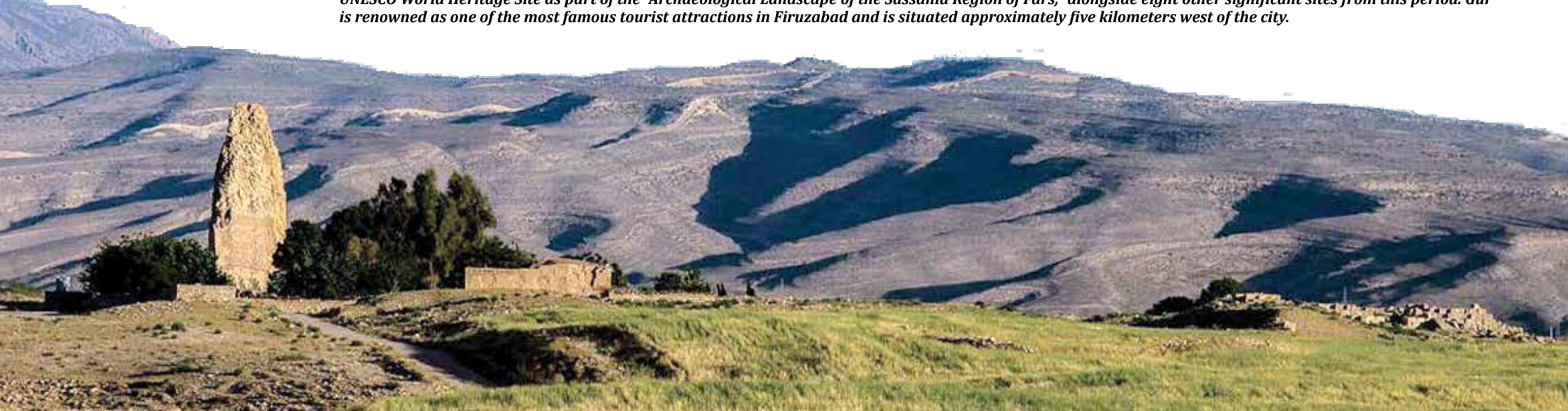


Ancient city of Gur; a heritage of Sassanid Era

Iranica Desk

The ancient city of Gur, located in Firuzabad, is a remarkable archaeological site in Fars Province, dating back to the Sassanid era. In 2018, it was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the "Archaeological Landscape of the Sassanid Region of Fars," alongside eight other significant sites from this period. Gur is renowned as one of the most famous tourist attractions in Firuzabad and is situated approximately five kilometers west of the city.



Historical significance

The ancient city of Gur, along with its surviving structures, has provided invaluable insights into the culture and architecture of the Sassanid Empire in ancient Iran. It served as the first capital of the Sassanid dynasty and is recognized as the first circular city in Iran. Despite extensive archaeological excavations in various parts of the area, Gur still holds considerable potential for further exploration. This article aims to introduce the ancient city of Gur and share key information about its historical significance, IRNA wrote.

Historically, Gur was one of the most prosperous cities in Iran and the center of Ardashir Babakan's rule. The geometric layout of the city reflects its military design during ancient times. During the Achaemenid era, Gur thrived with robust fortifications that made it virtually impenetrable to enemies. Notably, even Alexander the Great, during his devastating invasion of Iran, found no way to breach this ancient city and ultimately redirected a river to flood it instead. Although Gur's prominence waned during the Parthian period, it experienced a revival following Ardashir Babakan's victory over Artabanus V, the last king of the Parthians. Under Ardashir's orders, the city was rebuilt in 224 CE, with new structures erected, restoring its significance.

Strategic role of Gur in trade

An important aspect of the ancient city of Gur is its strategic location along the trade route connecting China and India to Rome and the port of Siraf, which significantly contributed to its commercial prosperity. The city flourished until the final days of Sassanid rule, after which it faced devastation following the Arab invasion of Iran.

Under Arab rule, Gur was governed by officials appointed by the Arab leadership. With the rise of the Buyid dynasty, Fars once again became a royal seat. Under the direction of Adhuh al-Dawlah Deylami, the city of Gur was rebuilt. However, information about the tumultuous history of Gur, or Firuzabad, during the 7th and 8th centuries AH is limited; by the end of this period, Gur began to decline. Subsequently, a village named Deh Koushk was established nearby, retaining this name even during the Qajar dynasty. This village is considered the first nucleus of present-day Firuzabad.

Archaeological discoveries

Although Gur was the residence of many kings throughout history, approximately 40% of the pottery discovered in the city dates back to the Sassanid era. The abundance of artifacts from this historical period underscores the glory and prosperity of Gur during



the Sassanid dynasty. After the Sassanid period, many buildings and infrastructures in Gur were destroyed by subsequent rulers due to cultural and religious differences. One of the most significant features of this ancient city was its innovative water supply system, developed by the Sassanids, which facilitated agricultural expansion and trade, contributing to Gur's economic prosperity for many years. The ancient city of Gur is recognized among Iran's national heritage sites. It, along with eight other Sassanid sites in the regions of Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan, was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site during the 42nd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. The archaeological sites included in this designation highlight the political and ritual significance of Gur in ancient Iran. Numerous pottery artifacts have

been uncovered during archaeological excavations, with nearly half attributed to the Sassanid period. Due to the destruction of many ancient structures in Firuzabad, a detailed examination of them is currently not feasible. Archaeologists, relying on existing evidence and comparisons with other nearby sites, have provided interpretive insights. Excavations in Gur have been conducted over time by both Iranian and German archaeologists. The most significant remains in the ancient city are found in its central circle, which was once the royal area.

Distinctive features

Gur was designed in two distinct sections and fea-

has largely been destroyed over time. Another notable building, referred to as the Takht Neshin, is thought to have been a fire temple. This building, much of which is also in ruins, is located 100 meters southeast of Milo Minaret, where archaeologists have discovered remnants of a stone gate and tiled flooring. In 2005, a significant discovery was made by Professor Dietrich Hoff, a German archaeologist, when he uncovered an observatory in Gur. This circular structure, built from mud bricks, is considered one of the oldest observatories in Iran, reflecting the advanced astronomical knowledge of the Sassanids. The observatory has a diameter of 6.5 meters, with twelve markings on its walls indicating instruments for observing celestial bodies and platforms for graphical displays. The gates of the ancient city of Gur exhibit strong similarities to the entrances of Persepolis, and their colorful decorations highlight the Sassanid preference for vibrant architectural styles. The gates, named Mehr, Bahram, Hormoz, and Ardashir, are located to the east, west, north, and south

of the city, respectively. Given the extensive area of Gur, this ancient site still holds immense potential for further archaeological exploration.

Visiting Gur

Fars Province is known for its hot climate, which can be challenging for tourists during the peak summer months. The ancient city of Gur is located in a plain that becomes particularly warm under direct sunlight on hot days. The ideal time to visit Gur and other attractions in Firuzabad is from late winter until late spring. In May, the surrounding pastures reach their peak beauty, making it an excellent time for outdoor activities. If you're planning to explore nearby attractions while in Firuzabad, May is the perfect choice.

Autumn also offers mild weather in Firuzabad, making it suitable for visiting the city's natural and historical sites. However, be aware that temperatures can drop closer to winter. When visiting the ancient city of Gur and other sites in the open plains and mountains, it's advisable to wear a sun hat and sunglasses for protection against the sun.

