



FĪRŪZKŪH I. THE GHURID CAPITAL

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The ruler from the Šansabānī family of local *maleks* in Ġūr, ‘Ezz-al-Dīn Ḥosayn (493-540/1100-1106), had his stronghold and capital at Estīa, and in a partition of the Šansabānī dominions at the accession of Sayf-al-Dīn Sūrī on ‘Ezz-al-Dīn’s death, Sayf-al-Dīn retained Estīa as overlord of the family, allotting to one of his brothers, the Malek-al-Jebāl Qoṭb-al-Dīn Moḥammad, the district of Varšād/Varšār. Here, the latter is said to have founded his own fortress-city, known as Fīrūzkūh (Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, pp. 335-36, tr. Raverty, I, pp. 339-40). This was completed only after family dissension led to Qoṭb-al-Dīn’s flight to Bahrāmšāh (q.v.) at Ġazna, his death there, and the accession in Ġūr of Bahā’-al-Dīn Sām, till then the ruler (*malek*) of the district of Mandēš, in 544/1149. He adorned the new capital Fīrūzkūh with fine buildings and palaces, making it the key point in a network of fortresses established across his dominions (Jūzjānī, I, p. 337, tr. Raverty, I, pp. 341-42).

Over the next decades, Fīrūzkūh functioned as the capital of the main branch of the Šansabānīs, providing the base for the Ghurid attempts to expand westwards into Khorasan and northern Persia, while parallel branches made their capital at Ġazna (after 569/1173-74) and Bāmīān (from 540/1145). The two main sources for Ghurid political and military history, Jūzjānī and Ebn-al-Aṭīr, give few details on the urban and demographic development of Fīrūzkūh, but



it was there that the sultans of the senior line piled up their treasures and the spoils of battle from regions like Khorasan and India (cf. Jūzjānī, I, pp. 349-50, tr. Raverty, I, p. 364), and some of this was doubtless spent on providing the city with public religious and charitable buildings. Prisoners deported from Ġazna after Sultan ‘Alā’-al-Dīn Ḥosayn’s sack of the Ghaznavid capital (probably in 544-45/1150) were employed on construction work there (Jūzjānī, I, p. 345, tr. Raverty, I, pp. 335-56; Ebn-al-Aṭīr, Beirut, XI, pp. 165-66; Bosworth, *Later Ghaznavids*, pp. 117-18). According to Jūzjānī (I, p. 367, tr. Raverty, I, p. 389), Fīrūzkūh, located deep in the heart of the mountains of Ġūr, functioned as the sultan’s summer capital, but in winter the court moved down to the milder climate of the *garmsīr* of Zamīn-dāvar in what is now southeastern Afghanistan. He mentions a splendid royal palace (*qaṣr*) which was adorned with five pinnacles (*kongera*) inlaid with gold and with two effigies of the fabulous *homāy* bird, all these having been forwarded to the supreme sultan in Fīrūzkūh, Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Moḥammad b. Sām, by his brother Mo‘ezz-al-Dīn Šehāb-al-Dīn Moḥammad from the spoils captured by the latter at Ajmer in Rajasthan in 588/1192 (Jūzjānī, I, p. 375, tr. Raverty, I, pp. 403-4; Maricq and Wiet, p. 44). During the reign of Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Moḥammad (602-9/1206-12), elaborate public festivities were held at Fīrūzkūh, with lavish distributions of largesse (Jūzjānī, I, p. 376, tr. Raverty, I, pp. 405-6; cf. Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, II, p. 62, tr. Boyle, I, p. 328). Such a highly-developed court must have attracted poets, literary men, musicians, etc., but we know virtually nothing of the cultural life there beyond Neẓāmī ‘Arūẓī Samarqandī’s brief mention of poets who glorified the house of Šansab (*Čahārmaqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, p. 45, tr., E. G. Browne, London, 1921, p. 30) and the interesting mention of disputations there between local leaders of the pietistic sect of the Karrāmīya and the famed Shafī‘ite scholar Faḫr-al-Dīn Moḥammad Rāzī when the latter visited Fīrūzkūh in 595/1199 (Ebn-al-Aṭīr, Beirut, XII, pp. 151-52; Maricq and Wiet, p. 50; Bosworth, 1961, pp. 131-32).

The prosperous days for Fīrūzkūh ended with the capture of the city in 607/1210-11 by Sultan ‘Alā’-al-Dīn Moḥammad K̄vārazmšāh, which made Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Maḥmūd his vassal (Jūzjānī, I, pp. 382-83, tr. Raverty, I, pp. 418-19; Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, II, p. 65, 84-86, tr. Boyle, II, pp. 331-32, 352). There were a few years of Chorasmian occupation, toward the end of which ‘Alā’-al-Dīn Moḥammad’s *šeḥna* there, Mobārez-al-Dīn Šīrāzī (Sabzavārī?), re-fortified and enlarged the citadel (*bālā ḥesār*), placing a rampart around it and making an access track for mules (Jūzjānī, II, p. 112, 133, tr. Raverty, II, pp. 1004-56). However, a Mongol force appeared before Fīrūzkūh in 617/1220 and besieged



it for twenty days. A certain Malek ‘Emād-al-Dīn Zangī was sent to defend the city, but in 619/1222 it fell to troops from the army of Čengīz Khan’s son Ögedey; ‘Emād-al-Dīn was killed and the populace massacred (Jūzjānī, II, pp. 113-14, 132-33, tr. Raverty, II, pp. 1007, 1055-57). The city seems to have never revived, for thereafter it disappears from historical mention, and its site was forgotten.

There has been speculation since the time of Sir Thomas Holdich (p. 223) that the name of the ancient Ghurid capital is enshrined in the name of a component tribe of the modern Čahār Aymāq, the Fīrūzkūhīs, now found in the north of the Harīrūd (see AFGHANISTAN, iv, p. 496), but a chronological gap of over seven centuries means that nothing can be proven here (cf. Leshnik, pp. 42-43).

Location. The site of the fortress-city has occasioned much discussion. Holdich (pp. 222-23, cf. Maricq and Wiet, pp. 55-56), identified it with Taywara in the upper valley of the Rūd-e Ġōr, where he had in 1884-85 noted substantial ruins, and this was followed by M. Longworth Dames (“Fīrūzkōh,” in *EI* IIa, p. 114). Following investigations by the Afghan scholar Aḥmad ‘Alī Kohzād, André Maricq visited the upper Harīrūd region in 1957 and confidently identified the site of Fīrūzkūh with that of the free-standing minaret (or victory tower?) built by Sultan Ġiāt-al-Dīn Moḥammad at the confluence of a small, left-bank affluent of the Harīrūd, the Tagao Gombaz, with the main river, near the modern village of Jām and roughly halfway between Češt and Dawlatyār (Maricq and Wiet, pp. 55-64). It is true that Jūzjānī (II, p. 127, tr. Raverty, II, p. 1047) locates the Ghurid capital near the Pol-e Āhangarān (the modern Dawlatyār) in what was known at that time as the district of Darmašān (cf. *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, tr. Minorsky, comm., p. 333 and Addenda, 2nd Series, map, p. xxiv). A decade or so after Maricq, L. S. Leshnik argued against this location for Fīrūzkūh, with extensive citation of passages from Jūzjānī indicating a more southerly and central location, since the course of the Harīrūd seems to have been the northern boundary of the original Ġūr. He further pointed out that Jām lies within a very narrow valley and that a major access route to the Ghurid capital along the Harīrūd would hardly be possible there. He therefore reverted to Holdich’s view of a more probable location near the more accessible and more central Taywara (pp. 37, 40-49). The impossibility of further exploration and archaeological investigation during the troubled last twenty-five years of Afghanistan’s history has left the question of the location of Fīrūzkūh open.



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at Fīrūzkūh).

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