

## Pasargadae (Iran)

No 1106

### 1. BASIC DATA

*State Party:* Islamic Republic of Iran

*Name of property:* Pasargadae

*Location:* Pars Province

*Date received:* 30 January 2003

*Category of property:*

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

*Brief description:*

Pasargadae was the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Empire, created by Cyrus II the Great in the heartland of the Persians in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Its palaces, garden layouts, as well as the mausoleum of Cyrus are an outstanding example of the first phase in the evolution of the royal Achaemenid art and architecture, and an exceptional testimony to the Persian civilization.

### 2. THE PROPERTY

#### *Description*

The archaeological site of Pasargadae represents the first capital of the Achaemenid Persian Empire. It is located in the plain on the river Polvar, in the heart of Pars, the homeland of the Persians. The position of the town is also denoted in its name: 'the camp of Persia'. The town was built by Cyrus II the Great in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The core zone (160 ha, ca 2.7 x 0.8 km) of the site is surrounded by a large landscape buffer zone (7127 ha).

The core area contains the following monuments:

- The Mausoleum of Cyrus the Great, at the south end;
- The Tall-e Takht (or Tall-e Takht-e Soleyman, 'Solomon's Throne') and fortifications, on a hill at the north end of the core zone;
- The royal ensemble in the centre of the core zone, in the plain, consisting of the remains of: the Gate House (Gate R), the Audience Hall (Palace S), the Residential Palace (Palace P), and the Royal Garden ('Four Gardens').
- In the eastern part there is a small structure (16 x 16 m) identified as the Bridge. North of the Royal ensemble, there is the Zendan-e Soleyman (Solomon's Prison), a stone tower, ca 14 m high, of which the date is not certain.

The core zone includes the main excavated area. The ancient capital extended much beyond this zone and has not yet been excavated. In the buffer zone there are other remains, including: the Sacred Precinct (ca 550-530 BCE), and the sites of Tall-e Nokhodi; Tall-e Khari, Tall-e Se Asiyab, Do Talan, of which some are prehistoric, as well

as the Madrasseh or Caravanserai (14<sup>th</sup> century CE). Within the buffer zone, there are also five small rural villages, inhabited by farmers.

*The Mausoleum of Cyrus the Great* is built in white limestone ca 540-530 BCE. The base (13.35 x 12.30 m) of the structure is formed of six receding tiers, of which the first is 170 cm high, the second and third 104 cm, and the last three 57.5 cm. The mausoleum chamber, on the top, has the form of a simple gable house with a small opening from the west. In the medieval period, the monument was thought to be the tomb of Solomon's mother, and a mosque was built around it, using columns from the remains of the ancient palaces. A small prayer niche, mihrab, was carved in the tomb chamber. In the 1970s, during a restoration, the remains of the mosque were removed, and the ancient fragments were deposited close to their original location.

*The Tall-e Takht* refers to the great fortified terrace platform built on a hill at the northern limit of Pasargadae. This limestone structure is built in dry masonry, using large regular stone blocks and a jointing technique called *anathyrosis*, which was known in Asia Minor in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The general plan of the terrace structure is a parallelogram measuring ca 98 x 79 m, with recesses in the north and south sides. The original height of the elevation was ca 15 m. The first phase of the construction was built by Cyrus the Great, halted at his death in 530 BCE. The second phase was built under Darius the Great (522-486 BCE), using mud brick construction.

*The royal ensemble* occupies the central area of Pasargadae. It consists of several palaces originally located within a garden ensemble (the so-called 'Four Gardens'). The colour scheme of the architecture is given by the black and white stones used in its structure. The main body of the palaces is formed of a hypostyle hall, to which are attached porticoes. The *Audience Hall* (Palace S) was built ca 539 BCE. Its hypostyle hall has two rows of four columns. The column bases are in black stone (1.43 x 1.43 m), and the column shafts in white limestone. The column base is 1.04 m high, and the shaft 12.06 m. The capitals were in black stone. There is evidence of a capital representing a hybrid, horned and crested lion. The palace had a portico on each side. Some of the bas-reliefs of the doorways are preserved, showing human figures and monsters. The *Residential Palace* (Palace P) of Cyrus II was built 535-530 BCE; its hypostyle hall (31.1 x 22.1 m) has five rows of six columns, and its impressive southeast portico measures 75.5 x 9.3 m. The *Gate House* stands at the eastern limit of the core zone. It is a hypostyle hall with a rectangular plan, 26.2 x 22.2 m. In one of the doorjambes, there is the famous relief of the 'winged figure'. The *Pavilions* A and B were probably two entrances to the Royal Garden. Pavilion B is the better preserved of the two; it consists of a rectangular platform of dressed stones, 11.7 x 10.1 m.

#### *History*

The land of Parsa or Persia was the homeland of the Achaemenids, the Persian tribe whom Cyrus II the Great (reigned 559-c 529 BCE) led to victory over the Medes in 550. Traditionally, Cyrus II chose the site for his capital because it laid near the site of his victory over Astyages

the Medeian king. This first victory was followed by the conquest of Lydia, Neo-Babylonia, and Egypt, and the empire was later consolidated and extended by his son Cambyses (529-522 BCE) and by Darius I the Great (521-486 BCE). Cyrus has been remembered in the Bible as the liberator of Babylon, and as the one who brought the Jews back from their exile.

Darius I decided to build a new symbolic capital for the empire, at Persepolis, some 70 km further south. Nevertheless, Pasargadae remained an important dynastic centre until the empire was conquered by Alexander the Great of Macedonia in 330 BCE. According to ancient writers, such as Herodotus and Arian, Alexander paid his respects to the tomb of Cyrus and had it restored.

In later periods, Tall-e Takht continued to be used as a fort, while the palaces were abandoned and the material was reused. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century on, the tomb of Cyrus was called the Tomb of the Mother of Solomon, and it became a place of pilgrimage. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, a small mosque was built around it, which was in use until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The site was visited by travellers over the centuries, giving accounts on the gradual loss of various elements. Special attention was given to the Tomb of Cyrus and the Tall-e Takht fortified terrace.

### **Management regime**

#### *Legal provision:*

The nominated core zone is owned by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and allocated to the care by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO). The land in the buffer zone is privately owned.

The site of Pasargadae has been protected under the Iranian national legislation since 1931.

#### *Management structure:*

The management of the site is the responsibility of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, which has adopted a Management Plan in 2002. At the local level, the management is under the responsibility of Parsa-Pasargadae Research Foundation (PPRF), established to manage, conserve and maintain Persepolis and Pasargadae. A sub-office of the PPRS is permanently established at Pasargadae, under the direction of an architect conservator. The PPRS has a direct support from the central ICHO office in Tehran, from the provincial government and the local amenities. To guarantee security at the site, the local and provincial authorities provide guards and the support of the Police department. So far, no case of vandalism or theft has occurred at this site. Staff working in conservation and monitoring of monuments is employed on regular and long term basis.

#### *Resources:*

The Foundation (PPRF) at the site has three sources of financial support for preservation and restoration activities, employment of all categories of staff and for the promotion of tourism related activities. The main source of funding is from the ICHO in Tehran. The second source is the provincial government of Fars where Pasargadae is located, and the third source is the 25 % share of all revenue generated by the PPRF consisting mostly of entry fee.

### **Justification by the State Party (summary)**

Pasargadae was the first capital of the first great multicultural empire in Western Asia and perhaps in the human history. Pasargadae is also the first manifestation of an imperial combined (composite, synthetic) art in the Near East recognized as 'Achaemenid art'. Moreover, Pasargadae shows the earliest manifestation of Persian or Iranian art and architecture in the written history of ancient Iran. No other architectural remains of that time are comparable to Pasargadae in the whole of the Near East or indeed in the world. Pasargadae is proposed as a single nomination under criteria i, ii, iii and iv.

*Criteria i and iv:* A masterpiece of human creative genius in its composite architecture and town planning which includes the first example of 'Four Gardens' type prevailing in Western Asia up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Safavid Ispahan or Mughal India).

*Criterion ii:* The first capital of the first great multicultural empire in Western Asia and perhaps in the human history. An empire which recognised and respected the cultural and religious values of each nation and reflected it in its set of laws (return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem for instance, see the Bible) and arts (composite, mainly Greco-Persian architecture).

*Criterion iii:* An exceptional testimony to the Achaemenid civilisation.

## **3. ICOMOS EVALUATION**

### **Actions by ICOMOS**

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the nominated site in August 2003.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management.

### **Conservation**

#### *Conservation history:*

After the fall of the Achaemenid Empire, most structures of Pasargadae were abandoned and gradually destroyed and the material was reused. However, the Tall-e Takht continued to be used as a fortification. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Tomb of Cyrus II became a place of pilgrimage, and a mosque was built around it from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The first scientific excavation was carried out by E. Herzfeld in 1928, and continued by the Archaeological Service of Iran. The site was placed under legal protection in 1931. A British archaeological mission led by D. Stronach surveyed the site in the 1960s, and an Italian mission carried out some restoration in the 1970s.

#### *State of conservation:*

The architectural remains within the core area of Pasargadae are in relatively good state of preservation. The conservation of the site is respectful and undertaken at a minimum level. Some conservation problems are reported regarding the more delicate elements, such as the famous bas-reliefs, which are kept in situ.

### *Management:*

The management plan for the area has been prepared by the recently established Parsa-Pasargade Research Foundation (PPRF), which is associated to the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization. The programme of the PPRF focuses on the cultural landscape of which Pasargadae and Persepolis as well as other sites of the region. Attention is given to the survey of the whole extent of the ancient city of Pasargadae and its monuments, the development of appropriate conservation and presentation measures, as well as facilities and routing for cultural tourism. Attention is also given to improving the social conditions of the local population and raising public awareness on the economic, social and cultural values of Pasargadae. The management of the site includes the establishment of a commission, involving all relevant authorities as well as representatives of the inhabitants.

On the basis of present knowledge of the site, it is advisable to limit the World Heritage nomination to the main core zone. The additional sites indicated in the nomination can be kept within the buffer zone. With the advancement of the exploration of the ancient capital, and on the basis of more information on the real extent of the ancient urban area, it is expected that the World Heritage nomination be revised accordingly.

### *Risk analysis:*

The main pressures on the site are from agriculture and the possibility of the growth of the villages in the buffer zone. Here, the land is all privately owned. It is noted that the current level of development of the villages is very low. Therefore, the risk is not immediate. In fact, within the management system of the site special attention is given to monitoring the situation and coordinating any development in coordination with the inhabitants.

While the area of Pasargadae is a seismic risk zone, no earthquakes have been reported in the past century. Instead, there is a risk of flooding, which has caused some damage in the past years. For the time being, there is no pollution in the area, but this aspect requires monitoring in order to avoid any adverse development in the future –in the event of the construction of industrial plants in the region.

### *Authenticity and integrity*

The site of Pasargadae has been confirmed to have been the capital of Cyrus the Great. Taking into account the character of the area as an archaeological site, it can be considered to pass the test of authenticity as required by the Operational Guidelines. Restorations have been limited, and there have been no modern reconstructions on the site.

The site is part of an agricultural landscape, which continues to be cultivated. The buffer zone includes five villages, used by the farming population. As a whole, the area retains its traditional integrity.

### *Comparative evaluation*

In its significance as the first capital of the Achaemenid Empire, Pasargadae can be considered unique. Later on,

other cities were taken to function as capitals of the empire, including Persepolis, built by Darius I starting in 518 BCE, as well as the ancient cities of Susa and Babylon. During the entire Achaemenid period, Pasargadae continued to retain its significance as the city of the founder of the dynasty, and it remained a place for crowning the emperors and for special ceremonies.

There are no truly comparable sites to Pasargadae. It was built with the contribution of workers from Babylon and Ionia. Architecturally it has similarities with Ionian Greek architecture, e.g. in the details of the column bases. At the same time, Pasargadae established a prototype for a garden city with pavilions, and initiated the development of royal Persian architecture with its specific character and identity. This is distinguished from the earlier Assyrian or Babylonian architecture by its character of detached buildings. The Achaemenid art and architecture reached their full form in Persepolis, which differs from Pasargadae both in terms of its architecture and its concept. At the same time, Pasargadae and Persepolis can be seen as part of the same process of evolution.

The current World Heritage nominations related to Achaemenid civilisation include only Persepolis, inscribed on the basis of criteria i, iii and vi in 1979.

### *Outstanding universal value*

#### *General statement:*

The principal significance of Pasargadae is in its being the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenid Empire, built by Cyrus the Great, the founder of the dynasty, in the heart of the homeland of the Persians. This great empire extended from the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt to the Hindu River in India. It is considered the first empire to be characterized by a respect to cultural diversity of the different peoples. This characteristic was also reflected in the royal Achaemenid architecture, which became a synthetic representation of the different cultures. Pasargadae represents the first phase of this development into a specifically Persian architecture, which later found its full expression in Persepolis. Pasargadae also became a prototype of the Persian garden concept involving pavilions and palaces with porticoes (in Persian: 'paradayadam' or 'paradis', 'pleasant retreat', 'park').

#### *Evaluation of criteria:*

*Criterion i:* Pasargadae is the first outstanding expression of the royal Achaemenid architecture. The builders came from Babylonia and Ionia, and the design introduced themes that existed in the region integrating these into a specifically royal Achaemenid architecture.

*Criterion ii:* The dynastic capital of Pasargadae was built by Cyrus the Great with a contribution by different peoples of the empire created by him. It became a fundamental phase in the evolution of the classic Persian art and architecture.

*Criterion iii:* The archaeological site of Pasargadae with its palaces, gardens, and the tomb of the founder of the dynasty, Cyrus the Great, represents an exceptional testimony to the Achaemenid civilisation in Persia.

*Criterion iv:* The 'Four Gardens' type of royal ensemble, which was created at Pasargadae became a prototype that

came into current use in Western Asian architecture and design. The garden with its pavilions and water canals is based on a formal layout, and the architecture is characterized by its refined details and slender verticality.

#### **4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### ***Recommendation with respect to inscription***

That the property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of ***criteria i, ii, iii and iv***:

***Criterion i:*** Pasargadae is the first outstanding expression of the royal Achaemenid architecture.

***Criterion ii:*** The dynastic capital of Pasargadae was built by Cyrus the Great with a contribution by different peoples of the empire created by him. It became a fundamental phase in the evolution of the classic Persian art and architecture.

***Criterion iii:*** The archaeological site of Pasargadae with its palaces, gardens, and the tomb of the founder of the dynasty, Cyrus the Great, represents an exceptional testimony to the Achaemenid civilisation in Persia.

***Criterion iv:*** The ‘Four Gardens’ type of royal ensemble, which was created in Pasargadae became a prototype for Western Asian architecture and design.

ICOMOS, March 2004