



JĀM I. JĀM REGION AND VILLAGE

JĀM, a mountainous region on the way from Kabul to Herat, and a historically important village in the province of Ghur (Ġur) in western Afghanistan (lat. 34°23' N, long. 64°30' E). Lying 45 km northeast of Šahrak, Jām is located on the barren foothills of the remote narrow valley of Jām, close to the well-known minaret of Jām (see [JĀM MINARET](#)). The village of Jām abounds in cornfields, willow trees, and orchards, particularly of apricots and apples (Adamec, III, p. 183; Pažvāk, p. 16, no. 1; Stark, pp. 65-66; Masse, p. 406).

The history of Jām is virtually interwoven with that of its minaret, which stands at the confluence of the Harirud River and one of its tributaries, Tagao Gunbaz (or Jam Rud). Emphasizing the cultural significance of the place, in 2002 UNESCO declared the minaret of Jām and the surrounding archaeological remains as Afghanistan's first World Heritage Site, but due to the status of the minaret it was also put on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger or List of Endangered Sites (Thomas, Pastori, and Cucco, 2004, p. 89; "Endangered minaret puts Afghanistan on World Heritage list," Manhart, pp. 406-8; for more details see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/211/>). Built in the late 12th century on an octagonal base, the cylindrical minaret is 63 meters high (Thomas, Giannino, and Cucco, 2004, p. 87), and consists of three superposed stages culminating in a huge lantern. It has an interior staircase of over 180 steps (Bar, p. 510; Massé, p. 406). In height, the minaret of Jām, made of baked mud-bricks, is the second tallest in the whole Islamic world, after the Qoṭb



Menār in Delhi (Jilāni-Dāvāri, p. 45; Leshnik, p. 40; cf. Dupree, p. 315). It is widely assumed that the minaret was constructed about 591/1194 by the Ghurid (see GHURIDS) ruler Ġiāt-al-Din Moḥammad b. Sām I (r. 558-99/1163-1203), who was a great patron of arts and the builder of mosques, *madrasas*, and caravanserais (Bosworth, p. 1103). The inscription on the side of this colossal building indicates that the minaret was constructed to commemorate Moḥammad b. Sām I's triumph in one of his campaigns (cf. Maricq and Wiet, p. 65; Pinder-Wilson, pp. 171-72). It is evidently the only significant piece of architecture left from the Ghurid dynasty which ruled, for some sixty years, a vast area extending from Khorasan in the west to the Bay of Bengal in the east.

Because of the brevity of historical evidence, some confusion has arisen regarding the position of Jām and its minaret in relation to the now non-existent city of Firuzkuh (see FIRUZKUH i. The Ghurid Capital) and its Friday Mosque (*masjed-e jāme*). In his *Ṭabaqāt-e Nāšeri*, Menhāj-al-Din b. Serāj-al-Din Juzjāni (1193-1260?), the main source on the Ghurids (q.v.), states that, when the Ghurid Malek-al-Jebāl Qoṭb-al-Din Moḥammad-Ḥosayn decided to have a well-fortified castle (*qal'a*) built, he sent his people around to find a suitable place. He eventually chose the spot where the city and the castle of Firuzkuh were constructed (Juzjāni, I, p. 336). Elsewhere in his *Ṭabaqāt-e Nāšeri* (I, p. 375), Juzjāni reports that Firuzkuh's Friday Mosque was washed away in a flash flood. Apparently, for both natural and human reasons, the city itself disappeared completely.

On the other hand, due to its inaccessibility, local conflicts, as well as devastating Mongol incursions, the village of Jām seems to have been lost to the outside world for centuries until it "was 're-discovered' during a survey of the Afghan Boundary Commission in 1886" (Thomas, Pastori, and Cucco, p. 89, with reference to Holdich). In the mid-1950s, the governor of Herat reported to the Afghan Historical Society of his sighting of a minaret on the banks of the Harirud River, thus drawing some attention to Jām again. In 1957, an expedition led by the President of the Afghan Historical Society, Aḥmad-'Ali Kohzād, and by the Belgian archaeologist André Maricq visited the minaret of Jām. Since one of the two inscriptions on the minaret glorifies Ġiāt-al-Din Moḥammad, Maricq came to identify Jām with Firuzkuh (Maricq and Wiet, pp. 21-55), the summer capital of the Ghurids, assuming accordingly that the minaret belonged to the Friday Mosque of Firūzkūh (Leshnik, pp. 37, 40-41; Jilāni-Dāvāri, p. 44). Maricq thus called the whole area Firuzkuh (Jilāni-Dāvāri,



p. 52; Massé, p. 406). However, the view that the flood had destroyed Firuzkuh's mosque but left its minaret intact, has been seriously challenged. It appears highly improbable that the Jām minaret survived so strong a flood which had devastated the rest of the mosque. Besides, because of its mountainous condition and the lack of land space, the area of Jām could not have possibly afforded such enormous monumental buildings as Firuzkuh's Friday Mosque. Nor could it have possessed the capacity of becoming the capital of the Ghurid dynasty, as some have assumed (Jilāni-Dāvāri, pp. 55-56).

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