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in occasione del suo 65° compleanno

a cura di Luca Colliva, Anna Filigenzi, Luca Maria Olivieri

con l'assistenza editoriale di Marco Baldi



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FROM SEMINAR TO WORLD HERITAGE LIST
ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE OF SASANIAN FARs:
FIRUZABAD, BISHAPUR, AND SARVESTAN

ALIREZA ASKARI CHAVERDI

It was 2010. Everyone was there except for one. In fact, the one person who needed to be there was not there. But his image on the wall was overlooking it all. Toward the end of 2009, I became the assigned manager of Firuzabad and Savestan National Heritage Site and had invited all my predecessors and experts in the field to the first seminar about discussing World Heritage inscription [of said sites].

From among my three predecessors, two participated: Amir Pirouz Dagugi and Afshin Ebrahimi. But the one who was the site manger before all of us, Masoud Azarnoush, could not make it to the seminar. I was his student in a module on the Sasanian in University of Tehran. Not having a former site manager and a university Prof. whose expertise was the Sasanian era in the seminar was challenging. He was the one who taught me about the importance of Sasanian heritage. When he was the manager of Archaeological Research Institute in 2003, he first introduced me to a dignified scientist and stated:

Your sincerity and perseverance regarding the identification of the interregnum period in the Fars region, following the fall of the Achaemenids and before the rise of the Sasanians, is evident in the discovery of the Tomb-e Bot area located Lamerd and Mohr county needs scientific international-level support and collaboration. I want to choose an expert, a supervisor, for you who can collaborate with you in the scientific journey ahead. Someone who can remain your close friend, because I believe in this person's honesty, scientific ethics, and sincerity throughout the prospective collaboration. That person is Prof. Pierfranceso Callieri.

Thanks to an excellent choice made by Masoud Azarnoush, our collaboration and friendship went on strong from 2004 to 2021. We had extensive excavations in Tang-e Bolaghi in Sites 76 and 77, we collaborated on reviewing

stratigraphy of Pasargadae's Tol-e Takht, and finally in Parse City of Persepolis and Tol-e Ajori. In all these years, I had the executive support of Dr Masoud Azarnoush and Dr Mohammad Hasan Talebian in Iran along with Prof. Gnoli and Prof. Adriano Rossi, then and current Heads of ISMEO in Italy. If it was not for their efforts and the support of a number of competent managers and scientific consultants in Archaeological Research Institute, we could not witness our collaboration in both excavations and research projects come to fruition. The contribution of these honorable individuals have been acknowledged before and we are forever grateful for their managerial support.

Years passed and our collaboration continue. It gradually dawned on me: Dr Masoud Azarnoush has put me in touch with a treasure that will remain a great gift to the history and archaeology of Achaemenid and Sasanian Fars. In fact, the legacy of true cultural heritage paragons in the academia and Ministry of Cultural Heritage has taught me that great human beings are not only excellent educators in universities or competent managers in their own time, but their legacy lives on and remains significant.

I witness this first-hand when, during Dr Mohammad Hasan Talebiyan's office, I was fervently working on collecting documents to support our World Heritage inscription request for the Sasanian Archaeological Landscape. When we needed an understanding of the foundations and insight in the Sasanian landscaper, the great Dr Seyyed Mehdi Mojabi Qazvini and Dr Naser Norouz-zadeh Chegini provided us with analysis and interpretation. When we needed to understand archeology in terms of its outlook on the Sasanian, the great Prof. Dietrich Huff came to our support. In 2018, when we needed to discuss and consult with the international community, Prof. Pierfrancesco Callieri in Paris and in Manama, Bahrain, defended the Sasanian World Heritage and wrote and delivered speeches. In fact, what helped our team succeed in inscription the Sasanian archaeological landscape of Fars was love.

The love that was clearly evident in the depths of the gazes, efforts, and round-the-clock perseverance of the World Heritage Inscription Office team, colleagues from the Firuzabad, Bishapur and Sarvestan, Research Base, scientific consultants, the permanent representative of Iran in UNESCO, the General Directorate of the Ministry's bases, and the entire General Directorate of Fars Province. However, among this managerial, advisory, and scientific group, there was one passionate scholar who did not withhold his scientific collaboration at any stage and was a supporter until the moment the Sasanian archaeological landscape of Fars was inscribed as World Heritage: "Pierfrancesco Callieri, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Bologna, Italy." The very individual who, in recognition of his services to Iranian studies, received the Farabi International Festival's appreciation plaque from the esteemed President of Iran, and both the President and the esteemed Minister of Science expressed their gratitude for Prof. Callieri's scientific contributions to Iranian history (Figs 1-4).

Sasanian Landscape of Fars

This landscape encompasses eight archaeological sites in three regions of Fars province: the Sasanian Palace of Qaleh Dokhtar; Mehr-Narseh Bridge; the relief of the coronation of Ardashir Babakan the founder of the Sasanian dynasty; the relief of Ardashir's victory over Artabanus/Ardavan, the last Parthian king, in the Firuzabad gorge; Ardashir's Palace in plain, and the city of Gur or Ardashir Xwarrah city in the Firuzabad plain; the historic city of Bishapur and six reliefs of Shapur I and other Sasanian kings in the Chogan Gorge; the Grand Statue of Shapur I in Shapur's Cave, and the famous Zoroastrian temple building in Sarvestan, known as Sarvestan Palace (Figs 5-8).

In total, 639 hectares of archaeological sites in these three regions of Fars province consist of: 392 hectares in ancient Firuzabad, 222 hectares for the two archaeological sites in Bishapur, and 25 hectares for the Sarvestan building, which was nationally registered in the 1930s. These sites, with their unique values, were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2018. These sites possess special cultural and natural values, recognized by UNESCO as deserving of protection based on international regulation and criteria. As a result, the archaeological sites of the Sasanian landscape of Fars now belong to the global community and are managed, as World Heritage, under the rules and regulations of the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO.

The Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE) was undoubtedly one of the most powerful dynasties in Iranian history, dominating the entire Southwestern Asia and being a major counterpart to the Roman and Byzantine empires. The empire's significant achievements in harmonizing with nature, exploiting natural and regional potentials, and showcasing human genius in various forms of creation and innovation are recognized and validated as masterpieces of human genius in terms of various innovative approaches to efficient use of land, residential patterns and special residences, urban and landscape design, ritualistic architecture, public buildings, and the application of symbolic artistic ornaments in grant constructions and cultural legacies.

The area encompassing the Sasanian archaeological landscape of Fars is essentially the core land where a vast range of Sasanian innovations materialized. It is the cradle of the Sasanian lineage. Fars is the most representative and self-sufficient region of the Sasanian Empire, reflecting formation, transformation, and sustainability of social, cultural, and political spheres over four centuries of Sasanian civilization. This civilization managed the cultural scope of Iran throughout its existence and left a significant legacy for the Islamic era.

Having been influenced by the Achaemenid and Parthian cultures and rituals, Sasanian archaeological landscape of Fars also demonstrates cultural exchanges with ancient Roman art and architecture and the profound influence it had on city design, architecture, and Iranian art during the Islamic period. This magnificent archaeological landscape showcases exemplary instances of an ef-

efficient and functional network for land use and ecosystem resource exploitation, with techniques, innovations, and architectural styles such as the establishment of domes on square plans being the Sasanians' most fundamental contribution to Iranian and Middle Eastern architecture.

The "World Heritage Sasanian Archaeological Landscape of Fars" was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List with registration number 1568 during the 42nd Session of the World Heritage Committee held in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, in the month of July 2018.

Sasanians and Their Role in Human Civilization

The Sasanian were one of the two major empires of ancient Iran that shaped a significant portion of the history of Southwestern Asia during the 1st millennium CE. This empire reigned over various parts of Asia for four centuries and was considered a serious counterpart to the Roman Empire. Both the Sasanian and Roman dynasties were heirs to great empires that preceded them: the Achaemenids and the Seleucids. Therefore, these successors, especially the Sasanian, within the historical traditions of a millennium before them, determined the fate of the oldest historical regions from the Indian Ocean to the borders and coasts of the Mediterranean Sea (Yarshater 1971: 517-520; Daryaee 2010: 236-255).

The Sasanian Empire emerged following the experience of great states such as the Achaemenids and Parthians in the Middle East. This empire expanded its capital cities in the region of Iran and Mesopotamia, basing its beliefs on the political, economic, and religious traditions of the millennia-long history of these lands. However, the birth of the Sasanian's cultural, political, economic, social, and religious innovations within this traditional context is of great importance (Christensen 1944).

Based on numismatic studies and historical texts, from the year 224 (the victory of Ardashir Babakan over the last Parthian king) to 651 CE (the year Yazdegerd III, the last Sasanian king, was assassinated), a total of 32 kings ruled for 427 years within the framework of the Sasanian Empire, governing over 27 provinces mentioned in the inscription carved on the Ka'ba-ye Zartosht structure in Naqsh-e Rostam, Fars (Sprenghing 1937: 126-244; 1953: 2-114). The legacy of this great empire includes innovations in architectural techniques, such as constructing magnificent edifices in the palace-building tradition using indigenous materials like rubble stone, lime mortar, and adobe. They pioneered architectural techniques, especially the art of creating arches, vaults, and inventing the Eastern dome for the first time in architectural structures. They established grand cities with a circular design for the first time, developed advanced irrigation networks for agriculture, created scenes depicting power or coronation with the creation of 38 relief scenes, and organized religious systems, emphasizing the Zoroastrian ritual of venerating fire as the source of light and truth.

The founder of the Sasanian dynasty, Ardashir I (224-243 CE), emerged following the political upheavals of the late Parthian period and the fragmentation of political and religious authority in Firuzabad, Fars (Bivar 1989: 883). His lineage belonged to the Bazrangids of Fars, the custodians of the religious affairs of the region thereby possessing the necessary legitimacy to attain political power (Frye 1983: 118-119). Ardashir I, the founder of the Sasanian Empire, unified the Fars region, the hub of Iran's renaissance, and in 230 CE, minted coins as the Shah of Iran (Wiesehöfer 1986: 371-376). He built the city of Firuzabad with a military purpose and constructed his first structures in this plain. He structured his kingdom's political framework based on the Fars region, the Iranian plateau, and Mesopotamia within the context of a state-based feudal system, and his significant innovation was the establishment of an official state religion. Following these reforms, by adding the state feudal lords to social classes like the Magi, warriors, and workers [as mentioned] in the Zoroastrian holy book, Avesta, he modified the Sasanian Empire's governmental structure aiming to prevent the disintegration and fragmentation of the Iranian land [forming] a nationalistic core for the unity and preservation of the Iranian identity (Frye 1979: 335-341).

The artistic dynamism of the founder of the Sasanian Empire was no less than his political and religious reforms. In fact, he laid the foundation for the masterpieces of indigenous Iranian architectural art for the first time using indigenous materials, innovating in the local art style with the construction of two buildings: the Qaleh Dokhtar Palace and the Atashkadeh Palace, as well as establishing the magnificent city of Ardashir with a circular plan. This genius, which was experienced on a large scale in Firuzabad for the first time in the Middle East, continued throughout this period and became prominent in the art of the Islamic period, especially in the dome structures of Iranian mosques (Frye 1983: 116-180). Ardashir's fundamental reforms in minting eight types of coins with his unique crown became a tradition for other kings of this great dynasty. So much so that today, dating the Sasanian period for historians by examining the face and crown of each Sasanian king along with other artistic works of this period has become easily possible.

The Sasanian monuments of Firuzabad consist of a circular urban structure surrounded by defensive towers and ramparts enclosed within a moat, known as the City of Gur or the City of Shokooh-e Ardeshir [Ardeshir's Splendor]. The two major structures, Qaleh Dokhtar and the Palace, are both grand and magnificent buildings, and their function as political and administrative units is evident. In the Tangab gorge of Firuzabad, two carved rock reliefs have been created, reflecting the political developments of the Sasanian period, especially the transfer of power from the Parthian to the Sasanian dynasty (Lukonin 1972: 291-294). These Sasanian monuments were constructed in a geographical area named Ardashir- Khwarrah or Ardaxshir- Xwarrah or Shokooh-e Ardeshir during the Sasanian period. However, the name of this place was changed to Firuzabad or Piruzabad during the Islamic period (Huff 1983: 296-298).

The foundation of the city and its attribution to Ardashir I is mentioned in most historical texts such as *Karnamak*, *Shahraстанаha-ye Iranshahr* [Towns of Iranshahr], *Tarikh-e Tabari*, *Hudud al-Alam*, and as quoted from Estakhri, Ibn Hawqal, Ibn Balkhi, and Yaqut Hamawi (Huff 1999: 633-634). The design of this historical city is based on a complete circle with a diameter of 1,950 meters (one kilometer and nine hundred fifty meters). The inner area of this large circle is divided into 20 sections based on three concentric circles, intersecting and concentric streets, and radial lines. The city is enclosed by a 35-meter-wide brick rampart and a protruding wall based on a circular design (Huff 1986: 302-308). Within the city's interior, a thin wall encompasses the central part of the city's circle, which likely housed the city's central official and governmental buildings. Most buildings in this section and its surrounding areas were probably made of brick, except for two structures with different construction subjects: a building with carved stone blocks called *Takht-e Neshin* and a structure known as *Tarbal*. The *Takht-e Neshin* Building, following the Achaemenid architectural tradition but serving as a fire temple, is located in the main part of the city of Gur. The *Tarbal* Tower, or minaret, stands 30 meters tall in the city's center and served as a pivot point for designing the circular map with a diameter of 1,950 meters. The three circles surrounded by 20 radial divisions and the city's division into 60 sections represent one of the masterpieces of urban design routes of the ancient period in the first capital of the Sasanian Empire (Huff 1999: 634).

From a conceptual perspective, the circular map of the city of Ardashir-Khwarrah was designed based on Ardashir's ideas regarding his envisioned governmental system. The design of Ardashir-Khwarrah, being circular and based on a central point surrounded by radii and other circles, symbolizes Ardashir's ideal governance where the king is at the center of the empire, and other governmental and societal sectors are arranged around him based on their importance. In essence, Ardashir materialized his vision of establishing a strong centralized government (as opposed to the decentralized Parthian rule) within the framework of a circular city map and its specific radial divisions (Huff 2008; Daryaee 2013).

The *Qaleh Dokhtar* is Ardashir's first residential building, constructed simultaneously with the city of Ardashir-Khwarrah on the winding heights of a valley in the Firuzabad gorge (Huff 1977a: 127-130). This royal edifice, with its citadel and large ramparts, is situated at the most crucial access point to the Firuzabad plain. The main rooms of this palace are located in a circular plan at the end of the building, adorned with outstanding architectural motifs and symbols. The structure, being inaccessible, was clearly chosen for its strategic location. The castle, known as *Qaleh Dokhtar*, was built on three levels. Entry to it was from the lowest level via a spiral staircase leading to the main courtyard on the middle terrace (Bier 1982: 33). Three sides of the courtyard were surrounded by rectangular rooms with barrel vaults, and the fourth side led to the upper terrace where the main palace building was located. The entire palace consisted of a large portico with a barrel vault and two smaller porticos on

either side. The large portico was 14 meters wide and 23 meters long, leading to a central room whose ceiling was covered with a new architectural feature, a dome (Huff 1977a: 31). On either side of this domed room were other rooms, and the entire domed structure was enclosed within a circular outer wall.

The Parthian architects utilized barrel vaults, which when intersected at right angles, connected using simple arches. Although domes were used in contemporary Roman buildings, especially in bathhouses, there is no evidence of the Parthians constructing domes. Roman architects addressed the challenge of placing a round ceiling on a square room by positioning a dome on pendentives at the corners, gradually bringing the bricks or rubble stone into a continuously curving shape. The Sasanian architects tackled this issue differently, a method still prevalent in Iranian architecture today. Based on existing records, the oldest example of this dome construction method is found in Qaleh Dokhtar. The dome was constructed using conical squinches that were raised from each corner to form a circle, which was then gradually closed over a square room.

The creation of arches, vaults, and domes in the Ardeshir Palace on the edge of the plain, compared to the Qaleh Dokhtar, was executed with greater skill. The building, which is mistakenly referred to as a fire temple in some instances but is actually the Ardeshir Palace, showcases more refined architectural techniques in various sections, indicating that it was constructed after Qaleh Dokhtar (Huff 1977b). This palace lacked defensive ramparts, suggesting that it was built during a period of political supremacy and governmental stability. The Ardeshir Palace faced a small, round lake and was surrounded by a luxurious garden or *paradis* [paradis] (Huff 1977a: 25). The structure of this palace is elongated rectangular, divided into an official or external section and an informal or internal section. A long portico led to a tall domed hall, presumably the main dining room, flanked by similar domed halls on either side (Reuther 1938: 433). In the Southern part of the central hall, a smaller portico opened towards the inner courtyard, with its counterpart located on the opposite side of the inner courtyard.

Rooms with a cradle-shaped arch opened all around the inner section facing the courtyard (Huff 1977a: 25). Both the Palace and the Qaleh Dokhtar follow a similar architectural style and method. However, the difference is that in the lower palace, known as the Palace of Ardashir, the portico and the square-shaped domed rooms, each 14 meters wide, constitute the formal or external part of this royal palace (Reuther 1938: 538). The rectangular-shaped rooms with crescent arches around the central courtyard were likely the inner section, used for the semi-private life of the king. The rooms with staircases on the upper floor were probably used for the family and the private quarters of the king (Huff 1986: 332).

Around the year 238 CE, Ardeshir was an old man, and in 240 CE, he directly associated his son, Shapur I, with the throne (Wiesehöfer 1986: 375). This event is reflected on the coins of this period, where the full-face images of Ardeshir and Shapur are depicted side by side. Ardeshir wears his distinctive personal crown, while Shapur is seen with his tall, round hat, typical of the nobility

(Göbl 1983: 322-324). After his coronation, Shapur adopted a specific crown for himself. The exact date of Ardeshir's death is unclear, probably occurring sometime after 240 CE. His military victories once again provided a profitable position in trade between the East and the West, a benefit that subsequent kings greatly protected and expanded. Ardeshir's monarchy structure, with its economic and military stability and a strong centralized government, continued for 427 years until the advent of Islam and its entry into Iran (Shahbazi 1986: 380-381).

Shapur I (243-273 CE), the son of Ardeshir, had been present in battles alongside his father for a long time and was chosen as the heir to the throne during his father's old age. Like his father, Shapur was a powerful and skilled warrior. Over his thirty-year reign, he had numerous battles with the major Roman empires. He expanded the boundaries of Iran and inscribed in a trilingual inscription (Sasanian, Parthian, and Greek) on the Achaemenid building of the Ka'ba-ye Zartosht at Naqsh-e Rostam, calling himself the 'King of Kings of Iran and Aneran' (Marico 1958: 304-306). The title difference between Shapur and his father is clear, as Ardeshir was only the 'King of Kings of Iran,' while Shapur was also the 'King of Kings of Aneran (non-Iranians)' (Herrmann 1972: 151-162). It is likely that Shapur had conquered the numerous lands mentioned in the Ka'ba-ye Zartosht inscription, which were part of Aneran, outside the realm of Iranshahr. In another inscription at Naqsh-e Rostam, victories over two significant Roman emperors, Gordian III and Philip the Arab, are mentioned. Scenes commemorating these victories over the Romans are also displayed in the mountain rock at the Chugan Gorge in Bishapur. The inscription lists 27 provinces and conquered lands, indicating the extent of the Sasanian Empire in the 3rd century CE: Fars, Parthia, Khuzestan, Mesene, Assyria, Adiabene North of the Tigris, Arabia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Cappadocia, Albania, Balasagan up to the Caucasus mountains and the Albanian gate, Patishkhwagar or the Alborz mountains, Media, Gorgan, Margiana or Merv, Aria or Herat, Abarshahr or Nishapur, Kerman, Sistan, Makran, Paratan, possibly the Indus delta, Kushan-shahr up to the borders of Peshawar and the vicinity of Kashgar, the border of Sogdiana and Tashkent, and beyond the Sea of Mazun or Oman. This vast geography, mentioned during the period of Shapur the Sasanian, represents the territories of the Sasanians (Sprengling 1937: 126-144; 1953: 2-114).

In this vast territory, Shapur I founded many cities, but his first favorite city was Bishapur, which he built in the center of Fars, about 80 kilometers West of the city of Ardeshir (Firuzabad). This city was built during the stable period of the Sasanian government and was therefore designed in a grid pattern (Hippodamus), which was the usual style for Middle Eastern cities after the Hellenistic period (Ghirshman 1956-71). The city, designed as a rectangle with four gates, had streets perpendicular to each other leading to the city's central square and was built on a total area of 20 hectares (Ghirshman 1971: 91-106). The city had several districts, and today, thanks to archaeological research, parts of the city's citadel and significant structures such as the fire temple or the Temple of the

Goddess Anahita, the Palace, the Mosaic Portico Building, and several other religious buildings have been identified (Sarfaraz 1970; 1975). The city was built on a permanent river named Shapur River, along which Sasanian rock reliefs were displayed in the heart of the mountain next to the city of Bishapur. These reliefs, in addition to their artistic aspects, commemorate the many wars and battles of the Sasanians, especially Shapur's battles with the Romans. Along the same Chugan Gorge, a magnificent full-face statue of Shapur, eight meters high, is displayed in a cave known as Shapur's Cave (Kleiss, 1973: 78). Although many significant Sasanian structures in the city of Bishapur have not yet been excavated, it seems that this city had large buildings of the Sasanian nobility, numerous gardens, and houses (Kiel 1989: 287-289).

The architectural and urban planning traditions of the Sasanian era evolved and persisted over four centuries in the construction of various structures in Iran and Mesopotamia. The technical methods and indigenous innovations of the Sasanian set a standard for arch and dome construction in architecture for the subsequent fifteen hundred years. One of the most valuable structures from the early Islamic centuries in Fars is built with the same materials of rubble stone and plaster using Sasanian architectural techniques. This building essentially showcases a variety of arch-making techniques, arches, vault facades, and methods of constructing domes and half-domes (Bier 1986: 23-53). The building known as the Sasanian Palace in Sarvestan, located 100 kilometers Northeast of Firuzabad and 200 kilometers Northeast of Bishapur, was built in the early Islamic centuries and is the result of the advancement of Sasanian architectural techniques. Technical innovations in creating arches and vaults in this building signify the evolutionary trajectory of Sasanian architecture over a millennium of Iranian architectural art in the Islamic period (Fontana 1986). In the Sarvestan building, wide arches covering the ceilings of rooms and halls rest on paired columns instead of walls and are aligned along the walls. It is an ingenious innovation inspired by the architectural style of the Sasanian palaces in Firuzabad and has played a significant role in the advancement of Iranian architecture during the Islamic period (Bier 1993: 57-66).

Archaeological Studies, Conservation, and Restoration

The Iranian Center for Archaeology and the Zurich Institute for the Restoration of Historical Monuments, in collaboration with the German Archaeological Institute, conducted the first archaeological excavations initially in 1971 (1349) and then in 1974-1976 (1352-1354) at Qal'eh Dokhtar (Huff 1977a: 174). Dietrich Huff and Hugi conducted archaeological studies of the Qal'eh Dokhtar Palace, the Ardeshir Palace, and the city of Gur. The General Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Fars took responsibility for the maintenance, restoration, and archaeology of the Firuzabad structures from 1981 to 2004. From 2009 to 2018, the National Sasanian Axis of Firuzabad and Sarvestan handled

the conservation and archaeology of Firuzabad by management of Alireza Askari Chaverdi. In July 2018, this national site was inscribed globally and renamed the World Heritage Site as the Archaeological Landscape of Sasanian Fars, accompanied by the two areas of Bishapur and Sarvestan. However, the archaeological excavations of Bishapur took place years before Firuzabad, supervised by Roman Ghirshman from 1935-1940 (1314-1319). After World War II, Bishapur remained a focus of the Iranian Center for Archaeology until 1978 and was excavated annually. Various restoration programs in Bishapur have been carried out over the past decades. From 1968 to 1979, this program was conducted as an archaeological excavation accompanied by simultaneous restoration under the supervision of Ali Akbar Sarfaraz. In the subsequent decades, these studies continued with conservation and restoration in Bishapur until 2001. From 2002, this site, as a national base, took responsibility for the conservation of Bishapur's monuments until 2018 when this site, along with Firuzabad and in the archaeological landscape of other Sasanian monuments in Firuzabad and Sarvestan, was inscribed in UNESCO world heritage list.

Criteria

The eight archaeological landscapes of Sasanian Fars had five valuable criteria worthy of being proposed for World Heritage inscription. Among all the criteria for registering any work on the World Heritage List for the archaeological landscape of Sasanian Fars, in total, the following criteria were accepted. Criteria I and IV: representing a masterpiece of human genius in the field of techniques, innovation, and architectural style, such as the establishment of a dome on a square plan, which is the most fundamental contribution of the Sasanians to the architecture of Iran in the Middle East. Criteria II: recognized as a symbol of the exchange of high human values over a specific period in a global cultural domain, especially in the field of the influence of Achaemenid and Parthian religious and cultural traditions, cultural exchange with the art and architecture of ancient Rome, and the significant process of its influence on the design of the city, architecture, and artistic approaches of Iran during the Islamic period. Criteria III and V: this landscape, as a magnificent, complete, and indicative example of an efficient and functional network in the use of land and the exploitation of ecosystem resources in harmony with the environment.

Approaches and Sustainable Development

The objectives and visions within the framework of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) recommendations and emphasis at the 42nd UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting in Manama, 2018, are based on the sustainable development of the Sasanian Fars World Heritage, a

UNESCO World Heritage site. The main Sasanian World Heritage site was responsible for presenting and implementing this plan. The starting point of this project is primarily the World Heritage landscape of Sasanian, and its ultimate scope is defined up to the Persian Gulf in the historical province of Ardeshir Khwarreh and this joint scientific research carried out by cooperation of two directors, Alireza Askari Chaverdi as site manager and Pierfrancesco Callieri from Bologna University, from 2018 to 2022.

The extensive field research in this program has highlighted the necessity of adopting a multidisciplinary approach. For this reason, numerous Iranian and European research institutions are scientifically participating in this program: the Cultural Heritage Deputy of the Organization, the General Directorate of World Heritage Sites (ICHHTO), the World Heritage Landscape of Fars Archaeology; Firuzabad and Sarvestan (SALF), the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (RICHT), the Archaeology Research Center (ICAR), the Conservation and Restoration Research Center (RCCR), Shiraz University, University of Bologna, ISMEO—The International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies, University of Aix-Marseille, University of Urbino, the National Institute of Oceanography of Iran (INIOAS), the French National Research Center (CNRS), the Advanced Technologies Institute for Cultural Heritage of Italy (ITABC-CNR), and Tehran University.

The primary goal of this program is to establish a solid knowledge base. Within this framework of understanding, the sustainable development objectives of the World Heritage Landscape of the Sasanian era in the fields of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as sustainable tourism, can be realized. The expected outcomes of this plan are realized in [the following] two main sections.

Geographical Information System (GIS): In this method, all available data within the natural habitat is covered. These information resources are available for specialists to use for targeted planning in the fields of cultural heritage and tourism. **Protection of Archaeological Sites:** This protection is not only based on the provided information resources and carried out in their specialized fields but also involves the participation of local communities associated with the archaeological sites. The protection is based on the sustainable economic benefits derived from archaeological heritage.

In essence, the program aims to combine modern technology with community involvement to ensure the sustainable development and protection of the Sasanian cultural heritage.

A. The scientific section of the program encompasses three main areas:

Section A-1

Documentation: Establishing a database from existing maps and creating a basic digital map at a scale of 1:2000 in the GIS system for the Firuzabad,

Bishapur, and Sarvestan plains. This will cover all layers of information for the registered World Heritage sites, structures, enclosures, and historical cities. Specifically, in this program, all collected archaeological object data stored in warehouses will be placed in a data bank. In this method, all topics related to each group of objects are categorized and studied. This central database will serve as the hub for storing and retrieving archaeological layer information for the cultural heritage of the Sasanian archaeological landscape.

Section A-2

Detection and Identification of Essential Conservation Elements: Monitoring the materials and substances of the structures and artistic works of the Sasanian landscape, research on the quality identification of reliefs, paintings, sampling, chemical and physical studies, biological tests, and mineral materials, as the basis for preliminary studies for the implementation of conservation and restoration programs for the Sasanian archaeological landscape.

Section A-3

Archaeology: Multidisciplinary research in the plains of Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan in the ancient Ardeshir Khwarreh region to the shores of the Persian Gulf in the three provinces of Fars, Hormozgan, and Bushehr:

- Paleo-environmental and ancient climatology research.
- Geomorphological studies in the Sasanian archaeological landscape.
- Geophysical studies of the city of Ardeshir Khwarreh to reconstruct and understand archaeological remains and city planning.
- Coastal geophysical studies of the Persian Gulf on the coastal edge of ancient Ardeshir Khwarreh (National Oceanography Center of Iran, University of Marseille, and the French National Research Center).
- Archaeological research, exploration, and speculation in the plain, communication routes of the Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan plains, and the back coasts and historical ports associated with Ardeshir Khwarreh and Bishapur (Joint Iranian-Italian Archaeological Team; University of Bologna, University of Shiraz, Archaeological Research Institute, Sasanian Archaeological Landscape of Fars: Firuzabad).

B. The project management section encompasses three main areas:

Section B-1

Conservation and Restoration Interventions in Important Structures:

- Protection of architectural structures of the Sasanian archaeological landscape (in collaboration with the Advanced Cultural Heritage Research Center and the Italian National Research Center).

- Protection of the rock reliefs of Firuzabad and Bishapur (in collaboration with the Italian Conservation and Restoration Center and the Conservation and Restoration Research Institute of Cultural Heritage).
- Protection of wall paintings and exposed paintings in the excavations of the city of Gur and Bishapur (in collaboration with the University of Urbino and the Conservation and Restoration Research Institute of Cultural Heritage).

Section B-2

Introduction and Sustainable Valuation of Sites and Structures.

Section B-3

Sustainable Development Plan for Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

The objectives of this program specifically include local communities, particularly indigenous residents with the Qashqai language and culture, who have preserved the traditional structure of their culture and will play a fundamental role in sustainable development programs related to tourism. When indigenous and local communities correctly appreciate the importance of cultural heritage, structures, and archaeological sites of the Firuzabad and Bishapur plains, and utilize the sites as a sustainable cultural economic resource for the region, then the destruction of archaeological records in the Sasanian landscape will cease.

Along with all the archaeological activities, conservation, restoration, topography, and documentation, the involvement of numerous experts in field research in the Sasanian archaeological landscape, as well as the activities of sustainable development specialists and management planning, have been considered in this long-term program to achieve the goals of Iran's Twenty-Year Vision Document.

Exploiting the Sasanian cultural heritage in the central region of Fars as a sustainable resource for the cultural and ecological development of the community residing in the plains of Firuzabad, Kazerun, and Sarvestan requires planning. In the development horizon of this province, this region is designated as the Sasanian World Heritage site in the land-use plan. By creating a world heritage capacity in the fields of cultural economy, environment, and local community, one aims for sustainability, emphasizing historical patterns for long-term utilization. The cultural development model is essentially the historical and archaeological values of the Sasanian landscape, where the long-term and dynamic economic function of these regions is measured based on these values and is considered as an indicative function in sustainable development.

From this perspective, with the international registration of the Sasanian archaeological landscape, planning was done to understand the sustainable de-

velopment of the Sasanian archaeological landscape of Fars. It was decided to approach the foundations of cultural heritage from the perspective of World Heritage in four topics:

- Recognizing cultural heritage and understanding the Sasanian archaeological landscape as World Heritage.
- Introducing and understanding the legal rules of world heritage in the Sasanian archaeological landscape of Fars.
- How to invest in the field of world heritage of the Sasanian archaeological landscape.
- Sustainable tourism in the Sasanian archaeological landscape.

These programs have been being implemented and monitored in several stages from 2019 to 2023.

During the seven years joint mission of Shiraz University and Bologna University under the supervision of Alireza Askari Chaverdi—director of the Sasanian sites, SALF—and Pierfrancesco Callieri, with the cooperation of the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts—especially the institutes RICHT and ICAR, the extensive Sasanid complex of Fars, including Firuzabad, Bishapur and Sarvestan, was inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list, and several achievements have been reached:

- the documentation of Tangab reliefs and painting in Gur, in addition to the laser scanning of Qale Dokhtar Palace;
- the radiocarbon dating of Sarvestan and Qal-e Dokhtar;
- the conservation and restoration studies of Sasanid reliefs;
- the geophysical studies of the Gur site;
- the geoarchaeological and geomorphological studies of Firuzabad plain;
- the archeological study of the ancient routes from Firuzabad to the Persian Gulf.

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Fig. 1 - World Heritage of the Sasanian Archaeological Landscape of Fars: Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan.



Fig. 2 - Prof. Pierfrancesco Callieri collaborating on the inscription of the World Heritage of the Sasanian Archaeological Landscape of Fars in Firuzabad (third person standing from the right); in this picture, Mohammad Hassan Talebian, Deputy of Cultural Heritage of the country and head of the World Heritage office, Assad Seif, UNESCO representative, Prof. Dietrich Huff, and Engineer Farhad Azizi, director of the heritage sites, are present.



Fig. 3 - Prof. Pierfrancesco Callieri collaborating on the inscription of the World Heritage of the Sasanian Archaeological Landscape of Fars at the 42nd UNESCO meeting in Manama, Bahrain, 1397 (from right to left: Ms. Firoozeh Salari, Dr Mohammad Hassan Talebian, Dr Ahmad Jalali, Ambassador and Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to UNESCO, Dr Rasoul Vatandoust).



Fig. 4 - Appreciation and gratitude from the esteemed President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhani; the esteemed Minister of Science, Dr Farhadi; the Scientific Deputy to the President, Dr Sattari; and Dr Mohammad Nahavandian, Chief of Staff of the President, for the scientific contributions of Prof. Pierfrancesco Callieri in the field of Iranian Studies at the Farabi Festival.



Fig. 5 - The ancient city of Ardeshir Khwarreh, Gur, Firuzabad.



Fig. 6 - The ancient city of Bishapur, Kazerun, Fars.



Fig. 7 - Palace of Ardashir Babakan, Firuzabad, Fars.



Fig. 8 - Sasanian structure of Sarvestan at the beginning of the Islamic era, Fars.

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