
Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan

(Islamic Republic of Iran)

No 1716

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan

Location

Hamedan city
Hamedan Province
Islamic Republic of Iran

Brief description

Hamedan is located at the foot of the Alvand subrange of the Zagros Mountains in northwestern Iran. On a hill within this city are the archaeological remains of ancient Hegmataneh, which had an unbroken history of human habitation for nearly three millennia. It provides important and rare evidence of the Medes civilisation in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, although its status as the capital of the Median Empire cannot be established with certainty. It later served as a summer capital of Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian rulers. Key historical trade and pilgrimage routes crossed this gateway to the Iranian Plateau, testifying to its importance as a geopolitical, cultural, and trading focal point. Hamedan has witnessed an intensive cultural interchange amongst different civilisations since antiquity, which has contributed to the formation of the rich and diverse archaeological, architectural, and urban heritage of its historic centre. These include its bazaar, its religious heritage of mosques, churches, and tombs, and its urban context defined by the 20th-century radial city plan that was laid over the historic core of the city.

Category of property

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

Included in the Tentative List

5 February 2008 as “Hegmataneh”

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations and technical evaluation mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 23 to 27 August 2023.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 4 October 2023 requesting further information about integrity and authenticity, documentation, conservation, boundaries, legal protection, factors affecting the nominated property, and the local community.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 6 November 2023.

An interim report was provided to the State Party on 19 December 2023, summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the interim report on the archaeological evidence, documentation, planned surveys and excavations, comparative analysis, and conservation.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 28 February 2024.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

13 March 2024

2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

Located at the foot of the Alvand subrange of the Zagros Mountains in northwestern Iran, the nominated property is comprised of the hillside archaeological site of Hegmataneh and the adjacent historic centre of Hamedan. The ancient city of Hegmataneh provides important and rare evidence of the Medes civilisation in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE. It may have been the capital of the Median Empire, but this cannot be established with certainty. It later served as a summer capital of Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian rulers, and can claim an unbroken history of human habitation of nearly three millennia.

The present-day city of Hamedan, in which Hegmataneh is located, is believed to be amongst the oldest cities in Iran. Its historic centre includes a bazaar with caravanserais, passageways, plazas, shops, and warehouses; religious architecture of mosques, tombs, memorials, shrines, churches, and a synagogue; various public and private buildings and structures; and a historical street network that had a radial plan of avenues and squares superimposed on it in the 20th century.

The archaeological heritage of the nominated property is represented by the vast territory of the Hegmataneh hill,

largely cleared of buildings in the 20th century, and parts of the Imam Khomeini Square, excavated and presented to the public in 2017. The sites display remains from Median, Achaemenid, Parthian, and later periods. Archaeological evidence has also been revealed during development works in Jarrahan Alley in the historic centre (2017), and during several seasons of excavations at the Jam'eh Mosque (2000-2017), although most of these findings are covered with soil and conserved underground or presented in the Hegmataneh Museum and the Central Square Historical Museum. The city's historical development can be further traced through the archaeological finds in numerous other locations around the historic centre. The earliest evidence from the Medes and Achaemenid periods is found in more than twenty locations, and the most extensive unearthed structures from the Parthian period are presented at the Hegmataneh hill.

Despite large-scale urban interventions in the 20th century, the bazaar has remained the main urban feature of the historic centre of Hamedan. It is comprised of the traditional elements of Persian bazaars: passageways (*Rusteh*), arcades and plazas (*Timcheh*), shops (*Dokkan*), workshops, and warehouses. The historic caravanserais of Golshan, Mirza Kazem, Safar Khan, No, and Sharifiyeh, which are attributed to the Safavid and later periods, represent the most notable buildings in the bazaar.

The Jam'eh Mosque (*Masjed Jame*) is the key religious heritage of the nominated property. It is believed to have been founded in the early Islamic period and integrated into the bazaar structure. The building was reconstructed in 1833, and partly again in the 20th century. Excavations revealed an oil-pressing workshop and the remains of a fire temple on the site of the present mosque, indicating a long history of occupation that pre-dates the current building.

Other important religious sites within the nominated property boundaries are the Shahzadeh Hossein tomb, largely reconstructed in the Safavid and Qajar periods, the Alaviyan Mosque, and the Gonbad-e Alavian mausoleum attributed to the late Seljuk or early Ilkhanid periods (13th-14th centuries). The Gonbad-e Alavian mausoleum features remarkable brick craftsmanship and decorative art.

The tomb of the prominent Iranian philosopher and scholar Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna), known worldwide for his works in medicine and philosophy, represents a modern architectural landmark of the historic city centre. The memorial complex, completed in 1951, is inspired by traditional Persian architecture and garden design.

The nominated property also presents Jewish and Christian heritage as evidence of the historically diverse culture of Hamedan. The Tomb of Esther and Mordechai remains an important Jewish pilgrimage site. Built between the 12th and 15th centuries, it demonstrates an influence of Islamic architectural traditions. The tomb of

the Hebrew prophet Haggai, integrated into the early 20th-century Peyghambar Mosque and the 19th-century synagogue, also highlight the continued presence of the Jewish community in Hamedan since ancient times.

The Christian heritage sites are the Orthodox St. Stephen Church and Protestant Angeli Church, built and reconstructed in the 19th and 20th centuries by the local Armenian community. The churches used to be part of the dense urban fabric of the Hegmataneh hill, but lost their historic settings after the area was cleared for archaeological excavations in the second half of 20th century. The Hegmataneh Museum, housed in a former school building built in the mid-20th century, exhibits key archaeological artefacts unearthed in the area.

Even though significant parts of the historic urban fabric of the city centre of Hamedan were demolished and redeveloped in the 20th century, there are a number of historic residential and public buildings of historical-cultural value and architectural quality preserved within the nominated property. Most of these buildings, such as the Shabaziyan, Asgari, and Noshadi mansions, bathhouses, a school, and a traditional sports gymnasium (*zurkhaneh*), belong to the Qajar period (1789-1925). They enhance an understanding of the architectural and urban characteristics and the traditional way of life in the historic city that underwent significant changes in the 20th century.

The radial city plan, designed under the lead of German engineers in 1928 and completed in 1933, imposed wide boulevards such as Ecbatan and Abu Ali Sina streets organised around a new central square now known as Imam Khomeini Square. The landmark Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna) tomb was dedicated in 1954. Not only did this new urban plan result in the demolition of a number of historic buildings and alleys, it also transformed the traditional organisation of public spaces, allowed vehicle traffic into the city centre, and, as a result, altered the socio-economic structures characteristic of the historic city.

The nominated property has an area of 75 ha, and a buffer zone of 287 ha. The boundaries of the nominated property encloses an irregular-shaped area that follows various property and street lines to encompass the Hegmataneh hill and the historic centre of Hamedan including Abu Ali Sina street as far south as the Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna) tomb.

The archaeological evidence and historical sources, including Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions and abundant accounts by Greek and Roman historians, relate the development of the city to the Median Empire. According to these sources, in about 700 BCE the united Median tribes established the first Iranian state, with Hegmataneh possibly as its capital. They also point to the earlier occupation of the place by different peoples.

Due to its strategic location, the city maintained its dominant political and economic role after the defeat of the Medes and served as a summer capital of

Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian rulers. The growth of trade and the city-dwelling culture was encouraged by the connection of Hegmataneh to major international trade routes such as the Great Khorasan Road, the Lapis Lazuli Road of the Babylonian and Assyrian eras, the Achaemenid Royal Road, and the Silk Road of the Parthian and Sasanian eras.

These connections are reflected in innovative city planning and architecture, particularly with a modular structure introduced in the Parthian period (247 BCE-224 CE). Innovation and creativity in urban planning and architectural design was stimulated by interactions amongst the diverse ethnicities and religions in the city. Artefacts made for the royal palaces in Susa and Persepolis demonstrate the high level of craftsmanship of the masters in Hegmataneh and the transfer of their knowledge to other major ancient cities.

The advent of Islam in Persia (632-654 CE) saw the appearance of new landmarks such as mosques and mausoleums, making Hamedan the destination of different Islamic pilgrimage routes. The development of culture and science in the Islamic period is also demonstrated by the number of prominent scholars, philosophers, and poets such as Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna) and Baba Taher living and practising in the city at that time.

The city underwent significant development during the Safavid (1501-1736) and Qajar (1789-1925) periods while maintaining its role as a regional trade hub and governmental centre. Most of the architectural monuments preserved in the nominated property were built, enhanced or reconstructed during these periods. The evolution of the urban form of the city also continued into the 20th century. Under the influence of Western urban culture and planning principles, and following modernisation trends of the time, a radial city plan was superimposed on the historic centre, cutting new avenues through the ancient core and building a vast central square – Imam Khomeini Square – as a transportation hub.

State of conservation

The nominated property was the subject of various conservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction initiatives in previous decades. According to the nomination dossier and additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023, the majority of buildings (1,206) and monuments (thirty-nine) within the nominated property are in a stable physical condition. However, a significant portion of the urban fabric in the historic centre still requires some form of repair (769 buildings, including twenty-eight monuments), substantial restoration (109 buildings, including nineteen monuments) or reconstruction (118 buildings, including six monuments).

As clarified by the State Party in additional information provided in November 2023 and February 2024, some of unearthen mudbrick walls and the central trench of Hegmataneh are conserved in situ under lightweight

protective shelters, and a small number of the locations excavated under public passageways and streets in Hamedan are covered with soil. In other instances, the excavated mudbrick walls are covered with a traditional mud-and-straw mixture (*Kāhgel*), which is a sacrificial layer that is renewed annually or replaced as necessary. In still other instances, the excavated mudbrick walls are encased in protective mudbrick or mud-straw shells without direct contact between old and new material to allow for ventilation. Such a conservation approach is used where the unearthen structures are very fragile. A drainage system for surface water has also been installed for these areas.

A tower in the eastern part of the ancient fortifications of the city has been reconstructed. As clarified by the State Party in August 2023, the reconstruction served interpretive purposes, and this approach will not be repeated. There is little information on the details of reconstruction or the current state of these elements. The nomination dossier and additional information provides fragmentary information about the conservation challenges of the conserved archaeological remains. The State Party confirmed that the protective plastering of mudbrick walls and reconstructed parts of fortifications are renewed and replaced as necessary, based on regular monitoring of the archaeological site.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is satisfactory, though several individual elements need various degrees of conservation and/or restoration.

Factors affecting the nominated property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the nominated property are development and environmental pressures. Development pressures include unauthorised interventions and the use of inappropriate materials in the historic buildings. Environmental pressures include factors related to climate change such as droughts, heavy rainfall, and excessive growth of weeds that may be particularly harmful to the archaeological remains.

The measures for restricting traffic in the historic centre, the pedestrianisation of the Ecbatan–Abu Ali Sina streets axis, and urban regulations in the historic centre have gradually been enforced by the State Party in an attempt to mitigate the disruption of the historic fabric caused by modern urban planning, and to reduce the negative visual impact of incompatible urban interventions. A comprehensive disaster risk management strategy is in place, with designated disaster response focal points in the historic centre.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is satisfactory and that factors affecting the nominated property are under control.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The nominated property represents one of the oldest capital cities and a rare testimony of the early Medes civilisation of the Ancient World. Established by the united Median tribes in the 7th century BCE, the city has thrived as an important trade and government centre for more than two thousand years.
- Due to its strategic position as a gateway to the Iranian Plateau, the nominated property has served as a melting pot of different civilisations successively occupying the area throughout history. Several important trade and pilgrimage routes crossed the city in different periods, attesting to its continued significance and contributing to sustained cultural exchanges between diverse ethnic and religious groups.
- The nominated property demonstrates the creativity and innovation of the Parthian civilisation, which established modular urban planning and regular city architecture as early as the 1st millennium BCE.

Based on the nomination dossier and the additional information, the key attributes of the nominated property can generally be grouped into those related to Hegmataneh, and those related to the historic centre of Hamedan. In Hegmataneh, the key attributes are the archaeological remains that provide evidence of the cultural, social, economic, and political developments of several civilisations occupying the Iranian Plateau since the 1st millennium BCE. These include evidence of city planning and architecture, as well as pottery, metal, and stone artefacts. In the historic centre of Hamedan, the key attributes include a bazaar, caravanserais, religious buildings, tombs, public spaces, and the historical street network on which a 20th-century radial plan of avenues and squares has been superimposed.

The State Party considers that the proposed Outstanding Universal Value is expressed through the archaeological remains, the architectural heritage, and the planning layout of the city. However, ICOMOS has concerns regarding the proposed justification for inscription relating to the continuity and evolution of this city's culture from ancient times up to the present day. ICOMOS considers that the continuity between cultures or civilisations does not in itself hold universal significance unless the traces left by this process demonstrate the outstanding achievements of its time. While the archaeological remains provide important and rare evidence of early civilisations such as the Medes, Achaemenids, and Parthians, the successive stages of development in Hamedan city cannot be considered to demonstrate features that stand out in its geo-cultural context.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed based on a chronological and regional framework. It has examined properties within the region and elsewhere inscribed on the World Heritage List and inserted in the Tentative Lists of States Parties. The geo-cultural region is presumed to be the Middle East, but with additional examples drawn from Central Asia, the Caucasus region, and Southeast Europe.

The framework for analysis is structured according to the typology of the nominated property, which includes archaeological and religious sites set in the context of ancient urban settlements. Thus, the analysis presents properties and sites of similar typological features and chronological timeframe from the selected region, having the most similar set of characteristics, as selected through the use of four parameters.

The first parameter is continuously inhabited cities with archaeological sites. The comparators presented under this parameter are Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures (Uzbekistan, 2001, criteria (i), (ii) and (iv)); Ancient City of Aleppo (Syria, 1986, criteria (iii) and (iv)); Old Town of Corfu (Greece, 2007, criterion (iv)); Historic Centre of Sheki with the Khan's Palace (Azerbaijan, 2019, criteria (ii) and (v)); Kerman Historical-Cultural Structure (Iran, Tentative List); and Historic Monument of Kangavar (Iran, Tentative List).

The second parameter is archaeological sites with no continuous urban habitation. Discussed in this context are Susa (Iran, 2015, criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv)); Persepolis (Iran, 1979, criteria (i), (iii) and (vi)); and The Historical-Cultural Axis of Fin, Sialk, Kashan (Iran, Tentative List).

The third parameter is archaeological sites of the same chronological period and importance. Properties considered under this parameter are Ahwar of Southern Iraq: Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities (Iraq, 2016, criteria (iii), (v), (ix) and (x)); Babylon (Iraq, 2019, criteria (iii) and (vi)); Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat) (Iraq, 2003, criteria (iii) and (iv)); and State Historical and Cultural Park "Ancient Merv" (Turkmenistan, 1999, criteria (ii) and (iii)).

The fourth parameter is cities with valuable architecture and urban planning from ancient to contemporary times, such as Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures (Uzbekistan, 2001, criteria (i), (ii) and (iv)).

Considering the significance of the archaeological evidence associated with the Median, Achaemenid, and Parthian civilisations that the nominated property displays, not all the comparators may be seen as completely relevant. In response to a request from ICOMOS for an enhanced comparative analysis with regard to the third parameter, the State Party in February 2024 presented additional comparative data on preserved

sites associated with the civilisations that influenced the early development of the nominated property.

Additional information provided by the State Party in February 2024 confirms that the earliest archaeological layers in the nominated property are comparable to the major identified centres of the Median, Achaemenid, Seleucid, and Parthian periods discovered in different parts of the geo-cultural region. Unearthed Median pottery and bronze brooches are comparable to the material from the Godin II, Nushijan Temple, and Babajan I archaeological sites in Iran. The remains of the columns of Achaemenid palaces found in the nominated property are comparable to those in Pasargadae, Susa, and Persepolis. The cuneiform inscriptions discovered on the Achaemenid-period columns suggest the existence of governmental or ceremonial buildings belonging to this period. Amongst the archaeological finds, the sophisticated urban structures of the Parthian period are particularly significant, pointing to a highly developed urban dwelling culture.

At the same time, ICOMOS notes that even though the Medes period is documented by ceramic finds in twenty locations in the nominated property, no archaeological evidence can yet confirm the nominated property was a capital of the Medes state/empire, which is a common hypothesis. Therefore, the qualities that would make the nominated property stand out from the comparators in this period are difficult to establish at this stage. Similarly, the archaeological evidence and justification suggesting that the nominated property served as important government seat of Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian rulers and a hub of the ancient trade and pilgrimage routes would need to be strengthened to clearly establish the outstanding value of the nominated property as compared to other sites of the respective periods.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property holds important evidence about ancient civilisations as well as the evolution of early Iranian culture, but does not consider that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated property for the World Heritage List at this stage.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv).

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;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan have evolved through the civilisations and cultures of the Iranian Plateau for nearly three millennia, having been continuously exposed to different cultural influences, demonstrating an interchange of human values and the peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews, and Christians. According to the State Party, the sophisticated urban

planning and modular architecture from the 1st millennium BCE, the bazaar and integrated architectural monuments from the Islamic periods, and the combination of historic urban form and modern planning provide evidence of the sustained interchange amongst different cultures and civilisations from ancient to contemporary times.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property exhibits important evidence of the cultural interchanges amongst the cultures and civilisations of the Middle East in the 1st millennium BCE. The archaeological remains of town planning and architecture of the Parthian period, as well as the presence of artefacts made for the royal palaces in Susa and Persepolis, testify to the craftsmanship of the masters of Hegmataneh and to the transfer of knowledge from Hegmataneh to other major ancient cities.

The bazaar and architectural monuments from the Islamic period and the modern urban plan overlaid on the historic city illustrate the evolution of the urban form and city-dwelling culture of Hamedan under various cultural influences through successive occupations, movements of peoples, and exchanges of goods and materials, as well as political, cultural and religious beliefs, concepts, customs, and traditions. However, ICOMOS considers that these urban layers of the city cannot be seen as constituting outstanding evidence of an important interchange of human values on developments in town planning or architecture. ICOMOS therefore considers that this criterion could possibly be justified, but only for the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (ii) is not justified at this stage.

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;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the archaeological remains of ancient Hegmataneh provide exceptional evidence of the cultural, social, economic, and political developments of several civilisations occupying the Iranian Plateau since the 1st millennium BCE. Hegmataneh is amongst the ancient cities of the Middle East chosen as the capital of the Medes and continued to be one of the most important government seats through the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sasanian, and Islamic periods.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property provides important and rare evidence of the Medes civilisation, although its role as the capital of the Median Empire cannot be established with certainty at this stage. It also presents important evidence of the cultures and civilisations that successively occupied the city. The archaeological remains present an exceptional testimony of the creative planning and architectural solutions developed during the Parthian era that were designed through interactions amongst diverse ethnicities and religions. ICOMOS considers that this criterion could

possibly be justified, but only for the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) is not justified at this stage.

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;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Hegmataneh archaeological site presents outstanding evidence of early urban planning and architecture using a regular plan and modular construction techniques, and the historic centre of Hamedan's Islamic urban fabric, with the bazaar, religious buildings, shrines and tombs, public spaces, and modern planning, demonstrates various cultural influences throughout history and the respective development of the urban and architectural form.

ICOMOS considers that the archaeological evidence of Hegmataneh testifies to early developments of urban planning and architectural creativity. However, the importance of Hamedan compared to other cities in Islamic Persia lessened during the historical evolution of the region, especially in the Islamic period, as manifested in its planning and architectural achievements.

Furthermore, the radial city plan introduced in the 20th century has substantially altered the urban and architectural form, functionality, and traditional urban lifestyle of the historic centre of Hamedan. While the radial city plan illustrates cultural influences of the modern era, which affected many Iranian cities in the 20th century, it disrupted the continuity of principles of the socio-economic organisation of the traditional Islamic city. The radial planning concept, layout, and architectural design cannot be seen as an outstanding architectural or technological ensemble in the context of the deep history of Hegmataneh and the historic centre of Hamedan.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iv) is not justified.

ICOMOS considers that cultural criteria (ii) and (iii) are not justified at this stage, and that cultural criterion (iv) has not been demonstrated.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the nominated property is based on the creativity and innovation in urban planning and architecture found at the Hegmataneh hill archaeological site, where the evidence of Median, Parthian, and later periods has been found; and on the historic centre of Hamedan's roles as an important trade and government centre for more than two thousand years, and a melting pot of different civilisations successively occupying the area.

The historic centre's bazaar, with its alleyways and squares, caravanserais, workshops and warehouses, its mosques, churches and synagogue, its tombs of prominent historical figures, and its various public and residential buildings, are important elements in the development of the city. A large number of these are conserved, restored or reconstructed, and major pressures on them are being managed by the designated authorities in accordance with national and local laws and regulations.

The 20th-century radial city plan is presented by the State Party as an example of the harmonious integration of modern planning principles with the historic city. ICOMOS considers that the disruptions in the historic fabric and ensuing redevelopments within the nominated property and its buffer zone, including covering of the Alūsgerd River, suggest that the radial city plan has greatly compromised the continuity and integrity of the historic centre as a whole. Moreover, the removal of urban layers from the Hegmataneh hill to allow archaeological excavation has compromised the integrity of the urban form of the historic city as well as the continuity of the traditionally diverse communities of the neighbourhood.

For the reasons explained above in the proposed justification for inscription, and in relation to the integrity of the later periods, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity of the nominated property could possibly be met only for the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh. This would imply the revision of the boundaries of the nominated property to reflect a reconsideration of its proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the nominated property is based on its forms and designs, materials and substances, uses and functions, locations and settings, and spirit and feeling. Important archaeological evidence of the Median, Parthian, and Sassanid eras is preserved and presented in situ on the Hegmataneh hill, which had its more recent urban fabric removed in the second half of the 20th century. Archaeological finds from the early periods are also preserved and presented at the Imam Khomeini Square archaeological site. The excavated mudbrick walls have been conserved using various methods: covered with an overhead canopy, plastered with a layer of a traditional mix of mud and straw, covered with soil, or encased in protective shells. Some parts of the Hegmataneh fortification walls have been reconstructed with traditional materials for interpretation purposes.

The clearance of later urban layers from the Hegmataneh hill has had a significant impact on the authenticity of the Islamic city, removing entire neighbourhoods and altering the uses and functions of the area, its socio-economic profile, and its spirit and feeling.

The modern radial city plan, with new central square and wide avenues cutting through the historic centre, have

compromised the authenticity of the materials and designs of the Islamic city, as well as its spirit and feeling. The authenticity of the setting was altered by covering the Alūsgerd River in the historic part of the city and transforming it into a street. Placing a telecommunication antenna on the Hegmataneh hill archaeological site and building new structures in the immediate vicinity of the nominated property, including the Mosalla hill, have also affected the authenticity.

The material authenticity of individual architectural elements, such as the historic Jam'eh Mosque, some alleyways, and buildings of the bazaar, can be seen to have diminished through reconstructions and alterations using modern materials.

For the reasons explained above in the proposed justification for inscription, and in relation to the authenticity of the later periods, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of authenticity of the nominated property could possibly be met only for the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the nominated property have not been met at this stage.

Boundaries

There are 3,900 of permanent inhabitants in the nominated property and 27,780 in the buffer zone (2022 estimates).

The boundaries of the nominated property surround an irregular-shaped area encompassing the Hegmataneh hill, the historic centre of Hamedan and the bazaar to the south of the hill, core parts of the 20th-century radial city plan including Imam Khomeini Square, as well as Ecbatan and Abu Ali Sina streets as far south as the Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna) tomb. The boundaries follow various property and street lines and is intended to include the locations of archaeological finds and various historic monuments and ensembles. The buffer zone encircles the entire nominated property, largely following the system of radial boulevards of Hamedan. It comprises the territory within the core ring of the radial city plan, the Mosalla hill, the Baba Taher mausoleum and garden, the adjacent residential areas around the Hegmataneh hill and the surroundings of the Abu Ali Sina tomb in the south.

The delineation of the boundaries lacks clear spatial, historical, legal or other parameters. According to clarifications provided by the State Party in November 2023, the rationale for the delineation of the boundaries of the nominated property is based on the locations of archaeological finds, the outline of the Hegmataneh hill archaeological site, the limits of the bazaar, the route of the Alūsgerd River presently covered by a street, and the historical monuments and ensembles along the axis between the Hegmataneh hill and the tomb of Abu Ali Sina established by the modern radial city plan. Natural and manufactured boundaries have been important bases for

delineating the nominated property and buffer zone boundaries, according to the State Party.

The boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zone differ slightly from the boundaries of the area inscribed on the list of national monuments in 2022. The clarifications by the State Party do not provide a clear explanation for the difference.

ICOMOS notes that the boundaries of the nominated property encompass the historic centre of Hamedan, the Hegmataneh hill archaeological site, and the 20th-century radial street plan superimposed over the historic urban fabric. Considering that not all the elements therein support a proposed Outstanding Universal Value that would be based solely on the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh, the nominated property and buffer zone boundaries would need to be revised to focus on the relevant attributes of the nominated property.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that criterion (iv) is not justified, and that criterion (ii) and criterion (iii) are not justified at this stage, but could possibly be justified for the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh only. The comparative analysis highlights the potential exceptional character of the discovered archaeological remains at Hegmataneh, and the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met as regards these remains. The integrity and authenticity of the historic centre of Hamedan, however, have been compromised by large-scale 20th-century interventions. The boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone do not currently correspond to the identified archaeological values.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

Parts of the nominated property have been documented during different periods but, overall, a systematically organised inventory and documentation of all elements of the nominated property seems to be lacking. The additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 informed that many properties have been documented in recent years, and their records are preserved in the archive of the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base. However, the process of inventorying the historic buildings is not yet completed, and technical certificates are available only for some buildings. The certificates include basic information on location, description, and history as well as information on listing, conservation history, and further interventions. The State Party has clarified that the data is systematised in a Location Information System, allowing thematic analyses of the conservation status of each section, the materials used, and so on.

In response to the ICOMOS interim report, the State Party provided additional clarifications with regard to the

documentation of archaeological finds, their locations, unearthed material, and ceramic sequences, as well as planned archaeological studies. The State Party confirmed that, in 2023, part of the Alavian boulevard and the Ecbatan square were integrated into the archaeological site. It was clarified that archaeological excavations are planned to continue in eight locations within the nominated property's boundaries, including the Gonbad-e Alavian mausoleum and the Jewish synagogue. Most of these actions are planned to start in the short term, targeting various periods of the city's development. The State Party confirmed that more studies are needed to clarify the early development of the city.

Conservation measures

In the past two decades, several conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation projects were implemented by the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base, the management authority, which has regular state funding.

The archaeological remains have been the subject of regular conservation and maintenance, including conserving and strengthening the mudbrick walls, erecting protective shelters, and putting in place visitor infrastructure and facilities. ICOMOS requested additional information on conservation activities, including the conservation of archaeological remains and the rationale for the methods selected. In the additional information provided in November 2023 and February 2024, the State Party clarified that different conservation techniques have been used on different parts of the archaeological remains: some excavated mudbrick walls have been covered with an overhead canopy, while others have been plastered with a sacrificial layer of a traditional mix of mud and straw, or covered with soil, or encased in protective shells. The selection of the method was determined by the fragility of the remains. The State Party also confirmed that parts of the fortification walls have been reconstructed with traditional materials for interpretation purposes, although such an approach is not to be repeated in the future.

Restoration works have been targeted at the most historically valuable buildings and alleyways of the core area of the bazaar, Jam'eh Mosque, Imam Khomeini Square, Tomb of Esther and Mordechai, and Gonbad-e Alavian mausoleum, as well as the Armenian churches, a bathhouse, and a priest's house. These works included reinforcing the domes and foundations, repairing roofs, replacing doors and windows, repointing masonry, and restoring façade decorations. The rich brickwork designs in some of the main domes have been the subject of careful restoration, while joinery, ironwork, and woodwork seem to have been modified and replaced with more liberty. Reinforced concrete and new brick cladding have been used in some instances, including in the main bazaar passageway (*Rasteh*). The list of conservation works for key architectural monuments was further described by the State Party in the additional information it provided in November 2023.

Despite these conservation works, many buildings within the nominated property appear to be lacking appropriate treatment. Some of the restored buildings have continuing issues of salt efflorescence, humidity, and loosened masonry.

The State Party expects that having registered the entire historic centre under one entry in the national heritage list in 2022 will assist the management authorities in extending conservation works across the entire nominated property. The nomination dossier and management plan as well as additional information provided in November 2023 include lists of short-, medium-, and long-term actions. The responsibilities and commitment of different organisations in relation to the nominated property, including implementation of conservation programmes, are confirmed with signatures of the stakeholders.

There is a comprehensive digital database (Location Information System) for the nominated property in which various data is collected on each building, including the conservation status, the materials used, as well as regulations provided by the heritage protection zones. The system is an essential instrument for management decision-making. However, a comprehensive conservation master plan seems to be lacking. Such a plan would clarify the conservation approaches and implementation strategies for all types of structures within the nominated property. The lists of actions provided by the State Party in the additional information submitted in November 2023 and February 2024 do not clarify these strategic details.

Monitoring

The Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base is in charge of monitoring the nominated property and planning and implementing the necessary actions. Clear monitoring indicators and responsibilities are defined and shared amongst different authorities having stakes in the management of the nominated property. The monitoring activities are conducted daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, and annually. The Location Information System for the nominated property is regularly updated based on the monitoring outcomes.

The physical condition of all monuments within the nominated property and the buffer zone is monitored annually, semi-annually or seasonally by means of field visits, sample tests, and crack meters. The existing cracks in various structures such as walls, domes, vaults, and foundations are being monitored with chalk indicators.

The monitoring programme also includes control of the implementation of conservation and urban regulations within the historic centre, including traffic, the condition of the public access network and infrastructure, and the well-being of the inhabitants.

Regular training workshops are provided by the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base to enhance monitoring of the nominated property. Regular collaboration with research and educational institutions

helps to integrate their expertise into the monitoring programme.

ICOMOS considers that documentation of the entire nominated property, particularly of the archaeological remains and finds, needs to be further completed and systematised. The conservation measures need to be integrated into a comprehensive conservation master plan, which, as a priority, would highlight archaeological research and conservation, including the strategies for preventive and rescue archaeological works, methodologies, timetable, and budget. ICOMOS notes that a comprehensive monitoring system is in place, and considers it advisable to adapt it for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

Since the onset of the national heritage protection system in the 1930s, thirty-four monuments in the nominated property have been registered in the list of national monuments and an additional thirty-seven in the list of valuable monuments. In addition, the entire historic centre of Hamedan was registered in the national heritage list in 2022. The boundaries of the national heritage property include the nominated property. Thus, the nominated property is under the highest level of national legal protection.

The proposed buffer zone extends beyond the nationally listed buffer zone in places. Clarifications were provided by the State Party in November 2023. The existing differences between the boundaries of the nationally registered property and the nominated property are attributed to complementary field studies and rechecks of the boundaries based on the criteria of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Thus, some minor areas were excluded from the nominated property. However, the rationale for the differences in the buffer zone remains unclear. Furthermore, no specifications were provided as to how the areas of the proposed buffer zone that lie outside the nationally protected buffer zone are regulated and protected.

National law and bylaws, such as the Law for Protection of National Heritage (1930), the Bylaw Concerning Prevention of Unauthorised Excavation (1980), and the Bylaw on Conservation of Iranian Cultural Heritage (2002), regulate different aspects concerning protection, conservation, maintenance, and development. The national development plans and strategy documents, as well as conservation standards prepared by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran (IMCHTH) provide an additional set of national protective measures for the nominated property.

Listing the nominated property and its buffer zone implies creating tailored regulations for their legal control and protection. These regulations, which were further

explained in additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023, serve as the basis for a comprehensive plan and detailed plans for Hamedan City. The Ministry's regulations and provisions prevail over all other regulations in all urban programmes and plans. Interventions on nationally registered properties and their buffer zones require prior authorisation from the provincial branch of the Ministry, based on which the municipality issues construction permits.

Public organisations are required to base development projects on a preliminary assessment of their impact on cultural-historical values, and to comply with the recommendations of such studies during design and implementation. The most recent studies of the historic centre of Hamedan, along with the elaboration of a Hamedan City Comprehensive Plan, were conducted in 2020. This plan prioritises the conservation of the historic and cultural values of the nominated property, emphasising tourism development and fostering respective regulations in the historic centre. The Detailed Plan prioritises the pedestrianisation of the main avenues in the core ring of the radial city plan to aid functional reintegration of the historic fabric of the bazaar. The Hamedan Historical Fabric Design promotes minimal intervention, regulates heights, and provides criteria for permissible changes to urban land use.

Management system

The Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base, the site-based management body of the IMCHTH, is the primary management authority for the nominated property and its buffer zone. It is directly responsible for all conservation actions, planning, and coordination in the designated historic centre. The activities of the Base are supervised by the Hamedan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Head Office and the IMCHTH through its provincial branch.

The work of the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base is supported by a Steering Committee and a Technical Committee. The Steering Committee ensures administrative coordination amongst the parliament members, central and local state bodies, academia, and experts. It also approves annual management plans, research project proposals, and annual technical reports by the Base. The Technical Committee manages the technical conservation issues and monitoring of the nominated property via cross-sectoral working groups for restoration, social policies, training, tourism, economic planning, security, urban services, and infrastructure. The Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base has an adequate budget and level of staffing to fulfil its statutory duties.

The State Party has provided a description of the planning, implementation, and monitoring cycle built around the objective of preserving the historic and cultural values of the nominated property and its buffer zone. The management plan also contains a comprehensive table of short-, medium-, and long-term actions in conservation research, restoration and protection, training and

promotion, and tourism infrastructure. No specific plan of action is included for risk management, although the nomination dossier presents a description of the existing risk preparedness system. Additional information provided in November 2023 also included a Fire Safety Plan for the bazaar.

The management plan, the formal status of which has not been clarified, describes the existing management structure and the duties and responsibilities of stakeholders, which are approved and confirmed with their formal signatures. However, none of these duties specifically address and link to the policies and actions described in the management plan. While the signatures demonstrate the commitment of stakeholders to an integrated management of the nominated property, it remains unclear whether this commitment also extends to the implementation of the actions outlined in the management plan. The role and legal status of the management plan need to be defined in the context of these pre-established mechanisms of cooperation.

Visitor management

Tourism is amongst the priorities for the development of the historic city and is included in different urban plans and strategies. The National Tourism Development Plan and the Comprehensive Tourism Plan of Hamedan Province provide the policy framework for planning tourism development in the area.

The statistics provided by the State Party indicate that Hamedan is popular amongst domestic visitors, and has only a modest number of foreign visitors. There is no visitor pressure in the nominated property except during *Nowruz* (Iranian New Year), when the pressure is mitigated by increasing the number of guards and guides and improving guidance for visitors to the archaeological sites.

Planning, monitoring, and developing tourism and tourist products is the responsibility of the provincial branch of the IMCHTH, while the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base manages visitors at the archaeological sites. Development of the tourism infrastructure is amongst the components of the short-, medium-, and long-term objectives of the management plan, which includes actions such as adapting historic buildings for tourism purposes, improving public spaces, lighting and street furniture, updating the entrance control system of the Hegmataneh archaeological site, enhancing tourist routes and visitor facilities, managing visitation time, educating visitors, training tour guides, and improving security.

Community involvement

Overall, there is an adequate legal and policy framework to encourage public participation in heritage conservation, as well as in cultural and economic life in general. Various departments of the provincial Office of the Governor-General, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting in Hamedan, non-governmental organisations, as well as the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base

and the IMCHTH, share the responsibility for ensuring the participation of local communities, including women and youth, in different activities and programmes.

Participation of the local community and rights-holders was planned from the onset of the nomination process. It was conducted mostly in the form of public awareness and consultation sessions. The initiation of the nomination process has led to greater interest by the local population in restoration and conservation of the monuments, according to the State Party.

The State Party clarified, in the additional information provided in November 2023, that a special Facilitation Office is planned to be established to provide technical and legal consultation services for the residents and stakeholders, thus encouraging their involvement in the conservation of the nominated property. Other planned measures are low-interest loans for restoration and tourism infrastructure development, provision of traditional building materials for restoration works, tax exemptions and public and private partnerships in the process of urban renewal, and improvement of façades, amongst other incentives.

Participation of local communities in the management of the nominated property is enabled through the Steering Committee of the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base. However, the representatives of the Committee are drawn mostly from institutional partners. The link with the community is made through the chairpersons or representatives of the Chamber of Guilds, City Council, and non-governmental organisations.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the protection and management of the nominated property are satisfactory. The archaeological remains are protected and managed by the Hegmataneh and Historical Center of Hamedan Base, while potential archaeological finds are safeguarded by heritage regulations. The shared responsibilities amongst institutional stakeholders has formal approval, but the management plan's role and legal status need to be defined.

6 Conclusion

The highlight of Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan lies in its archaeological heritage of the ancient city of Hegmataneh, which provides rare evidence of the Medes civilisation and later served as a summer capital of Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian rulers. The archaeological evidence of Hegmataneh testifies to early developments of urban planning and architectural creativity.

Present-day Hamedan, in which Hegmataneh is located, claims an unbroken history of human habitation over nearly three millennia, being amongst the oldest cities in Iran. The historical evolution of the region, especially in the Islamic period, saw the importance of the city lessened, as manifested in its planning and architectural achievements, compared to other cities of Islamic Persia.

While some of the preserved architectural monuments in Hamedan contain layers of early Islamic, Seljuk, and Ilkhanid eras, most of the urban fabric, including the traditional bazaar with caravanserais, passageways, plazas, shops, and warehouses, dates to the more recent Qajar and Pahlavi periods. The historical street network is now dominated by a radial plan of avenues and squares superimposed over it in the 20th century.

The nominated property displays a sufficient degree of integrity and authenticity regarding its archaeological remains, whereas the integrity and authenticity of the historic centre of Hamedan can be seen as compromised by the large-scale interventions of the 20th century.

The comparative analysis highlights the potential exceptional character of the discovered archaeological remains. The important and rare evidence of the Medes civilisation is confirmed, although Hegmataneh's role as the capital of the Median Empire cannot be established with certainty at this stage. The evidence of the cultures and civilisations that successively occupied Hegmataneh are considered important testimony to the creative planning and architectural solutions developed through interactions amongst diverse ethnicities and religions from the 1st millennium BCE to the advent of Islam on the Iranian Plateau.

Based on the nomination dossier and additional information provided by the State Party, only the archaeological remains of the early periods of the city are seen as having a possibility of justifying criterion (ii) and/or criterion (iii), while criterion (iv) is not considered justified. Therefore, none of the cultural criteria have been justified at this stage.

The proposed boundaries are not considered to correspond to the archaeological values of the nominated property.

The state of conservation is satisfactory and the factors affecting the nominated property are under control through a framework of protective regulations and management mechanisms, with the shared responsibilities

and commitment of institutional stakeholders and the local community. However, research, conservation, and management need to be better aligned with the archaeological values of the nominated property, clarifying in more detail how current and future archaeological discoveries are protected and presented.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that significant additional work is needed to refocus the proposed justification for Outstanding Universal Value on the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh.

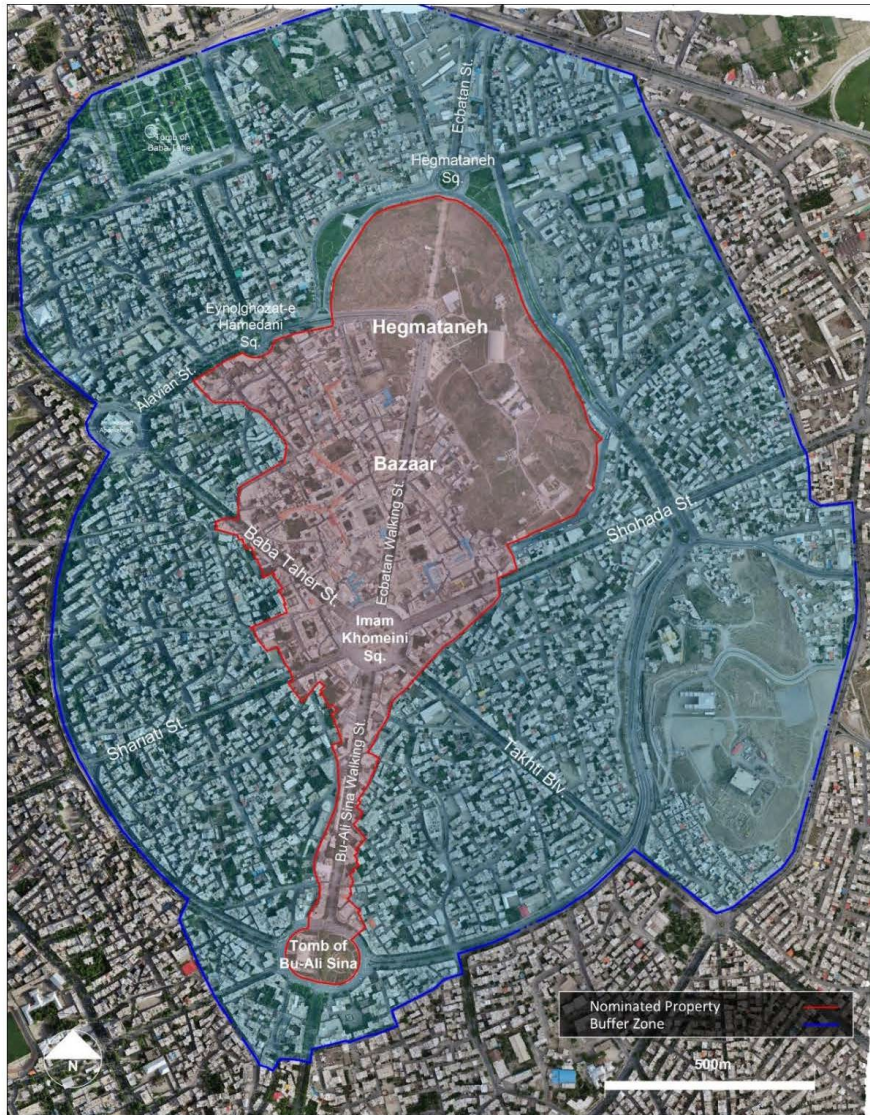
7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of Hegmataneh and Historical Centre of Hamedan, Islamic Republic of Iran, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party, with the advice of ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre, if requested, to:

- Develop a more coherent argumentation based on the archaeological values of the nominated property in order to demonstrate how or in which way the archaeological remains of Hegmataneh stand out in illustrating a significant stage or stages in human history, and/or how they illustrate in an outstanding way the history and historical development in the wider geo-cultural region,
- Develop an appropriate comparative analysis that includes a thorough, well-structured, criteria-based qualitative assessment of relevant comparators, presented in a comprehensive manner,
- Revise the nominated property and buffer zone boundaries in light of a refocused justification,
- Integrate the various research and conservation actions into a comprehensive conservation programme that allows for the long-term research, conservation, and presentation of the archaeological finds,
- Define the role and legal status of the management plan,
- Further develop the documentation and enhance the monitoring system;

Any revised nomination should be visited by a mission to the site.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property