Nomination of

Historic City of Yazd

for Inscription on the World Heritage List

Executive Summary

UNESCO
World Heritage Convention

Tehran 2016
In the Name of Allah; The Beneficent,
The Merciful...
“The Minarets and Windcatchers in the distance remind you of the book ‘A Thousand and One Nights’”

(Sir Percy Molesworth Sykes; 1902)
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Preface

The historic city of Yazd attests to the ongoing efforts of the hardworking people of desert over the course of its long history. In order to overcome the harsh nature of desert, locals have resorted to ingenious innovations resulting in the introduction of magnificent architectural and urban planning masterpieces to the world. Among them mention can be made of qanats, badgirs, goudal-baqchehs, sabats, gozars, Abanbars and several other architectural phenomena. The diligent residents of Yazd have extracted water from heart of the central desert of the Iranian plateau and mixing it with the cheapest material available namely soil, have artistically created the richest mud-brick architecture possible such as portals erected high into the sky, wind-catchers harnessing violent winds, turquoise-colored tiles shining in the kahgel background of the city, dome-like roofs, tall minarets, ayvans and cupolas showing off against mountainous and desert landscapes each manifesting the rich architectural identity of homes, mosques, madraseh, hammams and other historical urban structures.

Although Yazd is the cradle of art, its residents are most skilled in the art of life; living and struggling to live through interaction with the merciless desert environment. As a matter of fact, the art of these people is to transform restrictions into possibilities; the art of recognition, recognizing human and nature; the art of taming a brutal nature and turning it into an environment full of vitality and serenity appropriate for living and creating. Such an art mingles with science and technology and produces the most precious architecture exceptional on the face of the earth out of mud. Moreover, Yazd is the reservoir of Persian culture in the heart of desert. High values of Persian culture have been honestly preserved in this land and have been transferred to future generations. Special public and social relations, unique intangible heritage, colorful rituals and ceremonies at this part of the desert located in the central Iranian plateau are regarded as a cornerstone in the geographical culture of Iran. The Yazdi dialect and the original Persian literature have been truly saved in the memory of residents to be handed over to future generations. Many of the fine words and phrases of Persian literature have been precisely maintained in this ancient dialect.

Yazd is an icon of social peace of human beings. Residents have been receptive to various divine religions with a patience that is characteristic of desert dwellers. Peaceful coexistence of followers of Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Islam with the passage of time can serve as a good example for humankind. The strategic location of Yazd as a major intersection during various episodes of its history beside the wonderful juxtaposition of nature, tangible and intangible heritage in addition to traditional architectural and urban planning techniques, specific neighborhood organizations as well as excellent social and human relations have together shaped the structure of the historical city of Yazd. For these reasons, Yazd has always been considered as an attractive center for generating appropriate religious and cultural prototypes as well as for engaging in industrial, agricultural, commercial, artistic and architectural activities.
State Party

Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran (ICHHTO archive)
State, Province or Region

Yazd Province

Location of the Yazd province (ICHHTO archive)
Name of Property

Historic City of Yazd

Bird’s eye view and section of the Historic city of Yazd ; Sketch by: Najmeh Naderi, 2015
### Geographical coordinates to the nearest second

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<th>Area Buffer zone (ha)</th>
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Historic City of Yazd

Executive Summary

Textual description of the boundaries of the nominated property

Description of core zone

Historical core zone of Yazd City is consisted of three separate parts; each containing major urban elements and outstanding buildings.

The main central part constitutes the historical city. Here the core zone line originates from point C1 (X=230906, Y=3532474) located at Lard-e Keyvan neighborhood. Extending north and passing through points C2 (X=250807,Y=3532617) and C3 (X=250917,Y=3532810) it reaches point C4(X=250847,Y=3532912) along Seyed Golesorkh Street then moving in parallel with Muzaffarid fortifications, it joins point C5(X=251237, Y=3533459) which is the northern most tip of the core zone. From this point which is located at the intersection of Seyed Golesorkh and Fahadan streets, the core zone line stretches southeast and changes direction along the extension of Muzaffarid fortifications to reach point C6 (X=251611, Y=3533283). Then after a slight diversion towards the southwest, runs along Hoseinieh Fahadan Alley and joins point C7 (X=251571, Y=3533216). Then it travels along the extension of Muzaffarid fortifications southwards to reach points C8 (X=251726, Y=3533114) and C9 (X=251669, Y=3532879). Continuing along Lab-e Khandaq and Fahadan neighborhoods, the line leads to point C10 (X=251626, Y=3532647) and crossing Imam Khomeini Avenue towards the southeast, it connects to point C11 (X=251744, Y=3532576) along Malamir Alley. From this point as far as points C12 (X=251842, Y=3532576) and C13 (X=251706, Y=3532253) on the corner of Shahid Ebrahimi Street, Timurid fortifications are visible. Point C14 (X=251618, Y=3532146) is located at the intersection of Efaf Alley with Mahdi Street.

From here the line runs in a southwest direction relative to Mahdi Street and reaches point C15 (X=251722, Y=3532082). Then linking together points C16 (X=251667,Y=3532016), C17 (X=251698,Y=3531962) and C18 (X=251544,Y=3531744) along Masjed-e Seyed Alley, the line approaches point C19 (X=251410,Y= 3531781) from the southwest which is situated inside an intra-neighborhood car park, then running at its length the line joins point C20 (X=251324,Y=3531645) on Amirchaqmaq Square and further away comes to points C21 (X=251277,Y=3531573) and C22(X=251262,Y=3531473) delineating the valuable area containing the historical ensemble of AmirChaqmaq.

Extending west from point C22 (X=251262, Y=3531473) located beside a traditional hotel, the core zone line runs the length of Shahid Ahti Alley reaching point C23 (X=251157,Y=3531466) which is the southern most tip of the core zone. Continuing its route in the direction of northwest, the line passes through points C24 (X=251038, Y=3531499), C25 (X=250864, Y=3531639), C26 (X=250712, Y=3531799), C27 (X=250655 ,Y=3531746), C28 (X=250440, Y=3531945), C29 (X=250323 ,Y=3531865) and C30 (X=250277,Y=3531914) parallel with Qiam Street. This area of the core zone covers the historical bazaar complex of the city consisted for example of Khan Bazaar as well as the supporting elements such as: production workshops, caravansaries and timchehs.
Located between points C30 (X=250277, Y=3531914) and C34 (X=250327, Y=3532139) are historical districts of Godal-e Mosalla and Imam-zadeh Jafar containing prominent elements like: Mosalla Mosque and Mosallaye Atiq dome (cupola) dating from 8th and 9th centuries AH (14th and 15th century AD) as well as Imam-zadeh Jafar Complex dating back to the 4th century AH (10th century AD). Continuing from point C34 (X=250327, Y=3532139) located along Imam-zadeh Jafar Boulevard towards the northwest, the line crosses the boulevard and comes to point C35 (X=250247, Y=3532257) parallel to Mahdi Zargar Alley. Diverting towards north east via ShirQolami Alley, the line crosses Enqelab Street reaching Hoseineh Be’sat Alley and point C36 (X=250500, Y=3532549). From here the line changes its direction to southeast and crossing Imam-zadeh Jafar Boulevard joins point C37 (X=250620,Y=3532468) right around the corner of Sar-e polok Alley. The part of core zone located between points C34 (X=250327, Y=3532139) and C37 (X=250620, Y=3532468) has been the center of architectural and urban planning developments during the Safavid dynasty. Also outstanding elements such as Shah Tahmasb madraseh and square are located in this area. Points C37, C38 (X=250686, Y=3532423), C39 (X=250741, Y=3532458) and C40 (X=250819, Y=3532406) are inside the Sar-e polok neighborhood containing prominent elements like bazarcheh, mosque and water cistern. From point C40 which is the last point of the core zone, the line runs towards northeast parallel to Lard Keyvan Street and rejoins point C1 (X=230906,Y=3532474) within an area that contains the trench as well as the Muzaffarid rampart.

The second part of the core zone includes the Zoroastrians district located south of its center. Starting from point C41 on Rostam-e Giw cistern located in Basij Boulevard, the core zone line runs southwest at the length of Mr. Khodabakhsh Alley as far as point C42 (X=251766,Y=3530723) then continues its course after a half-turn and links points C43 (X=251730,Y=3530671), C44 (X=251822,Y=3530625) and C45 (X=251766,Y=3530659). In this area, a Zoroastrian shrine called Darb-e Mehr-e Mr Khodabakhsh stands. Continuing from point C46 (X=251861, Y=3530604) southwest, the line passes through points C47 (X=251689, Y=3530438) and C48 (X=251767, Y=3530332) on the border between the old and new fabrics. Further down the route in the same direction via the 14th Alley comes point C49 (X=251662, Y=3530264) and diverting in the direction of northeast, the line reaches point C50 (X=251636, Y=3530310) bordering the old fabric and a barren piece of land. The core zone line runs from here in parallel to the piece of land towards southwest as far as point C51(X=251522, Y=3530222) located on Kashani Street. The fire temple of Zoroastrians stands between these two points. From point C51 the line moves towards the northwest passing through points C52 (X=251504, Y=3530298), C53 (X=251513, Y=3530349) and C54 (X= 251377, Y=3530534). From point C55 (X=251441, Y=3530615) the course diverts towards the northeast and after crossing Bavafa Alley reaches point C56 (X= 251481, Y=3530648) opposite Basij Boulevard before coming to the final point 41 (X=251646, Y= 3530817).

The third part includes the core zone of Dolat-abad Persian garden which has already been inscripted as a world heritage site. But because of its location within the core zone of the historical city and direct relation of its values with those of the historical city, it is also
mentioned here. Starting from point C57 (X=249677, Y=3532250), the core zone line moves northwest and continues its course through the 7th Alley before reaching point C58 (X=249339, Y=3532910). Here it extends along Dolat-abad Boulevard in the northwest direction and comes to point C59 (X=249469, Y=3532910), then diverting northeast in parallel with the same boulevard is point C60 (X=249593, Y=3532938) and continuing southeast points C61 (X=249616, Y=3532912), C62 (X=249588, Y=3532877), C63 (X=249635, Y=3532838), C64 (X=249609, Y=3532814) and C65 (X=249790, Y=3532641) are passed marking the boundary between the core zone of Bagh-e Dolat-abad and new houses.

**Description of buffer zone**

The buffer zone line of the historical city of Yazd starts from point B1(X=250075, Y=3533396) on Shahid Navvab-e Safavi Boulevard and running northeast along the boulevard reaches point B2(X=250415, Y=3533815) at its intersection with OstadChiti Street. Then changing its course toward southeast and moving in parallel to OstadChiti Street, the line joins point B3(X=250834, Y=3533475). The area between points B1 and B3 includes the Ilkhanate part of Sheikhdad neighborhood. From point B3 the line extends towards the northeast and after linking points B4(X=250908, Y=353609), B5(X=25103, Y=3533590) and B6(X=251198, Y=353854) together, it changes course in the direction of southeast and reaches point B7(X=25143, Y=3533689) on Seyed Goleosorkh Street. The area contains the historical neighborhood of Sarcham.

The buffer zone line continues along Seyed-e Goleosorkh Street towards the northeast and joins point B8(X=251517, Y=3533784) then changing its direction to the southeast, it approaches point B9(X=251913, Y=3533421). Further away by going first to the southwest and afterwards to the southeast points B10(X=251853, Y=3533342) and B11(X=252008, Y=3533235) are passed located on Imam Khomeini Avenue. From the latter point the line runs along the avenue towards southwest and reaches point B12(X=251967, Y=3533178). Then extending southeast in parallel to Shahid Adhami Street, the line passes through points B12, B13(X=252108, Y=3533178) and B14(X=252108, Y=3532760) which link the historical and central urban fabric of the city to the Abshoor and Yaqoobi neighborhoods.

Before reaching point B15(X=252375, Y=3532467), the line must pass through Mohammad-e Ne'mati, Qassabi, Varzeshgah-e Qods and Shahid Abbasi-zadeh alleys in the southwest direction. Continuing its course, the buffer zone line crosses Nobahar, 6th and 7th alleys to join point B16(X=252461, Y=3532098) on Oshtor-zadeh Street and moving along this street towards southwest point B17 (X=252005, Y=3531711) is reached located in the middle part of Mahdi Street linking Yaqoobi, Sar-e sang and Jooy-e Horhor neighborhoods.

Further away along Mahdi Street to the northeast is point B18(X=252324, Y=3531339) at the intersection of Mahdi Street with A`sizadeh Boulevard. Then along the boulevard towards the northwest the line reaches point B19(X=251994, Y=3531127) and by turning southeast, it crosses the boulevard and reaches point B20(X=252159, Y=3530842) via Kianpoor and Tafazolli school alleys. Points B17 as far as point B19 cover Gazorgah, Salsabil and Goud-e Shahriari neighborhoods.
From point B20 the line turns slightly towards the southwest before reaching point B21\((X=252100, Y=3530808)\) on Salman-e Farsi Street via Shahid Adhami Alley. From this point the line moves along Salman Street towards the southeast and joins point B22 \((X=252322, Y=3530593)\). Then turning southwest point B23 \((X=251966, Y=3530264)\) is approached through Qods Alley. Taking a southward course, point B24 \((X=251989, Y=3530160)\) is reached via Sardar-e Melli Alley. In order to reach point B25 \((X=251700, Y=3529951)\) on Ayat-ollah Kashani Street, the line turns northwest and passes through Shohadaye Maktab-e Imam Alley, then moves along this alley in the northwest direction and reaches point B26 \((X=251629, Y=3530095)\).

Points B27 \((X=251518, Y=3530044)\), B28 \((X=251486, Y=3530080)\), B29 \((X=251347, Y=3529976)\), B30 \((X=251195, Y=3530163)\) and B31 include Markar ensemble composed of school, museum, orphanage and Markar Square. Extending northwest from point B31 \((X=251342, Y=3530338)\) parallel with Ayat-ollah Kashani Street, the line joins point B32 \((X=251123, Y=3530136)\) then changes course southeast along Shahid Montazer-e Qaem Boulevard as far as point B33 \((X=250731, Y=3530316)\). Then it turns northwest to reach point B35 \((X=250470, Y=3530211)\) from Shariatmadari Alley. From this point the buffer zone line moves north, passing through Shahid Naqibzadeh, Nemooneh, Shahid Nader-e Katira’i and Oorzhans-e Kalantari alleys, crosses Farrokhi Street and joins point B36 \((X=250357, Y=3531029)\) on its northern edge. Continuing westward along Farrokhi Street, the line approaches point B37 \((X=249919353, Y=3531009)\) on Azadi Square. Moving northwards and then to the northeast from this point along Motaharri Street, the line passes through points B38 \((X=249813, Y=3531758)\) and B39 \((X=249170, Y=3532549)\) which link Koocheh Biuk and Dolat-abad neighborhoods. Changing its course towards southwest along Dolat-abad Boulevard point B40 \((X=249298, Y=3532764)\) is reached and further away along Mohammad Hosein Poluni Street in the northwest direction is point B41 \((X=248778, Y=3533177)\). Then by changing direction towards the northeast along Chehelohasht Sot-e Davudi Alley, the line joins point B42 \((X=249062, Y=3533586)\) on Enqelab Avenue and by moving along the avenue toward southwest point B43 \((X=249649, Y=3533178)\) is reached.

The distance between points B39 \((X=249170, Y=3532549)\) and B43 \((X=249649, Y=3533178)\) covers the world heritage inscribed buffer zone of Dolat-abad Garden. Moving from point B43 toward northeast the line reaches point B44 \((X=249725, Y=3533262)\) via Namaki 29 \((X=251347, Y=3529976)\) Alley then changes its course again toward northwest and runs parallel with Masjed Sajjadieh Alley as far as point B45 \((X=249579, Y=3533374)\).

Then going to northeast through Shahid Beheshti Alley the line reaches point B46 \((X=249618, Y=3533480)\) and extending first to northwest and then to northeast and crossing Shahid Beheshti and Pir-e Sabzi alleys the line joins points B47 \((X=249490, Y=3533555)\) and B48 \((X=249634, Y=3533781)\) respectively. From point B48 it changes course toward southeast via Eram Alley as far as point B1 \((X=250077, Y=3533396)\). The distance between points B43 \((X=249649, Y=3533178)\) and B1 are occupied by Kasnavieh and Nasr-abad neighborhoods (dating from Seljuqid era).
**Historic City of Yazd**

**Regulations**

- Destruction of any historic structure is prohibited.
- Any conversion, repair and substitution works has to be authorized by the KOIVI after careful examination of the possibilities of original structures.
- Excavation systems and areas is prohibited. The existing installations should be replaced with интеграционный applicants of Kabirzadeh.
- Natural materials are exploited in the restoration processes to be authorized by KOIVI if the processes is a rule extremely difficult to carry out and is not possible to use modern materials.
- For the commercial extension of buildings within the historical core zone, an extension cannot exceed more than 15% of the total area. Also, the age of the new construction should be similar to the age of the existing buildings.
- It is recommended that the Commercial and cultural areas be located in the eastern part of the site.
- In case of new proposals, information is to be provided to the KOIVI to define on what is the area and its time frame, how the works can be made control before any implementation of the project.
- In case of reconstruction, the original architecture, functional elements, techniques, decorations and street patterns should be strictly preserved.
- In case of rehabilitation (removal or removal of structures), the designs of the buildings design are allowed, although it should be seen that the original architectural patterns are kept.
- In the case of the reconstruction/rehabilitation projects there any impacts on the neighboring houses, the owner will be consulted before the final decision of rehabilitation works.
- As a general rule, the height of new buildings cannot exceed the height of the existing neighboring historic houses, excluding the possibility, of raise up to one of the height of their own stairs.
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**Geographical coordinates of Nominated Property**

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**Nominated Property**

- Area: 195 ha
- Buffer Zone: 665 ha

**Qasr Course**

- 0 50 90 1000X
Historic City of Yazd

Executive summary

- Destruction of any historic structure is prohibited.
- Any restoration, repair and rehabilitation works has to be authorized by ICHIPTO after careful examination of the possibilities of related measures.
- As a general rule, the height of new buildings cannot exceed the height of the existing neighboring historic houses, excluding the possibility to take into account the height of their wind catchers.
- Usage of gabled roofs in any color or material is banned.
- Facades of buildings within the buffer zone, particularly the parts on the street side, must be covered with earth square planer or fired bricks, with the possibility of a mix of the two, as can be inspired from traditional architecture (fired bricks to be used at the base and at the top, around openings).
- Usage of glazed bricks covering a maximum of 5% of the total brickwork surface is allowed only if it is compatible with the traditional patterns, with the exception of monumental entrances to public buildings of specific importance.
- Usage of industrial ceramics, metallic and synthetic panels on facades is not allowed.
- Should any historic or cultural property (i.e. properties or monuments identified as historic) be encountered during infrastructural, developmental or constructional urban activities by real or legal people, private corporations or state administrations, the owner or executor of the plan is bound to immediately stop all operations and to notify ICHIPTO who is in charge of deciding on the need to undertake an archaeological survey.
- Deploying power lines, installing poles, establishing facilities and developing roads within this area is subjected to getting relevant permissions from the municipality and ICHIPTO.
- Establishing factories or workshops polluting the environment is prohibited.
- Advertisement billboards in the street itself are prohibited.
- Design of advertisement billboards, signboards and neon signs belonging to commercial entities must be in proportion to the facade area of each commercial unit.
- Advertisement billboards, signboards and neon signs above roof parapets are prohibited.
- Planting of vegetation in the garden and courtyards is encouraged, but only local species are to be used.

Geographical coordinates of Buffer Zone

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**Criteria under which property is nominated (itemize criteria)**

**Criterion ii: exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;**

Yazd in terms of urban planning, usage of materials and adaptation to its arid setting, has had a decisive role and influence on the evolution and promotion of earthen architecture, technology and urban planning within the Central and West Asian Region.

Yazd has taken advantage of its multi-cultural identity and its position right in the middle of the Silk and Spice Roads which, in addition to different goods also facilitated the transfer of knowledge, including that of building cities on the edge of arid zones. This has led to the building and gradual development of the city using elaborated principles at all levels, from construction materials selection and transformation to housing design and further in town planning with a city wall extending due to the juxtaposition of new districts to the existing ones. Each district is independent, having its components organized along its qanat or several qanats that provide the water necessary for life.

**Criterion iii: bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;**

The historic city of Yazd bears witness to an exceptionally elaborate construction system in earthen architecture and the adaption of the ways of living to hostile environment for several millennia. Yazd is associated with the continuity of traditions that cover social organization such as Waqf (endowment) benefitting public buildings, such as water cisterns, mosques, hammams, qanats, etc; as well as developed intangible and multicultural, commercial and handicrafts tradition, as one of the richest cities of the world entirely built of earthen material; a quality which contributes to the creation of an environment-friendly microclimate. It reflects diverse cultures related to various religions in the city including Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism, which are still living peacefully together and having a combination of buildings including houses, mosques, fire temples, synagogues, mausoleums, hammams, water cisterns, madrasehs, bazaars, etc. as it can be seen in their traditional crafts and festivities.

Presently, Yazd is a an outstanding example of an urban tradition developed throughout the second millennium (10th-20th centuries) that guided the founding and development of the commercial cities based on qanat system on the deserts of Iran, which can be titled as “qanat civilization”. In fact Yazd has one of the largest networks of qanat as in the world, and Yazdi qanat practitioners are considered the most skilled in Iran. The ingenious management of difficult conditions (limited resources, harsh climate, etc.) of Yazd has resulted in the strong persistence of this culture and its related urban fabric. Local population of Yazd and their
decision-makers have managed to maintain large zones of the historic city that illustrate these traditions well. Nowadays, this architectural and urban planning tradition has an important role as a model for other cities to make use of sustainable energy in architecture and town planning.

Criterion iv: be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

Yazd is an outstanding example of a homogenous architecture and urban planning. It illustrates the development of earthen architecture and urban fabric. Its well-preserved urban structure and nature-friendly architecture have been developed in a hot and arid desert setting, it also includes particular urban planning and architectural features such as magnificent wind catchers, large underground spaces and sabats (partially covered alleys) to deal with extremely hot summers, and to contribute to water management and energy saving.

Yazd is the most outstanding example of traditional Iranian desert architecture. The concept of courtyard house (developed around deep courtyards) with access to underground spaces, forms a typology that has become widespread and can still be observed with all possible declinations that address the needs of all social classes and comply with a wide range of standards, from modest to richly-decorated. Additionally, each district of the historic city has still retained its specific features designed for ensuring the quality of life: bazaar, water cisterns, hammams, tekieh and hoseiniehs (religious spaces), mosques, etc. The skyline of the city punctuated with wind catchers, minaret sand domes of the monuments and mosques offer an outstanding panorama visible from far away, from inside and outside the historic city.
Criterion v: be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

Yazd is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of the interaction of man and nature in a desert environment that results from the optimal use and clever management of the limited resources that are available in such an arid setting.

The historic city has been built with the least possible disruption of the environment, as well as minimizing energy consumption. It can be a good source of inspiration for facing the sustainable development challenges of today which has also been referred to in the most of the recent scientific publications on bioclimatic architecture.

Water brought from the mountains through qanats that limit evaporation is mixed with the earth which is dug from underground rooms of the houses to prepare mortar which is transformed into chineh (cob) or mud bricks (adobe) to build walls and vaulted roofs, and is also used in the protective plaster called kah-gel. These structures are quite thick so as to resist earthquakes. Furthermore, in combination with a system of deep courtyards and wind catchers, this pattern also solves the question of climate control of houses. This truly represents the most important expression of benefiting from ingenious techniques in order to create sustainable conditions for living in such harsh environment.
Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

a) Brief Synthesis

The city of Yazd is the capital of Yazd Province. It is located 270 km to the southeast of Isfahan and 625 km to the south of Tehran within the central area of the Iranian Plateau, which is known as the desert part of the country with an altitude of 1200 m above sea level.

Yazd is one of largest cities in Iran and is mostly known to be the driest major city of the country, with an average annual rainfall of only 60 mm. It is also one of the hottest areas with summer temperatures frequently exceeding 40°C.

The settlement in Yazd region dates back to pre-Islamic era but the historic city of Yazd, according to the evidences, was established after 10th century (4th century AH). The name of Yazd probably derives from the name of the Sassanid King yazdegerd I. Yazd was definitely a Zoroastrianism center in Sassanid times. After the Arab conquest of Persia, many Zoroastrians migrated to the region of Yazd from neighboring provinces. By paying a levy, Yazd was allowed to remain Zoroastrian even after the conquest of Islam, but Islam gradually became the dominant religion. Yazd, particularly after the 10th century AD (4th century AH), has a written and documented history.

Since the 10th century AD, due to its key strategic location on the main trade routes (Silk Road and Spice route), Yazd has become a famous and prosperous city on the edge of the
Iranian Central Desert. Due to the multi-cultural identity and its location on the caravan routes linking India with the West, Yazd became an important commercial center, facilitating transfer of knowledge in a way that the impact of Yazd on the cities and towns around the desert and along the trade routes can be clearly seen.

Taking advantage of this situation, the builders of Yazd have developed highly elaborated principles in the city building process at all levels, covering all relevant aspects from material selection and preparation to housing design and city planning.

Yazd has never been the capital of Iran, but it has always kept its significance and value. Furthermore, it has remained away from many major wars because of its desert location and great distance from the capital cities. All of these characteristics have allowed Yazd to become a perfect context for forming and promoting a special culture and urban structure during several periods and centuries.

Yazd is also recognized for its intangible cultural heritage. In addition to those linked to crafts and cuisine, religious festivals have a special significance in Yazd. It has been known for its silk cloth and other textiles production, even before Marco Polo passed through the city. It is also one of the most important centers of Zoroastrians whose main fire temple is still an important pilgrimage destination for them. With the presence of Zoroastrians, Jews, and Muslims, Yazd can be considered a model and an outstanding example for a peaceful coexistence of religions.
The built environment of Yazd is an outstanding example of adaptation with the harsh climate. Innovations made in the local architecture are noteworthy for the blending of elements from Persian culture that have come together over many centuries. Yazd also possesses an ancient water supply system (qanat) of great complexity and ingenuity that still effectively functions. As a matter of fact, before the Islamic era, many qanats were already flowing that made the further building and expansion of the city possible.

During the course of time other qanats were added to the network. Being located right in the middle of a desert area, builders of Yazd achieved an incredible capability that led to the transformation of small amounts of locally available materials into a large city. Earth was the main resource along with the water brought to the city by an optimized usage of traditional irrigation systems (qantas), due to lack of surface waters (such as rivers, springs, etc.), in production of earthen materials used in the city construction.

A specific building quality of Yazd, since the extracted earth during the construction of underground parts of houses has been used as building materials, therefore drastically minimizing environmental impact. The structures of the buildings are quite thick and partly underground so as to offer good resistance in case of earthquakes. This pattern, in combination with a system of courtyards and *badgir* also solves the question of climate control of houses in these extreme arid climatic conditions.
The earthen construction technology has been used in Yazd throughout the centuries to construct buildings for different uses and needs. These include housing of various sizes and organizations, *hammams*, water cisterns, mills, shrines, mausoleums, synagogues and mosques. Although some of them were built when access to other material was possible (mainly fired bricks for the most exclusive structures and gypsum for finishes and decorations). The city was surrounded by a wall which was gradually enlarged with the addition of new districts.

Each district was (and still is) independent and organized along a Qanat with all their components to make use of water for living as well as for construction purposes. Each district has its social structure and authorities. Yazd is an outstanding example of a traditional settlement that results from the optimal use and intelligent management of limited resources available in such an extreme arid environment. Yazd is considered a good source of inspiration for facing today’s sustainable development challenges. The exclusive house typology in Yazd has been referred to worldwide in scientific publications under the topic of “bioclimatic construction”.

**b) Justification for Criteria**

*Criterion ii: exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

Yazd in terms of urban planning, usage of materials and adaptation to its arid setting, has had a decisive role and influence on the evolution and promotion of earthen architecture, technology and urban planning within the Central and West Asian Region.
Historic City of Yazd

Executive summary

Criterion iii: bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

The historic city of Yazd bears witness to an exceptionally elaborate construction system in earthen architecture and the adaption of the ways of living to hostile environment for several millennia. Yazd is associated with the continuity of traditions that cover social organization these include Waqf (endowment) benefitting public buildings, such as water cisterns, mosques, hammams, qanats, etc. as well as developed intangible and multi-cultural, commercial and handicrafts tradition, as one of the richest cities of the world entirely built of earthen material; a quality which contributes to the creation of an environment-friendly microclimate. It reflects diverse cultures related to various religions in the city including Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism, which are still living peacefully together and having a combination of buildings including houses, mosques, fire temples, synagogues, mausoleums, hammams, water cisterns, madrasehs, bazaars, etc. as it can be seen in their traditional crafts and festivities.

The historic city of Yazd, earthen architecture

Criterion iv: be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

Yazd is an outstanding example of a homogenous architecture and urban planning. It illustrates the development of earthen architecture and urban fabric. Its well-preserved urban structure and nature-friendly architecture have been developed in a hot and arid desert setting, it also includes particular urban planning and architectural features such as magnificent wind
catchers, large underground spaces and sabats (partially covered alleys) to deal with extremely hot summers, and to contribute to water management and energy saving.

Criterion v: be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

Yazd is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of the interaction of man and nature in a desert environment that results from the optimal use and clever management of the limited resources that are available in such an arid setting.

c) Statement of integrity

From the 1930s onwards, several policies were established to modernize the city. That led to the creation of a few wide commercial streets and provision of easy access to “modern” housing. This happened mostly outside the historic city. Contrary to some intentions including those belonging to higher classes, the populations of Yazd, as well as the city decision-makers have managed to maintain large zones of the historic city intact, including possible restoration and conservation for a number of large houses.

Today, Yazd possesses a large number of excellent examples of traditional desert architecture with a range of houses from modest ones to very large and highly decorated properties. In addition to the main mosque and bazaar which are in a very good state, each district of the
Historic City of Yazd

Executive summary

Historic city still has all its specific features such as water cisterns, hammams, tekyehs, mosques, mausoleums, etc. In the core zone, there are still many streets and alleys which have kept their original pattern, having also many sabats, i.e. partially or entirely covered alleys, and series of arches crossing them for protection from the sun. The skyline of the city punctuated with wind catchers, minarets and domes of the monuments and mosques offer an outstanding panorama visible from far away, from inside and outside the historic city.

- **Visual integrity**

The skyline of the city is one of the most intact and historically significant in the world. Although there are some new developments outside the buffer zone, there is the least impact on the landscape of dome-shaped roofs combined with historic wind catchers, minarets, portals, earthen material façades within a background of the blue of the sky and the mountains backgrounds.

- **Functional integrity**

The main functions and activities in the historic city of Yazd, such as residential (houses), commercial (bazaar), squares, religious buildings (mosques, fire temples and synagogues) have retained their original functions. Only a few historic buildings have been adapted for tourism infrastructural facilities especially in the buffer zone, serving as boutique hotels and traditional restaurants, cultural and scientific centers (e.g. Art & Architecture Faculty) and tourist information centers; thus, the overall integrity of the historic city has been fully respected. Yazd, as an entire historic city, has also retained its historical role as “Dar-ol-Elm” (Center of Knowledge) as well as a multi-religious and trading center.

- **Structural integrity**

The relation between the major architectural elements and historic urban fabric, except for a few road constructions at the beginning of the 20th century, has undergone no significant changes thus the historic city benefits from a historic and homogeneous urban fabric. In addition, the interaction between the social, economic and cultural components within the structure of the urban fabric is still persistent.

d) **Statement of Authenticity**

Being a living, dynamic city, Yazd has evolved gradually with some inevitable changes. However, there are still many qualities which allow Yazd to meet conditions of authenticity, including those related to the continuity of its intangible heritage. Yazd is recognized as the place where religious festivals and pilgrimages have a special dimension. There is also a lively network of social organizations (Waqf) that still play a strong role at district level, besides those represented by the municipality and the government. In terms of use and function, mention must be made to the religious activities said above. Bazaar is still in
function, with addition of a few shops specifically addressing the tourist market. Also a large part of the historic city is still inhabited (with a rate of 80% private ownership). On the other hand, some elements have lost their original use but there are new ideas for their adaptive re-use. A part of the University of Yazd has been established in the historic city. There are also some hotels and restaurants that are operating within some of the existing structures which have been rehabilitated and restored by keeping their main physical elements and minimizing the interventions. This has had a positive influence in terms of authenticity linked to location, setting, form, design and materials. Apart from the changes that have occurred throughout the 20th century, the nominated core zone consists of plenty of well-preserved buildings and public spaces. In all interventions, priority has always been given to traditional techniques whenever restoration works were needed.

- **Design**

Much of the historic architectural structures such as mosques, bazaars, madrasehs, residential houses, etc. have maintained their outstanding qualities regarding their original layout and design. When reconstructions, renewal and rehabilitation of a historic building are required the compliance of new designs and plans have been first examined with the authentic designs based on historical documents, in order to guarantee the preservation of all authentic qualities of form and layout.

- **Material**

Almost all components and elements in the historic city are built from earthen materials which have mostly maintained their originality. The earthen materials are still widely in use for restoration and rehabilitation purposes and partially for new constructions. The know-how related to the processing of these materials is being promoted by the ICHHTO, by employing traditional practitioners and experts.

- **Use and Function**

Continuity of life as well as the permanence and active presence of important urban and architectural elements such as bazaar, religious centers, squares, etc. is considered as one of the significant aspects of Yazd Historic City which has been retained throughout the history until the present time.

- **Techniques**

The mastership and knowledge regarding traditional construction techniques still exists and is dynamic, especially for being used in restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction works. In which Yazd as a supplier of these techniques, has the highest number of experts and craftsmen in traditional construction not only in earthen architecture but also in qanat construction.
- **Setting**

The location and the setting of Yazd historic city have remained almost unchanged until present. Due to the formation of the city based on qanat (water supply system) and its course as well as trade routes, the city and all its key monuments have remained unmodified respecting their authenticity and original setting.

e) **Intangible Heritage**

Yazd is associated with a strong permanence of traditions which cover social organization such as *Waqf* (endowment) as well as religious traditions for all religions and their related ceremonies and festivals which have maintained their significance over time until present. In addition, *Yazdi* dialect and Zoroastrian language have still retained their original state as an element for identifying *Yazdi* citizens.

f) **Requirements for protection and management**

As a living city, a fact that needs to be maintained, adaptations will still need to be made so as to respond to the legitimate expectations and desires of its inhabitants and users. Besides that, as the values of Yazd are interesting sources of inspiration to solve some of the most important problems of the contemporary world (culture of peace, sustainable development, bio and cultural diversity, etc.), the city should be prepared to welcome more visitors.

For all these reasons, the past and present efforts which have been made by the local population itself, in some instances under the districts organizations and social structure of *Waqf* (endowment), as well as efforts by Yazd Municipality, ICHHTO, and local representatives of the Government of Iran (Ministries of education, health, etc.) have to be still promoted. To that end, all these partners have joined an effort to elaborate a new management mechanism that will allow to directing their capacities towards common goals. This has concretized with the creation of a steering committee in charge of defining general orientations for the management and conservation of the historic city. As the first important decision, this committee has officially adopted specific and clear rules and regulations for the both nominated core and buffer zones. A technical committee has also been composed by representatives of the major stakeholders, who will work under the direction of specialized working groups to identify, study, and monitor different kinds of projects. As the national body responsible for World Heritage properties, including reporting to UNESCO World Heritage Committee, ICHHTO has decided to establish a specific office (Base) that will have the responsibility to coordinate the meetings of these two committees and to organize the monitoring of the historic city regarding its state of conservation. Within the next ten years, it is expected that the living conditions in the historic city to be improved, poverty eradicated, and the number of national and foreign visitors to be increased so that the cultural values of Yazd can be presented and globally appreciated.
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