



## FAYZĀBĀD

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**FAYZĀBĀD**, a toponym of auspicious meaning (“blessed abode”) which enjoys great popularity throughout the Iranian world. Besides numerous villages of various importance (e.g. 77 occurrences of the name in Iran according to Pāpoli-Yazdī, p. 392), it designates two important towns: one is the main town and administrative center of the Afghan province of Badaḡšān (q.v.), the second is the town founded 1132/1719-20 which served as the first capital of the *nawwāb* of Awadh, now a district headquarters in Uttar Pradesh, 120 km east of Lucknow (Bazmee Ansari; Cole, index). It is also the name of one of the eighteen main canals of the Balkāb oasis (q.v.), hence the name of the district it waters, now extended to an *‘alāqadārī* of the province of Jōzjān, south east of Āqča (811 km<sup>2</sup>; 24,750 inhabitants in 1358 Š./1979; headquarters at Sānsīz). The following deals only with the Afghan town of Fayzābād.

Fayzābād’s situation is highly favorable: at an elevation of only 1,200 m above sea-level and the head of a small intramontane basin of the middle valley of the Kōkča river, it is the nodal point where all caravan routes crossing the central Hindu Kush to China (Yarkand) and India, both via Zēbak, converge with those coming from Darwāz via the Šēwa valley and Qaṭaḡān via the lower Kōkča (Davies, pp. ccclix ff.; Barrow, 1888, pp. 18, 49). Hence the antiquity of human presence there. The first settlement was 5 km west of the present town, at Ḳamčān (or Kūrī), where remains from the Sasanian to Timurid eras are scattered over 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> (Ball, p. 171); a stone bridge over the Kōkča, now ruined, was built there in 884/1479 (Barrow 1888, pp. 48, 63). In 1091/1680 Mīr Yar(ī) Bēg (r. 1068-1118/1657-1706 or 1707), a Naqšbandī leader of Yaftal who



achieved some political unity of southern Badaḡšan under the nominal suzerainty of the amir of Bukhara, shifted his capital from Ẕamčan (not Ẕenjān, as misspelled in Nāhež, p. 113) to a new city 5 km upstream. First known as Jawzān, or Jawz(g)ūn (< *jawz*, “walnut,” the locality of walnuts), the latter’s name was changed to Fayzābād after a shrine was built there in 1109/1697-98 (Barrow 1888, p. 7) to house the supposed cloak of the Prophet (*kerqa-ye mobāraka*) which Mīr Yar(ī) Bēg managed to intercept during its transfer from Samarkand to India and which was to be moved to its present location in Qandahār after Ahmed Shah’s conquest of Badaḡšan in 1182/1768 (Boldyrev, pp. 6a ff.; see also DAHBĪDĪYA). In the statement (Koshkaki, p. 101) that the cloak was kept in the town of Ẕānābād, that name must actually be understood as a synonym for Fayzābād, namely the “khan’s abode,” not the well-known city of Qaṭaḡan.

Political anarchy under Mīr Yar(ī) Bēg’s successors (the so-called Yaridite dynasty of Mīr of Fayzābād) led to growing encroachments on Badaḡšan by the Uzbeks of Qaṭaḡan, which culminated under Morād Bēg (r. 1230-1254/1815-38). In 1829 he took Fayzābād, destroyed it, and deported its inhabitants to Qaṭaḡan. The town was eventually rebuilt only in the 1860s, during the ephemeral restoration of an autonomous Badaḡšan, this time under Afghan suzerainty (Lord, p. 102; Wood, pp. lxxvii [Yule] and 162 f.; Barrow 1888, p. 47). It still has an unusually rich display of religious buildings, although without much architectural value (eight *masjed-e jāme’*, several *zīārāt* including those of Pīr Dastagīr (Ẕvāja Gīāt al-Dīn Gīātī), Ẕvāja ‘Abd-al-Ma’rūf Farroḡī, and Ẕvāja Sabzpōš (Ẕvāja ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz ‘Alīya al-Raḡmana) next to the old *zīarat-e kerqa-ye mobāraka*, to which a *madrassa* is attached (Nāhež, p. 113, Barrow 1888, p. 49, *Kabul New Times* 23 March 1982).

The town stands on a narrow alluvial terrace on the right bank of the Kōkčā; it was described as a “miserable place” at the end of the 19th century (Barrow 1893, p. 15). Although in the 1970s a new residential suburb was being built on the opposite bank, this could hardly be taken as a sign of demographic and economic development. The demography of the city actually shows a comparatively slow increase: from an estimated 4,000 inhabitants in 1886 (Barrow, 1888, p. 47), it grew to 6,000 (1,000 houses) in 1301 Š./1922 (Koshkaki, p. 108) and barely exceeded 9,000 in 1358 Š./1979. This trend reflects weak economic conditions. Besides the usual administrative functions of a provincial headquarters, trade is the only *raison d’être* of the city. Once linked with Bukhara, Yarkand, and Peshawar, although not on a very big scale it



seems (Barrow 1888, pp. 26ff. and 49, Grevemeyer, p. 105), its influence has greatly shrunk. Due to the poor supply of other commercial centers in Badaḳṣān, however, it attracts customers from all over the province (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, p. 155). In 1352 Š./1973 the *bāzār* reportedly included 620 shops and 6 *sarāy* lining up along a sole commercial street; i.e., twice as many as in 1301 Š./ 1922 (Koshkaki, p. 109: instead of 3,000, read 300 shops) and three times more than in 1879 (Barrow, 1888, p. 49). Besides plain imported consumer goods, which sell at comparatively high prices on account of high transport costs, only local products are available, notably salt, cumin, walnuts, apricots and metal, leather, and textile handicrafts.

Two small hotels, one poorly equipped hospital (thirty beds), one high school, and a small hydro-power plant (opened 1353 Š./1974), all make up the local infrastructure. A small domestic airfield, with only three flights a week, adds very little to the main cause of Fayzābād's economic weakness: its inaccessibility to modern transportation. The nearest paved road is 260 km west! Due to lack of accessibility, the town has therefore been unable to take full advantage of its position, both as a nodal *bāzār* and as a potential touristic center in the heart of the attractive scenery of the central Hindu Kush; it only used to serve as a starting point and rear base for the quite numerous mountaineering expeditions carried on in the area during the 1970s.

In 1358 Š./1979, the district of Fayzābād (3,014 km<sup>2</sup>) had 140,300 inhabitants, and thus a density of 47 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, a comparatively high figure for this mountainous area.

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