



HERAT IV. TOPOGRAPHY AND URBANISM

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Pre-Mongol period. In the medieval period, Herat, together with Nišāpur, Marv, and Balk, was one of the four main urban centers of the eastern Iranian world. Although its antiquity cannot be doubted, the origins of Herat remain largely unresearched, as no complex archeological study has been conducted until now (Frye, "Harāt"; Ball, 1982, pp. 123-25). In contrast to other ancient towns of the Iranian east, such as Marv or Samarqand, which successively occupied two or more sites, Herat has existed on the same location since its foundation. The ancient and medieval Herat is today covered by the modern city, making, all throughout, archeological excavation and study difficult if not impossible.

It can be reasonably assumed that the round mound to the north of the medieval ramparts, known as Qohan-dež-e M.s.r.q. (later, Tal-e Bangiān), is the location of the ancient Herat, or Alexandria of Aria, which had been founded by Alexander the Great (4th cent. B.C.E.) on some sort of an urban structure that pre-existed the Greek foundation (Ṭabari, I, p. 702; Qodāma, *Ketāb al-ḵarāj*, p. 265; Ball, 1982, no. 428; Allen 1983, p. 13; Grenet, pp. 379-81; Mirḵvānd, VII, pp. 512-14; Barthold, 1984, tr., p. 49). In a later period, the medieval town was annexed to this most ancient site, and the two parts of



Herat functioned simultaneously for a long time.

The first topographic descriptions of Herat are given by Muslim geographers of the 10th century (EsĀṭakri, pp. 264-67; *Ḥodud al-‘ālam*, ed. Sotuda, p. 91, tr. Minorsky, pp. 103-5; Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 437-38, tr. Kramers and Wiet, pp. 423-24; Moqaddasi, pp. 307-8, tr., pp. 249-50; Ebn Rosta, p. 173). The city occupied an area of about 2 km² within four walls of about half of a farsakh each, forming a rough square (Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 437, tr. Kramers and Wiet, p. 423; cf. Eṣṭakri, p. 264, whose version, although slightly different, is followed by Ebn Ḥawqal). The walls had an irregularity on the northern side, where the Qohan-dež (the old round city) touched the square city. In the 11th century, the Qohan-dež (Allen, 1981, no. 53) was still an inhabited quarter, before it became a cemetery in the later period. The dimensions of the walled inner city remained unchanged from the 10th century until modern times; it was the outer city and the suburbs that grew over the centuries (cf. Esfezāri, ed. Emām, I, p. 78). The walls were massive and were frequently reinforced and rebuilt over several centuries. In 1154, Herat could resist the raids of Oğuz tribes (see ĞOZZ) roaming in the area only because of its strong walls (Ebn al-Aṭir [Beirut], IX, pp. 180-83; Rāvandi, p. 183; Bosworth, 1968, pp. 153-54). Four gates (*darb*, *bāb*) are mentioned by the Muslim geographers, each opening in one of the four walls facing a cardinal point of the compass (Eṣṭakri, pp. 264-65, tr., p. 278; Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 437, tr. Kramers and Wiet, p. 423; Moqaddasi, p. 307). The road led from the Malek or Sarāy Gate (N), later also called the Maydān or Barāmān Gate (Ḥāfez-e Abru, 1984, I, p. 18), to Balk; from the Firuzābād or Firuz (since the 19th cent., Qandahār) Gate (S) to Sistān; from the Košk (Koš in Ḥāfez-e Abru) Gate (E) to Ghur; and from the Ziād (since the 14th cent., ‘Erāq) Gate (W) to Nišāpur. The Sarāy Gate was in cast iron, while the three others were built in wood. Because of the Qohan-dež touching the north wall, the Sarāy Gate was not situated in the middle section of the wall, but towards its western end. Two main alleys ran across the town in the north-south and east-west directions, joining the Sarāy and Firuzābād gates, and the Košk and Ziād gates, and crossing at a right angle in the center, where the main *bāzār* (*čahār-su*) was located. Secondary *bāzārs* were located at the proximity of the gates and were named after them. A network of smaller alleys covered the town, distributing the access to other *bāzārs* and to living quarters, still largely observed in 1842 by Charles North and Edward Sanders, who drew a map of the town. It is not quite clear if the fifth Herat gate, named *Darb-e Qepčāq* and situated in the north wall towards its eastern end (on the other side of the Qohan-dež), mentioned in later sources (e.g., Ḥāfez-e Abru, 1984, I, p. 18; idem,



ed. Māyel Heravi, pp. 12-13), was already in existence in the pre-Mongol period. There was no specific *bāzār* associated with this gate, but it opened towards a quarter where the main official and public buildings of Herat were concentrated, such as the Great Mosque (Masjed-e Jāme'), a feature that probably reflects an original urban pattern (Esfezāri, ed. Eshāq, I, pp. 57-59; Allen, 1983, p. 13).

The citadel, located inside the walled city, had its own system of fortified walls with four gates, each one facing a city gate and named after it (Eṣṭakri, p. 265, tr., p. 278; Ebn Ḥawqal, 437, tr. Kramers and Wiet, p. 423; Moqaddasi, p. 307, tr., p. 249). Since the early 14th century, the citadel has been known as the Qal'a-ye (or Ḥeṣār-e) Ektiār-al-Din (q.v.), after a military commander of the Kart dynasty; it occupied a site of about 18 x 42 m on a raised terrace (Allen, 1981, no. 54).

Muslim geographers of the 10th century locate the Great Mosque of Herat inside the square walls, surrounded by the *bāzārs*, in the central part of the city (Eṣṭakri, p. 264, tr., p. 279; Ebn Ḥawqal, 438, tr. Kramers and Wiet, p. 423; Moqaddasi, p. 307, tr., p. 350; Allen, 1981, no. 428). The mosque, repaired many times over the centuries, was extensively restored in the 12th century by the Ghurid ruler Ġiāt-al-Din Moḥammad; an inscription commemorating this event is still visible today (Kvāndamir, *Ḥabib al-siar* III, pp. 378-79; Melikian-Chirvani, 1970; Allen, 1981, pp. 108-10). A Ghurid dynastic mausoleum was built north to the mosque (Fischer, p. 383; Allen, 1981, no. 477, p. 108; only its south wall was extant at the end of the 20th cent.; Allen, 1983, p. 14). The *madrasa* of Ġiāt al-Din Ġuri, (built ca. 1200-03), situated in the same area, remained one of the most important *madrasas* of Herat until the Timurid period, when it was eclipsed by the *madrasa* of Šāhroḳ (Kvāndamir, *Ḥabib al-siar* III, p. 379; Allen, 1981, no. 460).

Figure 1. Topographical landmarks of Timurid Herat (after Allen 1981, Map 2).

Among other important buildings of the early Muslim period, the first government-sponsored *madrasa*, a Neẓā-miya, was erected by the Ziād ('Erāq) Gate in the years 1067-92. A Saljuq mosque was also located in this area (Allen, 1981, nos. 423, 477; Bosworth, 1968, p. 72).

The key question concerning the urban development of Herat at this early stage is the date of the square town, and consequently the origin of the specific quadrangle plan of the inner town, already observed by the geographers in the



10th century and still largely visible today. There is a strong presumption that the quadrate street plan of the square town might be a Greek-Roman heritage transmitted to the Iranian East through Sasanian influence during the period of urban expansion in Persia and Central Asia between the 3rd and the 5th centuries. Among other Sasanian foundations of this period in the eastern provinces are Pušang (see FŪŠANJ), founded by Šāpur I (r. 240-72; see Ball, I, no. 1259), Marv al-Rud (Maručāq on the Morġāb River) founded by Bahrām V (r. 421-38; Ball, I, no. 711), etc., while in Central Asia, the 5th century saw the birth or the re-foundation of Paykant, Panjikant, and perhaps Bukhara (Grenet, pp. 372-76, 381 with n. 39, refuting the theory of the Indian origin of the quadrate plan, suggested in Gaube, pp. 55-57). Recent researches in urban history of the Iranian East suggest that the citadel of Herat might have been located on the southern edge of the ancient round city (Qohan-dež). It cannot be excluded that the citadel has always occupied its present site, since pieces of pre-Islamic ceramics were found there (unpub. material mentioned in Grenet, 1996, p. 381; for a different view, see Allen, 1981, no. 54).

Muslim authors confirm the importance of the suburban area (*rabazū*) outside the square city, which was covered with fields, gardens, and pastures. Agriculture was most flourishing in the countryside south of Herat. Although it is impossible to retrace the pre-Mongol network of canals in its totality, the Muslim geographers evidence their significance and the abundance of water (*Ḥodud al-ālam*, ed. Sotuda, p. 91, tr. Minorsky, p. 103; Eṣṭakri, pp. 294-66, tr. p. 278; Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 438, tr. Kramers and Wiet, p. 424). The earliest reference to any canal flowing to the city is that of Enjil (Anjir) *nahr*, mentioned by Eṣṭakri, (p. 266, tr. p. 280) and, following him, Ebn Ḥawqal (p. 439, tr., Kramers and Wiet, p. 424; Edrisi, p. 471; Allen, 1981, no. 18). Other references to Herat canals come from the historical sources describing restorations after the Mongol invasion. Thus, the Juy-e Mālān and the Juy-e Now (637/1239) and the Juy-e Ālenjān (638/1240) existed in the pre-Mongol Herat (Sayf Heravi, pp. 123, 127; Allen, 1981, nos. 26, 29, 11). The most famous bridge on the Harirud, the Mālān Bridge (Allen, 1981, No. 78), located on the road from Herat to Farāh and Qandahār, dated from the Saljuqid period. It was frequently repaired, and, up to modern times, remains one of the most famous landmarks of Herat countryside.

Post-Mongol urban developments. After the Mongol destructions of 1221-22, Herat was progressively rebuilt during the Kart period (1245-1389), having started already in 1236 with the reconstruction of the main Herat canal, the



Juy-e Enjil (Sayf Heravi, p. 111). The Karts did not only rebuild the town but also were responsible for larger scale urban developments in the inner city, the suburbs, and the oasis of Herat (on Herat under the Karts, see Allen, 1981, pp. 228-31). Canals and bridges were restored or new ones were constructed, as was the water supply system inside the town. The Great Mosque was repaired and embellished (K̄vāndamir, *Ḥabīb al-siar* III, pp. 378-79). In 776/1374-55, a huge decorated bronze cauldron was given to the mosque by the Kart ruler for the community's use; it served as a model for a similar cauldron donated by Timur (Tamerlane) to the mausoleum of Shaikh Aḥmad Yasavi in Yasi (present-day Turkestan, in Kazakstan) at the end of the 14th century (Melikian-Chirvani, 1982, p. 232 and fig. 58). At least six shrines (*mazār*) and cemeteries were functioning in Herat and around it during the period (Sayf Heravi, p. 441). The Karts sponsored the repair and construction of other religious buildings, mosques, *madrāsas*, *kānaqāhs*, etc. Important works were accomplished under Faḵr-al-Din and Ġiāṭ-al-Din Kart, at the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th century, when the Pāy-e Ḥeṣār quarter was developed around the Great Mosque and the citadel (started in 1299). A big, walled *maydān* was added at the northern foot of the citadel and was called the *ʿIdgāh-e divāri* or *moṣallā* (Allen, 1981, no. 228). Another quarter with an important concentration of Kart constructions was around the ʿErāq Gate; for example, three *kānaqāhs* were endowed by the successive Kart rulers Faḵr-al-Din, in 1299, Ġiāṭ-al-Din, before 1321, Moʿezz-al-Din Pir-Ḥosayn, around 1330-69 (Allen, 1981, nos. 499, 502, 509), and others. A new royal residence, Bāḡ-e Šahr, was also built in the northern part of the walled square city, while in the suburbs of Herat residential gardens (*bāḡs*; *čahār-bāḡs*) were created, such as the Bāḡ-e Safid in the countryside northeast of the town, the Bāḡ-e Zāḡān to the west (Allen, 1981, nos. 645, 651, 653), etc. The Herat system of fortifications was restored and in many ways improved. The citadel structures were completely rebuilt under the Karts and are still visible today even after having been submitted to periodical repairs and developments under the Timurids and the Safavids. After the Karts, the citadel functioned less as ruler's residence and more as treasure house and prison; it resumed its military and defensive role only at specific moments. The Malek Gate (now called *darvāza*) was recast in iron. Under Moʿezz-al-Din Pir-Ḥosayn (r. 1332-70) an external protective wall was erected in the countryside, where the Enjil canal marked the northeastern limits of the extended Herat (Esfezāri, ed. Emām, I, pp. 81-82).

The Timurid period (1405-1507). This period was one of intense urban



development. Timurid constructions amount to more than sixty structures. Large-scale transformations in urban design took place under Šāhroḡ (r. 1405-47) and Solṭān-Abu Saʿid (r. 1451-69) and culminated under Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā (r. 1470-1506; Allen, 1983, pp. 29-31; O’Kane, pp. 104-10).

Timur destroyed the Kart outer oasis wall (never to be rebuilt) and the city walls in 1381, and took away the iron Malek Gate with him to Transoxiana as spoils of war (Esfezāri, ed. Emām, II, p. 41; K̄vāndamir, *Ḥabib al-siar* III, p. 431). Šāhroḡ ordered the reconstruction of the city walls and of the citadel (completed in 818/1415-16), but also of the main Herat Čahār-su *bāzār* and other *bāzārs* (since 813/1410-11; Allen, 1983, p. 18; Tumanovich, 1999). He also erected many public buildings in the official quarters of Herat, namely around the Great Mosque and the citadel (old Kartid quarter), and completed the reconstruction of Kartid gardens (Allen, 1983, p. 35). He built and endowed in 813/1410-11 the famous Šāhroḡiya *madrasa* and *kānaqāh* located east of the citadel (Allen, 1981, no. 486). He was the first, followed by other Timurid rulers, to sponsor the construction of the K̄iābān, a new residential quarter of Herat located to the north of the town, outside the Malek Gate. The K̄iābān quarter remained the main landmark of Timurid urbanism in Herat. Numerous religious and public buildings, garden residences, funerary complexes, and shrines were sponsored along the K̄iābān quarter by Timurid rulers, princes, and dignitaries. Among them are, the *madrasa* and the mosque of Šāhroḡ’s wife, the princess Gowhar-Šād Āḡā (q.v.), built during the years 1417-37, and the *madrasa* of Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā, built in 1477-86, part of a complex later known as the Moṣallā, as well as the Eḡlāsiya complex of Mir ‘Ali-Šir Navā’i (q.v.), the construction of which started in 880/1475-76 (Allen, 1981, nos. 413, 431, 457, 491; Subtelny, 1991), etc. The Timurid repairs to the Jāme’ Mosque date from 903/1497-98 onwards (Mirḡvānd, VII, pp. 519, 525-28; Allen, 1983, p. 29). The ‘Erāq Gate quarter, where Saljuḡ, Ghurid, and Kartid patrons had traditionally endowed public and religious buildings, was another scene of extensive Timurid building activity. The palatial complex of Solṭān-Abu Saʿid, called the Āq Sarāy (K̄vāndamir, *Faṣl-i az . . .*, p. 27), was built in the suburbs outside the ‘Erāq Gate in 1459-69 (Allen, 1981, no. 675). Later, K̄vāja Afzal-al-Din Kermāni sponsored (in 1497-1505) the construction of a large complex of religious buildings, situated in the same area (Allen, 1981, nos. 429, 449, 494).

The intensive development of the Harirud canal system, and especially the digging of a major canal, the Juy-e Solṭāni (Allen, 1981, no. 35), on Solṭān-Abu



Sa'īd's order (1467-69), improved the irrigation of agricultural districts south of Herat on both sides of the river ('Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandi, ed. Šafi', II, p. 1343; Esfezāri, ed. Emām, I, p. 85). It also permitted the extension of the recreational area to the slopes of the mountains east and north of the town, thus extending the outer Herat beyond its former limit at the Juy-e Enjil. Under Solṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā, the region was completely covered by a series of royal and aristocratic gardens and terraces (*takt*). In 1469, the ruler ordered the construction of a monumental residential royal garden east of Herat, the Bāḡ-e Jahānārā (Esfezāri, ed. Emām, II, pp. 316-19; K̄vāndamir, *Ḥabib al-siar* IV, p. 136; see also Ball, 1981; Allen 1981, no. 632; Szuppe, 1993, pp. 272-76). Timurid princes and dignitaries sponsored and endowed many shrines in Herat and other towns and boroughs of the region, such as Ziāratgāh, Owba, etc. (Wā'eẓ Ḥosayni, especially chap. 3; Allen, 1981, nos. 556-622). The most famous shrine of Herat, still functioning, was at Gāzorgāh (q.v.), where K̄vāja 'Abd-Allāh Anṣāri (d. 1089, q.v.) is buried (Allen, 1981, no. 204; Ball, 1982, no. 346; also Seljuqi; Golombek). In the Timurid period, the 'Idgāh square moved to the open space outside the city walls, to the MosĀallā area at the north end of the Kiābān quarter, at the foot of the Kuh-e Moḡtār hill (Allen, 1981, no. 532).

The town in the main preserved its earlier topography during the Safavid period (1510-1716); a plan of Herat drawn by Natalia Tumanovich shows the major buildings mentioned in Safavid sources (Tumanovich, 1989, pp. 46-47 and pp. 45, 48-64 for the commentary). During the early years of the Safavid rule in Khorasan and their struggle against the Uzbeks, the residential suburbs shrank and a part of the agricultural countryside declined (K̄vāndamir, *Ḥabib al-siar* IV, pp. 532, 552-53). Many gardens situated closer to the town, such as Bāḡ-e Safid, Bāḡ-e Zāḡān, or Bāḡ-e Āhu, were temporarily turned into fortified advance quarters (Szuppe, 1993, pp. 270-78). The walls of the citadel of Herat were maintained in good condition, and the five gates (*darvāza*) are referred to in the sources by their Timurid names. To them might be added the names of four main corner towers and of some secondary ones that are frequently mentioned, giving some indications on the importance of town defence strategy in the 16th century (Szuppe, 1992, pp. 28-29; Tumanovich, 1989, pp. 48-50). From 1537 onwards, the Safavids pursued an urban development policy after a long period of neglect of the town. The Safavid governor Moḡammad Khan Takkalu ordered the restoration of Timurid residential gardens and public buildings, but also of farming gardens, as well as of some shrines (Jonābādi, pp. 502-3; Amir Maḡmud, p. 388; 'Obayd-Allāh Heravi, pp. 99-141, lists the shrines existing in Herat in 1783-84). He also commanded



repairs and extensions of the *bāzārs*, and had a *maydān* built to the north of the citadel, probably as the restoration and extension of the old Kartid *Idgāh-e divāri*; under the Safavids the *maydān* had military and commercial use (Amir Maḥmud, ms., foll. 299a-300a, the chapter on the building of the *maydān* and other repairs in Herat is missing from the published text; see also Szuppe, 1992, pp. 115-16). Very little material evidence has been left from the Safavid period, and it is rather impossible to ascertain the part of the royal patronage in it, with the rare exceptions of the dome of the Emāmzāda Ab'l-Qāsem shrine in the Qohan-dez (repairs dated in or after 941/1534-35, as argued by Seljuqi in the commentaries to his editions of Wā'eẓ Ḥosayni and 'Obayd-Allāh Heravi, part IV, pp. 37-40) and architectural repairs at the Gāzorgāh shrine in 970/1562-63 (tile inscription published in Golombek, pp. 91-92). From the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (1588-1629), Herat was linked with the Caspian provinces of northern Persian by a royal road. The system of water supply was improved; a Safavid cistern, dated 1044/1634, at the Čahār-su, has been preserved until the modern period (Najimi, 1982; Tumanovich, 1989, pp. 46-47). The countryside enjoyed relative prosperity, and Safavid and local dignitaries sponsored buildings and shrines in Herat and other towns in the region (e.g., Maḥmud b. Wali, foll. 236b-239b, for Herat and its countryside; 'Obayd-Allāh Heravi, ed. Māyel Heravi, p. 126 and passim). Maḥmud b. Wali, who visited Herat in 1631, described its fortifications and important buildings, most of which were restored edifices from the earlier periods, namely Ghurid and Timurid constructions (Maḥmud b. Wali, foll. 236b-239b, tr., pp. 80-83). During the 17th century, architectural repairs were again accomplished at Gāzorgāh by unknown patrons (tile inscription dated 1014/1605-06, see Seljuqi, pp. 25-26; Golombek, p. 92). Two *ḥawżes* were constructed or repaired by the donation of a "Maḥd-e 'Olyā" (d. 1684-85), a lady descending from a minor branch of Astrakhanid khans of Bukhara and Balk, one in 1092/1681-82 and another in Gāzorgāh, dated 1100/1688-89 (Seljuqi, pp. 23-24). Among the major patrons of late Safavid Herat were members of the Barnābādi family of local *kvājas* and Safavid administrators (Māyel Heravi; Tumanovich 1989). They sponsored shrines and gardens in their native borough and in the city itself (Barnābādi, fol. 4a, tr. p. 35, for their activities in Barnābād, and fol. 67a and passim, tr. p. 117 and passim, for repairs of Pir-e Sabuzpuš shrine in Herat and building of a garden). In addition, the Mughal Mosque (Masjed-e Moḡol) was constructed during the period of Shah Solaymān (1666-94; cf. Tumanovich, pp. 50, 155).



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