evaluation

The Sasanian dynasty (ca 224 to 651 CE) governed an empire that extended from Sogdiana and today's Georgia in the north to Mazun region in Arabia, and from the Indus River to the Upper Tigris and Euphrates river valleys. In Iran, the major sites that represent the Sasanian civilization include the palace of the first Sasanian ruler (Ardashir I, early 3rd century CE), at Firuzabad, still basically Parthian. The royal palace at Bishapur was built at the time when the Sasanian army defeated the Roman Emperor Valerian (260), and reflects Greek and Roman influences. The Taq-e Kisra at Ctesiphon, their capital city (in present-day Iraq), is one of the most outstanding royal sites, particularly its famous *ivan* (a brick vault: 75 feet/22.50 m wide, 90 feet/27 m high). The sacred site of Taq-e Bustan, near Kirmanshah in western Iran, consists of two large *iwans*, carved in the rock in the 4th and 5th centuries CE. Many of their fortifications continued to be used in the Islamic period. There also exist a number of fire temples in Iran, but less important than Takht-e Suleiman.

Sasanian architecture is characterised by its structural solutions, and especially the vaults built in brick or stone, or carved in rock, and decorated with monumental sculptures. Some of these features were inherited from the Achaemenids and Parthians, but Sasanians gave their architecture its own, strongly Iranian identity. Their buildings were an important reference for the development of the early Islamic architecture, and their influence was felt even in Europe, for example, in Romanesque architecture. It is also interesting to note that the chapels of a square plan built by the Religious orders in Mexico correspond exactly to the scheme of the Sasanian fire temple.

Within this context, Takht-e Suleiman is distinguished as being the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary in the Sasanian civilization. The site is a mature expression of Sasanian royal architecture, and the fire temple is the oldest and largest in existence.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The site of the ensemble of Takht-e Suleiman and Zendan-e Suleiman is remote and protected by mountains. It has not been subject to major developments recently, and has thus kept its integrity. It has strong symbolic and spiritual significance, related to fire and water, the principal reasons for its occupation from ancient times. Takht-e Suleiman is the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary. It is also a mature architectural expression of the Sasanian civilization, which had significant influence on the development of Islamic architecture. The site has important archaeological potential.

Evaluation of criteria:

Criterion vi: The ensemble of Takht-e Suleiman consists of several elements, which together contribute to spiritual significance of the site. The beginnings of the appreciation of the site are documented in the shrines around the top of the ancient volcano, Zendan-e Suleiman, dated to the early first millennium BCE. The spiritual significance was further reinforced when the Sasanians built there the principal sanctuary to Zoroastrianism, an early monotheistic religion, which has influenced other world religions, such as Islam and Christianity. The presence of the Anahita Temple, ancient Iranian goddess of waters, fertility and procreation, gives added value. The symbolic meaning of the site is stressed by the Mongol rehabilitation six centuries later, and by the association of legendary and biblical figures with the site, such as Solomon, Bathsheba, and Christ. Takht-e Suleiman has also been identified as a representation of earthly paradise.

Criteria i and iv: Takht-e Suleiman offers significant evidence to the mature phase of development in Sasanian architecture. This is documented in the royal complex designed around the lake. The fire temple can be seen as a prototype; it is the largest and the oldest preserved structure. While various types of buildings, such as the brick *ivan* or the water and fire temples, can be found in other Sasanian sites, Takht-e Suleiman provides an outstanding example of their combination into a whole, which is not found elsewhere.

Criterion ii: Takht-e Suleiman is recognized to have influenced the development of Islamic and Christian architecture. The architecture that forms the complex of Takht-e Suleiman, the square structure of the fire temple, the massive vault of the *ivan*, and the open court around the water source, are clearly reflected in the architectural composition of Islamic mosques and shrines. Some relationship can also be seen with early Romanesque churches in Europe.

Criterion iii: The region of Takht-e Suleiman is rich in ancient settlements, of which many are still unexplored. The site provides exceptional evidence to the development of cult and religious practices from the 1st millennium BCE

to the 14th century CE. The site of Takht-e Suleiman itself was surrounded by a town, which is now covered by agricultural land.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation with respect to inscription

That the site be inscribed on the basis of *criteria i, ii, iii, iv* and *vi*:

Criterion i: Takht-e Suleiman is an outstanding ensemble of royal architecture, joining the principal architectural elements created by the Sasanians in a harmonious composition inspired by their natural context.

Criterion ii: The composition and the architectural elements created by the Sasanians at Takht-e Suleiman have had strong influence not only in the development of religious architecture in the Islamic period, but also in other cultures.

Criterion iii: The ensemble of Takht-e Suleiman is an exceptional testimony of the continuation of cult related to fire and water over a period of some two and half millennia. The archaeological heritage of the site is further enriched by the Sasanian town, which is still to be excavated.

Criterion iv: Takht-e Suleiman represents an outstanding example of Zoroastrian sanctuary, integrated with Sasanian palatial architecture within a composition, which can be seen as a prototype.

Criterion vi: As the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary, Takht-e Suleiman is the foremost site associated with one of the early monotheistic religions of the world. The site has many important symbolic relationships, being also a testimony of the association of the ancient beliefs, much earlier than the Zoroastrianism, as well as in its association with significant biblical figures and legends.

ICOMOS, March 2003

Takht-e Sulaiman (Iran)

No 1077

1. IDENTIFICATION

État partie : République islamique d'Iran
Nom du bien: Takht-e Sulaiman
Lieu: Province d'Azerbaïdjan occidental
Date de réception : 14 novembre 2001

Catégorie de bien :

En termes de catégories de biens culturels telles qu'elles sont définies à l'article premier de la Convention du patrimoine mondial de 1972, il s'agit d'un *site archéologique*.

Brève description :

Le site archéologique de Takht-e Sulaiman, dans le nord-ouest de l'Iran, est situé dans une vallée, au milieu d'une région de montagnes volcaniques. Le site comprend le principal sanctuaire zoroastrien, en partie reconstruit sous la période des Ilkhans (Mongols), au XIII^e siècle, ainsi qu'un temple dédié à Anahita datant de la période sassanide, VI^e et VII^e siècles. Le site a une valeur symbolique importante. La conception du temple du feu, celle du palais et la disposition générale du site ont eu une influence significative dans le développement de l'architecture islamique.

2. LE BIEN

Description

Le site proposé pour inscription est situé dans la province d'Azerbaïdjan, dans une région montagneuse, à environ 750 km de Téhéran. Il est formé d'une plaine entourée de chaînes de montagnes. Un volcan et un lac artésien en sont les éléments essentiels. La zone proposée pour inscription possède un paysage zone tampon d'environ 74 km² (8 km x 16 km), comprenant les biens suivants, qui possèdent chacun leur zone tampon spécifique :

- Takht-e Sulaiman (« Trône de Salomon ») est l'élément central du bien proposé pour inscription ;
- La montagne à l'est de Takht-e Sulaiman a servi de carrière pour la construction du site ;
- Zendane Sulaiman (« Prison de Salomon »), un petit volcan portant d'anciens sanctuaires autour de son sommet ;

- Tepe Majid, un tumulus archéologie culturellement liée à Zendane Sulaiman ;

- Le mont Belqeis et sa citadelle (du nom de Bethsabée, la mère de Salomon) ;

La zone a été partiellement fouillée et il existe un grand potentiel archéologique, dans la zone tampon mais aussi en dehors. Ledit Tumulus Ahmad Abad à l'ouest de Zendane Sulaiman en est un exemple. Le paysage zone tampon comprend aussi un petit village et sa zone d'extension potentielle.

Takht-e Sulaiman : Le site est constitué d'une plate-forme ovale, s'élevant à environ 60 m au-dessus de la vallée environnante. La plate-forme mesure environ 350 m sur 550 m. Elle possède un petit puits artésien calcaire qui a formé un lac d'environ 120 m de profondeur. De là s'écoulent des ruisseaux irriguant les terres environnantes. Les Sassanides occupèrent le site dès le Ve siècle et y construisirent le sanctuaire royal. Le sanctuaire était entouré d'une enceinte de pierre de 13 m de haut, dotée de 38 tours et de deux entrées au nord et au sud. Cette enceinte semble avoir eu une fonction essentiellement symbolique, car aucun portail n'a été retrouvé. Les principaux bâtiments s'élèvent au nord du lac, formant un ensemble de plan pratiquement carré (d'environ 180 m de côté) avec au centre le **temple du feu zoroastrien** (Azargoshnasb). Ce temple, construit en briques flammées, est de plan carré. À l'est du temple une autre enceinte carrée était consacrée au « feu éternel ». Plus à l'est se trouve le **temple d'Anahita**, également de plan carré. Les résidences royales sont situées à l'ouest des temples. Le lac fait partie intégrante de la composition et était entouré d'une « clôture » rectangulaire. Dans l'angle nord-ouest de cette zone autrefois clôturée, se trouve l'Iwan de l'Ouest, « la galerie Khosro », grande voûte en briques massive caractéristique de l'architecture sassanide. Les surfaces étaient enduites de mortier de chaux et décorées de *muqarnas*, motifs de stalactites en stuc tombant du plafond.

Le site fut détruit à la fin de la période sassanide et laissé à l'abandon. Il retrouva une nouvelle vie au XIII^e siècle sous l'occupation mongole, et certaines parties furent reconstruites, telles que le temple du feu zoroastrien et l'Iwan de l'Ouest. De nouvelles constructions furent édifiées autour du lac, en particulier deux tours octogonales derrière l'Iwan, décorées de tuiles vernissées et de céramiques. Une nouvelle entrée fut ouverte dans le mur principal, sur l'axe sud de l'ensemble.

On peut remarquer que les terres environnantes dans la vallée, y compris dans la zone tampon, contiennent les vestiges d'une **ville sassanide** qui n'ont pas été fouillés. Un four à briques flammées datant de la période Mongole a été trouvé à 600 m au sud de **Takht-e Sulaiman**. À l'est, la montagne fut exploitée par les Sassanides comme carrière de pierres de construction.

Zendane Sulaiman : Cette montagne conique et creuse, ancien volcan, est située à 3 km à l'ouest de Takht-e Sulaiman. Elle s'élève à 100 m au-dessus des terres environnantes ; son ancien cratère, profond de 80 m et d'environ 65 m de diamètre, était autrefois rempli d'eau. Le sommet de la montagne est entouré des vestiges d'une

série de sanctuaires et de temples qui datent du premier millénaire avant notre ère.

Citadelle Belqeis : Le mont Belqeis s'élève à environ 3200 m, il est situé à 7,5 km au nord-est de Takht-e Sulaiman. Sur la partie la plus haute, subsistent des vestiges en grès jaune d'une citadelle d'une superficie de 60 mètres sur 50, datant de la période des Sassanides. Les fouilles effectuées jusqu'à présent sur le site suggèrent que la citadelle aurait également contenu un temple du feu. Son orientation indique un lien étroit avec Takht-e Sulaiman.

Histoire

Contexte historique : L'empire perse fut fondé par la dynastie des Achéménides qui régna du VI^e au IV^e siècle avant notre ère. Par la suite, un nouvel empire fut établi par les Parthes (du II^e siècle au III^e siècle avant notre ère) qui étaient conscients de leur identité perse, bien que fortement hellénisés. L'empire de la dynastie suivante, celle des Sassanides (du III^e au VII^e siècle), rétablit la domination perse dans la région et forma une force capable de s'opposer à l'empire romain. Fondée sur l'héritage des Achéménides et imprégnée de la période hellénistique parthe, la dynastie des Sassanides développa un nouveau style architectural et artistique. Cette architecture eut une influence importante aussi bien en Orient qu'en Occident, elle devint la référence majeure dans le développement de l'architecture de la Perse islamique.

Contexte religieux : Depuis les temps anciens, le feu et l'eau comptaient parmi les éléments fondamentaux pour les peuples iraniens. Le feu était considéré comme un messager divin entre le monde visible et le monde invisible des divinités. L'eau était source de vie. Les régions volcaniques étaient donc particulièrement attirantes, surtout lorsqu'il y avait de l'eau, comme c'est le cas pour le site de Takht-e Sulaiman.

La religion de Zoroastre est une religion iranienne. Elle puise ses origines chez le prophète Zarathoustra qui vécut probablement au VII^e siècle avant notre ère ou même avant. Cette religion se caractérise par son aspect monothéiste lié à Ahura Mazda ; elle reconnaît le conflit entre les forces du mal et celles du bien. Ahura Mazda était vénéré par les premiers Achéménides, dont les rituels se déroulaient sans aucun temple, à ciel ouvert, sur des autels du feu. Avec le retour d'un nouveau nationalisme, les Sassanides firent du zoroastrisme une religion d'État et construisirent des temples du feu pour le culte. Le zoroastrisme eut une influence importante sur la chrétienté et l'Islam ; c'est une religion vivante, encore pratiquée en Iran, en Inde et en Asie centrale.

Les Sassanides reconnurent aussi le culte d'Anahita, la déesse de la terre, associée à l'eau. Un temple dédié à Anahita se trouve dans le complexe de Takht-e Sulaiman.

La première période : Le site volcanique où les Sassanides construisirent leur sanctuaire, Azargoshnasb (Temple du feu des chevaliers), plus tard appelé Takht-e Sulaiman (Trône de Salomon), était depuis longtemps l'objet de dévotions. La montagne volcanique creuse, appelée Zendane Sulaiman (la prison de Salomon) est entourée de vestiges de temples et de sanctuaires, datés du premier millénaire avant notre ère. Ceux-ci sont associés

aux Manas, qui ont régné sur la région de 830 à 660 avant notre ère. Le cratère, autrefois rempli d'eau, s'est asséché.

La période sassanide : Avec l'arrivée des Sassanides (Ve siècle de notre ère), Zendane Sulaiman perdit son importance au profit de Takht-e Sulaiman, dont la construction démarra au milieu du Ve siècle, sous le règne du roi Sassanide Peroz (459-484). Le site devint un sanctuaire royal zoroastrien sous Khosro Ier (531-579) et Khosro II (591-628), il fut le plus important des trois principaux sanctuaires zoroastriens. Les deux autres n'ont pas été identifiés à ce jour.

La construction de ce site votif coïncide avec l'introduction de la chrétienté comme principale religion de l'Empire romain. La nécessité de renforcer le zoroastrisme peut être vue comme un effort pour renforcer l'identité nationale en contrepoint de la chrétienté dans le monde romain. L'importance de Takht-e Sulaiman grandit encore avec l'introduction du culte d'Anahita. L'ensemble royal fut entouré d'une implantation urbaine dans la plaine. Le site fut détruit par l'armée byzantine en 627, en représailles à l'attaque Sassanide de leurs territoires.

La période mongole : Le site gagna de l'importance au XIII^e siècle, lorsque les Mongols Ilkhanides reconstruisirent une partie comme résidence pour Ilkhan Aba-Qaan, qui à l'époque domina l'Iran. La phase de reconstruction inclut le temple du feu et l'Iwan de l'Ouest, ainsi que de nouvelles structures érigées autour du lac. La réhabilitation opérée par les Mongols montre une continuité culturelle particulièrement intéressante pour la revivification de la foi zoroastrienne en pleine période islamique. En raison de ses qualités naturelles et culturelles, le site est associé à divers personnages et thèmes légendaires et bibliques tels que Salomon, le Christ, le paradis sur terre, le Saint Graal, etc.

Phases ultérieures : Après la période Ilkhanide, à partir de la moitié du XIV^e siècle, le site fut abandonné et tomba progressivement en ruines. Il fut redécouvert en 1819 par le voyageur britannique, Sir Robert Ker Porter, suivi par d'autres explorateurs. En 1937, le site fut photographié par Erich F. Schmidt et étudié par Arthur U. Pope et Donald N. Wilber. En 1958 il fut exploré par des archéologues suédois. Les premières campagnes des fouilles furent entreprises par l'Institut allemand d'Archéologie sous la direction de R. Naumann et D. Huff dans les années 1970.

Politique de gestion

Dispositions légales :

Les biens proposés pour inscription sont la propriété de la République islamique d'Iran. Takht-e Sulaiman a été inscrit sur la liste du patrimoine national d'Iran en 1931, il est protégé par la loi actuelle sur les Antiquités (1309/1930) et par la Charte de l'Organisation du patrimoine culturel iranien (n. 3487-Qaf, 1988).

Structure de la gestion :

Une grande campagne de fouilles a été menée sur le site par l'Institut allemand d'Archéologie, qui a fourni les documents nécessaires. Actuellement, les activités de préservation, le développement et la gestion de la zone

proposée pour inscription sont sous la responsabilité de l'Organisation du patrimoine culturel iranien (ICHO). Le Bureau provincial de l'ICHO à Orumiyeh est responsable des fouilles archéologiques et prend les mesures de sécurité qui conviennent pour assurer la conservation dans les zones tampon. Une unité distincte a été créée pour la gestion sur le terrain dans le cadre de l'ICHO, à savoir : *la Direction pour le projet de développement de Takht-e Sulaiman*. L'objectif de cette unité est de donner de l'impulsion au mécanisme de prise de décision et d'intégrer les activités des différents départements, à l'instar du projet réussi de Zogha Zanbil. Un plan de gestion quinquennal a été adopté pour Takht-e Sulaiman en 2002. La première partie du plan définit l'organisation et le budget, la deuxième définit les forces et les faiblesses du site et lui donne les moyens pour son entretien et son développement, la troisième partie résume les activités depuis 1993 et la quatrième fournit le plan pour une préservation durable et un programme de présentation pour les années à venir.

Ressources :

Les ressources pour la conservation et l'entretien de Takht-e Sulaiman sont essentiellement fournies par l'ICHO. L'Organisation recherche actuellement des fonds supplémentaires pour soutenir la gestion du site. Le nombre des visiteurs ne devrait pas augmenter beaucoup dans les années à venir. Les équipements d'accueil des visiteurs sont assez rudimentaires, mais les projets prévoient une amélioration et une meilleure présentation du site. Le rythme du développement dans cette région est relativement lent, mais le plan de gestion prévoit des mesures pour susciter la prise de conscience des autorités locales et du public concernant la valeur du site ainsi que les objectifs et l'importance d'un développement durable.

Justification émanant de l'État partie (résumé)

L'État partie présente Takht-e Sulaiman comme l'un des sites de sanctuaire les plus anciens et les plus importants du pays, caractérisé par la présence du feu et de l'eau (volcan et puits artésien). Le site est un lieu de dévotions depuis au moins le premier millénaire avant notre ère. L'élément principal est le temple du feu zoroastrien qui fut construit par les rois sassanides. C'est le plus important des trois principaux temples zoroastriens de cette période ; il date du VI^e siècle de notre ère.

L'État partie propose que le site soit inscrit sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial sur la base des critères i, ii, iii, iv et vi :

Critère i : le site témoigne de la capacité créative de l'utilisation du lac sacré, de sa relation avec la foi zoroastrienne et les croyances antérieures au zoroastrisme et de la parfaite adéquation entre ses caractéristiques naturelles et géologiques et le zoroastrisme.

Critère ii : Le site témoigne de l'ingéniosité de différents peuples à organiser, concevoir et utiliser le paysage en accord avec leur religion et leur philosophie quelle que soit leur appartenance ethnique, depuis les premiers temps jusqu'aux périodes sassanide et mongole. Le site est associé aux légendes et croyances (Salomon, le Christ, Zarathoustra) ; les rois sassanides se rendaient en pèlerinage sur le site après leur couronnement à Ctésiphon.

Critère iii : Le site offre une vision précieuse du zoroastrisme en tant que religion royale et officielle, du développement de l'art, de l'architecture et de l'aménagement du paysage iranien pendant la période préislamique et au début de l'islamisation.

Critère iv : Le site révèle une des grandes réalisations artistiques de la civilisation sassanide et témoigne de l'harmonie parfaite entre aménagement du paysage et activité religieuse.

Critère vi : Takht-e Sulaiman est associé à des croyances d'une valeur exceptionnelle et universelle, notamment le zoroastrisme, aujourd'hui un des plus anciens systèmes de croyances. Son influence sur la plupart des grandes religions est bien connue.

3. ÉVALUATION DE L'ICOMOS

Actions de l'ICOMOS

Une mission d'expertise de l'ICOMOS a visité l'ensemble de Takht-e Sulaiman en septembre 2002.

Conservation

Historique de la conservation :

Les anciens sanctuaires qui couronnent la montagne de Zendane Sulaiman ont été abandonnés dans l'antiquité et sont tombés en ruines. Le sanctuaire de Takht-e Sulaiman fut détruit par l'armée Byzantine au VII^e siècle et ne servit plus jusqu'à sa reconstruction partielle à la période mongole au XIII^e siècle. Le site fut abandonné au milieu du XIV^e siècle et tomba progressivement en ruine sous l'action des phénomènes naturels de l'érosion. La première campagne de fouilles fut entreprise par l'Institut allemand d'archéologie dans les années 1970. La gestion du site est actuellement confiée à l'Organisation du patrimoine culturel iranien, qui est responsable de sa consolidation et de sa restauration.

État de conservation :

L'écoulement de l'eau calcaire de la source artésienne et l'inondation périodique de la cuvette du lac ont élevé le niveau du sol de plusieurs mètres depuis la période sassanide. L'eau a érodé le mortier des joints des édifices et affaibli les fondations. Les conditions climatiques difficiles - la neige et la glace - et l'activité sismique ont provoqué l'érosion, aggravée par des causes physico-chimiques et ont contribué à l'effondrement des structures en briques et en maçonnerie. Les épais murs d'enceintes ont perdu leur partie supérieure et les pierres jonchent le sol. Les structures de brique massives et endommagées, avec leurs lourdes voûtes, présentent des faiblesses structurelles dues à leur poids. Seuls des fragments du décor des murs originellement en stuc ont survécu, les *muqarnas*, ainsi que des tuiles décoratives octogonales en céramique. Les sanctuaires autour de Zendane Sulaiman et de la citadelle de Belqeis sont dans un état de ruines comparable. Les terres entourant la zone principale possède un potentiel archéologique. On suppose qu'il existait une ville sassanide dans la vallée, actuellement cultivée par des paysans. De plus, il existe de nombreux

terres présentant un potentiel archéologique intéressant, qui n'ont été que partiellement fouillés jusqu'à présent.

Gestion :

La mission de l'ICOMOS envoyée sur le site a considéré que la gestion était organisée de manière raisonnable, mais recommande qu'une attention particulière soit accordée aux outils requis pour mener à bien les projets proposés. Il faudrait également garantir la durabilité des ressources financières à long terme.

Analyse des risques :

La principale cause de délabrement des vestiges archéologiques est liée à l'activité sismique et au climat marqué par des hivers rudes, de fortes pluies et le gel. Le tourisme n'est pas une activité importante à l'heure actuelle mais elle pourrait progresser à l'avenir, ce qui doit être pris en compte dans la planification et la gestion. Il peut y avoir des risques dans les zones tampon, dus à la pression du développement et la construction d'équipements pour recevoir les visiteurs dans les sites et aux alentours. De plus, il existe un conflit potentiel entre les intérêts des cultivateurs et ceux des archéologues, surtout en cas de fouilles entreprises dans les champs de la vallée.

Authenticité et intégrité

Concernant l'authenticité du site, il est prouvé qu'il est le principal sanctuaire zoroastrien des Sassanides. Ce lieu est un site archéologique dont les fouilles sont récentes ; les restaurations et les reconstructions sont relativement limitées jusqu'à présent. Une partie de l'enceinte extérieure près de l'entrée Sud a été récemment relevée, avec les pierres d'origines trouvées parmi les décombres du mur. Une partie des voûtes en briques des structures du palais ont aussi été reconstruites, avec des briques neuves disposées de la même manière que dans la structure originale. Globalement, ces interventions peuvent être considérées comme nécessaires et ne compromettent pas l'authenticité du lieu qui conserve son aspect de ruine historique.

Le paysage de la zone entourant Takht-e Sulaiman a évolué avec le temps, gagnant sa propre intégrité visuelle qui se définit par sa nature rurale et agricole. Il existe aussi une relation fonctionnelle et structurelle claire entre les différents éléments de cet ensemble. Cela concerne aussi la citadelle de Belqeis qui est située à l'écart du reste des composantes du site. Elle fut cependant construite à la même période en tant que principal sanctuaire, son implantation et son orientation suggèrent qu'elle a une signification religieuse liée à cela. Le petit village situé entre Takht-e Sulaiman et Zendane Sulaiman, est devenu une partie intégrante de l'intégrité visuelle du paysage. On note cependant qu'un contrôle strict est nécessaire concernant le caractère et le volume de toute nouvelle construction, et qu'il faudra apporter un soin particulier au choix des surfaces, des matériaux et des couleurs.

Évaluation comparative

La dynastie sassanide (vers 224 à 651 de notre ère) a gouverné un empire qui s'étendait de la Sogdiane et de la Géorgie actuelle au nord de Mazun, région d'Arabie, et de la vallée de l'Indus aux vallées supérieures du Tigre et de l'Euphrate. En Iran, les principaux sites représentant la civilisation sassanide comprennent le palais du premier chef sassanide (Ardachir Ier, début du III^e siècle) à Firozabad, encore essentiellement parthe. Le palais royal de Shapour fut construit au moment où l'armée sassanide vainquit l'empereur romain Valérien (260), et reflète les influences grecque et romaine. Le Taqé Kisra à Ctésiphon, leur capitale (aujourd'hui en Iraq), est l'un des sites royaux les plus extraordinaires, en particulier son fameux iwan (une voûte en brique de 22,50 m de large sur 27 m de haut). Le site sacré de Taqé Bustan, à proximité de Kirmanshah dans l'ouest de l'Iran, est constitué de deux grands iwans, taillés dans la roche aux IV^e et V^e siècles. Une grande partie de leurs fortifications conservèrent leur rôle sous la période islamique. Il existe aussi plusieurs temples du feu en Iran, mais moins important que Takht-e Sulaiman.

L'architecture sassanide se caractérise par l'ingéniosité de ses structures, en particulier les voûtes construites en brique ou en pierre, ou taillée dans la roche et décorées par des sculptures monumentales. Certaines de ces caractéristiques sont héritées des Achéménides et des Parthes, mais les Sassanides ont donné à leur architecture une identité iranienne forte et particulière. Leurs édifices constituent une référence importante pour le développement de l'architecture du début de la période islamique, et leur influence s'est fait sentir jusqu'en Europe, dans l'architecture romane par exemple. Il est également intéressant de noter que les chapelles de plan carré construites par les ordres religieux au Mexique correspondent exactement au plan du temple du feu sassanide.

Dans ce contexte, Takht-e Sulaiman se distingue par sa singularité comme principal sanctuaire zoroastrien de la civilisation sassanide. Le site est une expression achevée de l'architecture royale sassanide, et le temple du feu est le plus ancien et le plus grand qui subsiste.

Valeur universelle exceptionnelle

Déclaration générale :

Le site de l'ensemble de Takht-e Sulaiman et Zendane Sulaiman est éloigné de tout et protégé par les montagnes. Il n'a récemment connu aucun développement majeur et a donc conservé son intégrité. Il a une importance symbolique et spirituelle forte par rapport à l'eau et au feu, les raisons principales de son occupation depuis les temps anciens. Takht-e Sulaiman est le principal sanctuaire zoroastrien. C'est aussi une expression architecturale aboutie de la civilisation sassanide qui eut une influence importante sur le développement de l'architecture islamique. Le site possède un potentiel archéologique important.

Évaluation des critères :

Critère vi : L'ensemble de Takht-e Sulaiman est constitué de plusieurs éléments qui, ensemble, contribuent à la valeur spirituelle du site. Les débuts de la prise de conscience de la valeur du site sont illustrés par les sanctuaires bordant le sommet de l'ancien volcan, Zendane Sulaiman, datant du début du premier millénaire avant notre ère. L'importance de la valeur spirituelle fut renforcée par les Sassanides quand ils construisirent le principal sanctuaire du zoroastrisme, une des premières religions monothéistes qui a influencé d'autres religions comme l'islam et le christianisme. La présence du temple dédié à Anahita, ancienne déesse iranienne des eaux, de la fertilité et de la procréation, ajoute à la valeur du site. La signification symbolique du site est grandie par la réhabilitation que les Mongols ont pratiquée six siècles après, et par l'association de figures légendaires et bibliques, telles que Bethsabée, Salomon et le Christ. Takht-e Sulaiman est aussi identifié comme représentant le paradis sur terre.

Critères i et iv : Takht-e Sulaiman offre un témoignage clair du stade achevé du développement auquel l'architecture Sassanide est parvenue. Témoin de cela, l'ensemble architectural royal conçu autour du lac. Le temple du feu peut être envisagé comme un prototype de ce type d'édifice ; il s'agit du plus grand et du plus ancien exemple de ce type de structure qui subsiste. Si divers types de bâtiments, comme l'*iwan* en briques ou les temples de l'eau et du feu se retrouvent dans d'autres sites sassanides, Takht-e Sulaiman est un exemple exceptionnel de leur association dans un ensemble que l'on ne retrouve nulle part ailleurs.

Critère ii : L'architecture de l'ensemble de Takht-e Sulaiman est reconnue pour avoir influencé le développement des architectures chrétienne et islamique. La structure carrée du temple, la voûte massive de l'*iwan*, et l'espace ouvert autour de la source d'eau sont clairement reproduites dans les compositions architecturales des mosquées et des sanctuaires de l'Islam. On peut y voir quelques échos dans les premières églises romanes construites en Europe.

Critère iii : La région de Takht-e Sulaiman est riche en anciens établissements, dont beaucoup restent inexplorés. Le site offre un témoignage exceptionnel du développement des pratiques culturelles et religieuses du premier millénaire avant notre ère jusqu'au XIV^e siècle. Le site de Takht-e Sulaiman lui-même était entouré d'une ville qui est aujourd'hui recouverte de terres agricoles.

4. RECOMMANDATIONS DE L'ICOMOS

Recommandation concernant l'inscription

Que le site soit inscrit sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial sur la base des *critères i, ii, iii, iv et vi* :

Critère i : Takht-e Sulaiman est un ensemble exceptionnel d'architecture royale, regroupant les principaux éléments architecturaux créés par les Sassanides dans une composition harmonieuse inspirée par le contexte naturel.

Critère ii : La composition et les éléments architecturaux créés par les Sassanides à Takht-e Sulaiman ont fortement influencé non seulement l'architecture religieuse de la période islamique mais aussi d'autres cultures.

Critère iii : L'ensemble de Takht-e Sulaiman est un témoignage exceptionnel de la pérennité d'un culte liée au feu et à l'eau sur une période d'environ deux mille cinq cents ans. Le patrimoine archéologique du site est enrichi par la ville sassanide qui reste à fouiller.

Critère iv : Takht-e Sulaiman représente un exemple exceptionnel de sanctuaire zoroastrien, intégré à l'architecture palatine sassanide dans une composition qui peut être considérée comme un prototype.

Critère vi : En tant que principal sanctuaire zoroastrien, Takht-e Sulaiman est le plus important site associé à l'une des religions monothéistes les plus anciennes du monde. Le site possède des liens symboliques forts, en tant que témoignage de l'association des anciennes croyances, bien plus anciennes que le zoroastrisme, ainsi que dans son association avec des légendes et des personnages bibliques importants.

ICOMOS, mars 2003