

The Forgotten Ancient Fire Temples of Iran.

Compiled by Phil Masters

Koosan Fire Temple in the heart of Tabarestan mountains



Aftab Yazdani: Koosan (or Toosan) Fire Temple in Behshahr, is one of the countless fire temples remaining from the Sassanian era. Zahiruddin has called it Koosan in his book, where he says: “The son of Qobad built a fire temple in that place.”

Based on notes from Ebn Esfandiari, on this fire temple a military camp was built by the Arabs. However, the discovery of ancient relics and a whole lot of coins from the Sassanian era proves the value and importance that this place had for the Sassanians.

This fire Temple is situated 4 km on the west of Behshahr. Ebn Esfandiari has written about this fire temple and says that: “Firooz Shah, and possibly the Sassanian Firooz has visited this Fire Temple.”

This Fire Temple is on the southwest of Assiabesar Village, on top of a small mountain, and has been registered in the national heritage list under No. 5410.

The structure is 8.5 X 8.5 m in size. It is built of stone and mortar (plaster of lime and ash or sand) and the outside surface of the walls have been built with stones laid orderly with geometrical pattern, and the walls have been filled with shavings and earth.

Behshahr is a city on the east of Mazandaran province. Kouhestan Village is 6 km on the west of Behshahr district.

The old name of Kouhestan was Koosan and its age is estimated to go back to the pre-Islamic period.

According to history, this place was once called Toosan and built by Toos Nowzar, of the Kiyanian dynasty.

During the reign of Qobad (Sassanian king) some parts of Mazandaran/Tabarestan were developed and started flourishing, including the Fire temple of the city of Koosan, which was founded in Tabarestan/Mazandaran by Kiyus, the elder son of Qobad, and the brother of Anushirvan, during his reign. The spot where Koosan Fire temple was built is still remaining and called Koosan.

The Sassanian Fire Temple of Natanz has lots to say



Aftab Yazdani: Four pillars from seven pillars of **Natanz Fire Temple** are still standing, a fire temple that is said to be built in the Sassanian era.

Though, from its four free standing arches, only one is standing, but it is still the Natanz Fire Temple. It is predicted that very soon whatever is left of this 2500 years old fire temple will be completely destroyed.

So, while we still have the chance let us visit it. Close to the Fire Temple the public mosque of Natanz is built and it is said that it was built a thousand years ago, on the foundations of the Sassanian fire Temple.

The main section of the Fire Temple is built of cadaverine stone, covered with white clay. Very little is left of this structure. Two of the arches, from the four arches that connected the square surface of the structure to the upper ceiling of the dome are still remaining. The length of each of the outer walls of the structure is 11 m and 35 cm and the inner part is 7 m in length. The opening of each of the arches is 69m and 50 cm.

The fire Temple is at present inside a garden and private estate by the name of Imam Oskouie, and the Cultural Heritage Organization has neglected it. Natanz Fire temple is situated in Natanz District, a place with a history of 6000 years civilization. Natanz was called Natin and Natan in the ancient Pahlavi language, meaning a place with pleasant climate. In the course of time Natanz changed completely.

Natanz is located in the north of Isfahan province, on the edge of the desert, but its climate is unlike desert climate. It is fertile and green, with a mountainous and semi plain climate. Karkouyeh, an extinct fire temple of Zabol .

Karkouyeh, an extinct fire temple of Zabol



Aftab Yazdani: In his book about Karkouyeh Fire Temple, Yaghut Hamouie, an Iranian geographer, has written: Zabol was a city in Sistan and there was a fire temple which was of high value for the Zoroastrians.”

This Fire Temple is located in Karkouyeh village, at a distance of 25 km from Zabol, in the middle of marshy lands of Sistan, and close to Iran/Afghanistan borders.

Karku Shah or Karkouyeh is the remains of a Fire Temple from the Achaemenian era. It is said to have been built during the reign of Kaykhosrow. Karkouyeh was thriving until 700 years ago. There is no doubt that the present location of Karku Shah is the famous Karkouyeh, as reported by Islamic writers. ‘Estakhri’ (a geographer) has written that Karkouyeh was the beginning point of the route that connected Sistan (Zaranj) to Herat and according to this geographer, 18 km away from Zaranj.

As documented by writers of the Islamic era, this structure had two large domes and on top of each dome a huge horn like the horn of a bull was built, and the fire temple was under these two domes.

Based on findings, the fire of this fire temple was constantly burning and had a sacred position among Zoroastrians. This fire would be used to light other fires of fire temples. The people of this city highly respect this Fire Temple and it is also known as the Dome of Rostam. As written in Shahnameh, the battle between Siavash and Bahman occurred in this place.

**A mausoleum resting on Mount Mehr
Which may have been a worshiping temple**



Mitra Dehmobed: Mount Mehr is a mountain at the foot of which Takhte Jamshid lies. After reaching Takhte Jamshid, you can pass by Mount Mehr towards the east, and after 50 km, on the rocks of Mount Mehr, you will see a structure which is called today ‘Eyvan Ghadamgah’ or ‘Ghadamgah Chashtkhar’.

Eyvan Ghadamgah is a half built structure inside a rock and built of stone.

This large building, cut from rock, has three stories with a height of 15 m. Based on studies made, this building belongs to the Achamenian era. Some believe that this place was being built to serve as a grave and some believe it was a worshiping place of the Achameanians.

Close to this site there is a spring of water which makes the theory of it being a temple stronger.

In his studies made in 1331 (1952) Dr Wandberg (Austrian) has stated: “Since the building is incomplete its purpose is not clear, but because of a spring of water that was flowing close to this site till some years back, it could have been an open area temple. Dr Syed Mohammad Taqi Mostafavi has also mentioned this place to have been a religious place of the Achameanians, in his book “Land of Persia”.

Eyvan Ghadamgah is also called Eyvan Chashtkhar because it is located close to a village by this name. Archeologists have estimated the age of this village as far back as the Achamenian era. Close to this historic site there is a graveyard in which graves from pre-Islamic and Islamic eras are found.

Eyvan Ghadamgah was registered in the list of national heritage in 1331 (1952). But, unfortunately, not much research has been made on this site.

Eyvan Ghadamgah is part of the ancient city of Arsanjan in Fars province.

Shiyan Fire Temple, with its artistic plaster work



Aftab Yazdani: Shiyan is a huge fire temple from the Parthian/Sassanian era. The four sides are 23.5 m X 14.5 m and as far as its size is concerned it is the largest fire temple of the Sassanian era.

This Fire Temple was discovered during construction of Shiyan dam in Kermanshah, and as a result of archeological excavations.

Inside the Fire Temple beautiful plaster work from the Sassanian era can be seen. The floor of the Fire Temple is of plaster and has five fire places (thurible) with lotus design carved on them. Attached to the Fire Temple there is a water canal with 60 m length belonging to the Parthian era.

This is the first fire temple found in Kermanshah region. In the Islamic era a mosque was built on it and the space around it was converted into a graveyard.

Shiyan is one of the most important fire temples of the west of Iran.

Behind Shiyan dam, where the Fire Temple was discovered, many other discoveries have been made from the second millennium BC upto the beginning of the Islamic era. Archeologists believe the extent of the findings behind the Shiyan dam to be due to the Shiyan Sarab river. Shiyan Sarab is flowing since 2400 years.

Next to the Fire Temple smooth, stone pillars have been found, which could have been the place where the pilgrims took rest and shelter. These pillars are built close to each other and without any walls.

Shiyan plain is situated west of Kermanshah and is surrounded by low mountains and has way to other areas from the southeast and southwest corners, through natural passes.

The main water source of this plain is the Shiyan Sarab river, which starts from the northern parts of the plain and is used for irrigation of agricultural fields in the center of the plain. The surrounding mountains, with their rich pastures, are suitable place for domestic animals. On the whole, the Shiyan plain, with its special Eco system, has been a suitable environment from long ago, for human settlement. Evidence of this fact is the vast archeological sites like Shiyan Fire Temple.

Translation by Rowshan Lohrasbpour

Espakhu Fire Temple, the oldest registered structure of north Khorasan



Aftab Yazdani: Espakhu Fire temple is one of the oldest structures still upright, in north Khorasan province. Based on excavations and studies of archeologists, this Fire Temple belongs to the Sassanian era and close to it is a village by the same name, Espakhu. From its identical construction, dome shaped ceiling, and rubbles and special mortar used in the walls, which was the material used in Sassanian architecture, archeologists have agreed that this Fire temple belongs to the Sassanian era.

They say that the word ‘Espakhu’ is derived from the word ‘hasp’ or ‘asp’, which is a Pahlavi word. In the course of time this word changed to ‘asb’ (meaning horse) and it is assumed that in the past, in this area horses were bred.

Espakhu Fire Temple is situated near Espakhu village, in Maneh and Salgheman district, 115 km on the road from Bojnord to Golestan, and 65 km on the west of Ashkhaneh village. This Fire Temple is built on a high hill, on the slopes of a forest of pine and cypress. The local people call this Fire Temple a church, but upto this date there is no proof of Christians having lived in this area, and on the other hand, the round alter, the 'atashdan' (fire place) and the holes in the dome shaped ceiling for letting out the smoke, all prove that this place was never a church but a fire temple that the ancient people have built. Espakhu fire Temple is still standing in north Khorasan, on an altitude covered by pine and cypress trees, and attracts foreign and Iranian tourists. Espakhu fire Temple is registered in the national heritage list, under NO. 1579. Espakhu is still standing.

Translation by Rowshan Lohrasbpour

Source : <http://amordaden.blogfa.com/>