

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/EG/1716/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 19 December 2023

H. E. Mr Ahmad Pakatchi
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of the Islamic Republic
of Iran to UNESCO
Maison de l'UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15

World Heritage List 2024
Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan (Islamic Republic of Iran)
Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies are requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2024. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation procedure.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan” was carried out by Mr. Ghassan Chemali (Lebanon) in August 2023. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organisation and implementation of the mission.

On 4 October 2023, an additional information letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding integrity and authenticity, documentation, conservation, boundaries, legal protection, factors affecting the nominated property, and the local community. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 6 and 18 November 2023 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2023, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2024. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2024.

We thank you and your Delegation for your availability and your participation in the meeting held on 25 November 2023 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting.

While the ICOMOS Panel considered that “Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan” might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value, this has not yet been demonstrated.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

ICOMOS discussed at length the configuration and justification for inscription of the nominated property that present together the ancient archaeological remains of Hegmataneh and the layers of the later urban developments in the frame of the modern Hamedan city, while noting that the Tentative List entry of the property dated 2008 focused only on the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh and not the later development of the city. It came to the conclusion at this stage that only the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh might meet the requirements established in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Hence, the questions below are focused on these archaeological remains.

Archaeological evidence

The nomination dossier refers to multiple archival and historical sources highlighting the importance of Hegmataneh in the Median, Achaemenid and Parthian periods when it prospered at the crossroads of ancient trade and pilgrimage routes. The nomination dossier also stresses that “*Hamedan city is among the oldest cities of antiquity*” and one of the oldest Iranian cities (p. 15). As Ectabana, it was the capital of the Median Empire and became a summer capital of the Achaemenid and Parthian empires. ICOMOS would appreciate receiving more information on how these early periods of the city formation relate to the physical aspects on the ground, how these historical associations can be perceived and what can be said with certainty about the form of the city in relation to these ancient empires.

ICOMOS understands that there are only two trenches that display immovable archaeological fragments of the Median period – the “central trench” of the Hegmataneh hill, where the wall foundations under the remains of the Parthian era are dated to Median period, and the trench of the Imam Khomeini Square. The Achaemenid period is represented by excavated column bases that were not in their original positions, making it difficult to estimate their original location and form. The main physical features revealed during the series of archaeological excavations are urban structures of the Parthian period, for which details have been provided on the layout of houses, streets, and water management features.

ICOMOS would be pleased to receive more precise documentation summarising what is now known about the location and layout of the city in the Median, Achaemenid and Parthian periods as a result of excavations, including the layout of the fortifications, for which as many as six layers have been revealed.

The nomination dossier states that Hamedan thrived as one of the most significant Iranian cities during the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid, Al-e Bouyeh, and Seljuq periods. And that “*various functions from residential, trade (bazaar), religious (mosques, church, synagogue), educational (school), health and hygiene (Hamam) and sports (zoorkhaneh), etc. are available in this area, which comprises monuments from various historical eras (Medes to the present)*” (p. 25). While it is clear that movable remains have indicated numerous layers of occupation, ICOMOS would be pleased to receive additional details on what evidence exists for the form of the city during these later periods – how they relate to the excavated areas and the current city. It would also be helpful to clarify what archaeological evidence supports the schematic delineation of the Parthian-Sassanid city presented in the nomination dossier (figure. 2. 49 on p.70).

Documentation

The nomination dossier provides the map of the excavations in the Hegmataneh historical site (p.29). ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could provide a map of other excavations carried out in the historical city, particularly those relating to the early formative periods in the history of the city, including details on the chronology and typology of the excavated trenches, specifying which locations are associated with the Median, Achaemenid, Parthian and other periods. Such documentation would assist ICOMOS in understanding the estimated limits of archaeologically sensitive areas beneath the modern city and to relate the historical sources and descriptions mentioned in the nomination dossier to existing physical evidence on the ground.

Further surveys and excavations

The medium-term action plan for archaeological sites, submitted with the nomination dossier (p.251), includes further exploration of the Median period through archaeological excavations. Given the importance of the ancient lineage of Hamedan, particularly its association with the Medes Empire, ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could provide more detailed information on such planned exploratory works, especially regarding the approach, strategy, funding, partners, etc. In addition, noting the additional information received on the integration of the north section of Ecbatan Street into the Hegmataneh archaeological site and the pedestrianisation of the Ecbatan Square, ICOMOS would appreciate to receive more details on these planned works.

Comparative analysis

Considering the significance of the archaeological evidence associated with the Median, Achaemenid and Parthian civilisations that the nominated property displays, ICOMOS would find it helpful if the comparative analysis could be strengthened with a focus on the archaeological values of the nominated property. Such work, supported with relevant academic references, would be essential to provide a more precise context that would indicate the preserved sites associated with these civilisations and highlight the qualities for which Hegmataneh stands out from its comparators.

Conservation

Taking note of the additional information provided, ICOMOS would be pleased to receive a more detailed mapping of the different conservation methods, and the reconstruction works undertaken on the archaeological sites. ICOMOS would also be interested in receiving further details on the rationale behind the different intervention methods applied to the various segments of the archaeological remains, as well as on the reversibility of the selected approaches and techniques.

ICOMOS also notes existing signs of decay, such as increased humidity or the partial collapse of protective plaster on the reconstructed/conserved archaeological fragments, and would appreciate receiving more details on the sources of decay and means to mitigate them.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation procedure.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above requested information by **28 February 2024 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* concerning additional information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this statutory deadline will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any additional information submitted within the statutory deadline, it will not be possible to properly evaluate a completely revised

nomination or a large amount of new information submitted at the last minute. ICOMOS would therefore be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation procedure.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gwenaëlle Bourdin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to The Office of Vice Minister and Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage of the Iranian
Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts (IMCHTH)
UNESCO World Heritage Centre