



GĀZORGĀH

GĀZORGĀH, a village approximately 2.5 miles northeast of the city of Herat in present-day northwestern Afghanistan at 34°22' N and 62°14' E, situated at an elevation of 4,100 feet. The name has also been applied at times to the eastern end of the minor mountain ridge to the north of Herat (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan* III, p. 133; Yāqūt, *Boldān* IV, p. 225; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, I, p. 27, ed. Māyel Heravī, pp. 25, 89).

i. *Geography.*

ii. *Monuments.*

i. GEOGRAPHY

The name Gāzorgāh has usually been explained as a corruption of *kārzārgāh*, meaning “battleground,” after a battle apparently fought there in 206/821-22 between the Kharijite rebel, Ḥamza b. Āḍarak, and the ‘Abbasid governor, ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd-Allāh ‘Ammār (Esfezārī, I, p. 382; Barthold, 57 and n. 45), although the obvious meaning of the word, *gāzorgāh* (the correct form, Gāzorgāh, being corroborated by Yāqūt, loc. cit., “Kāzyārkāh”), is “a fulling place” or “bleaching ground” connected with the processing of cloth (Saljūqī, pp. 3 ff.).

During the medieval period, Gāzorgāh was located in the Parvāna-Havādaštak



district (*bolūk*) of Herat, which then belonged to the large eastern Iranian province of Khorasan (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, II, pp. 27, 88). It has always been identified with the tomb-shrine of the 11th-century Hanbalite traditionist and mystic, K̄vāja ‘Abd-Allāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1089, q.v.), popularly known as Pīr-e Harāt or Pīr-e Anṣār. His tomb became the object of a veneration cult and an important place of pilgrimage (Esfezārī, II, p. 50), particularly from the 15th century onwards, when the Timurid rulers of Herat, starting with Šāhroḡ, who in 829-30/1425-26 erected an enclosure (*ḥaẓīra*) around it, systematically developed it into a major architectural complex, supported by pious endowments (*awqāf*; Subtelny, 1994, pp. 386 ff.; Golombek, pp. 22 ff.). Like the other major shrine foundations in Khorasan, such as the ‘Alid shrines at Balk and Mašhad, the complex of ‘Abd-Allāh Anṣārī at Gāzorgāh was transformed by the Timurids into a vehicle for managing the intensive agriculture of the Herat region (Subtelny, 1994, pp. 189-94). An important prerequisite for that development was the construction of the Jūy-e Solṭānī irrigation canal during the reign of Solṭān Abū Sa‘īd (863-73/1458-69), which dramatically increased the area under cultivation in the Gāzorgāh region (Esfezārī, I, p. 85). It was at the Anṣārī shrine that the important agricultural manual, *Eršād al-zerā‘a* (q.v.), was completed in 921/1515 by Qāsem b. Yūsof Abūnaṣrī (Subtelny, 1994, p. 170).

Throughout the medieval period, Gāzorgāh was the burial place of choice for many members of the political and religious elite of Herat (Saljūqī, ed., comm., pp. 68 ff.), and a favorite destination for excursions outside the city although by the 19th century the shrine and surrounding necropolis had become neglected and fallen into a semi-ruined state, which has persisted to this day (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan* III, p. 133; Saljūqī, pp. 14 ff.).

Gāzorgāh is also the name of a village in the district (*šahrestān*) of Mamassanī in Fārs at 30° 07’ N and 51° 29’ E (Pāpolī Yazdī, p. 477).

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ii. MONUMENTS

Three monuments remain in Gāzorgāh: the funerary enclosure (*haẓīra*) of 'Abd-Allāh Anṣārī, erected by the Timurid Šarhoḵ in 829-32/1432-29; the Namakdān, a garden pavilion variously dated 15th to 17th century (see GARDENS ii, Plate 1); and the Zarnegār-kāna, probably a *kānaqāh*, attributed to the late 15th century, restored in the early 17th century. A most unusual building type, the shrine resembles a *madrassa* with its large rectangular courtyard surrounded by rooms; but only the west half of the courtyard



actually has rooms behind its facade. It shares with the Timurid *madrassa* an imposing facade and entrance block containing a vestibule flanked by large public rooms. These are a *jamā'at-kāna* and a *masjed*, both long rectangular halls divided into five bays by transverse arches, supporting tripartite transverse vaults and ornamented with plaster *moqarnas*. The courtyard has four axial *ayvāns* (q.v.) but the east *ayvān*, which stands behind the tomb of the shaikh, soars to a height of about 30 m and is richly decorated with glazed tile patterns, including the date 832 (in *hazārbāf* technique; foundation dated to Moḥarram 829/November 1425 in *Maṭla'-e sa'dayn*, ed. Šafi', pp. 304-05). The Namakdān is a two-storied twelve-sided pavilion with an octagonal interior. According to local tradition, a second pavilion lay at the other end of the garden. A mid-17th century Namakdān is known from the Sa'adatābād gardens of Isfahan (Honarfar, *Esfahān*, p. 580; Golombek, 1969, p. 70). The facade of the Zarnegār-kāna is perpendicular to that of the shrine and lies just a few meters from its southwest corner. It has a deep arched entrance, giving on to a large domed hall, behind which lie three small rooms. The building takes its name from the brilliant lapis, cobalt, and gold paintings within (probably a restoration, datable by comparison with those in the tomb of Akbar at Sikandra, 1613; see Koch, pl. VII).

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