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JĀM II. JĀM MINARET

JĀM MINARET, pre-eminent 12th-century monument of the Šansabāni sultans of Ḡur in central Afghanistan. The minaret stands 65 meters high near the confluence of the Harirud and Jāmrud rivers in a remote mountain valley once protected by a series of defensive towers (Ball, 2002; Plate I). The first major publication on the monument appeared in 1959 (Maricq and Wiet), but its existence was reported as early as the 1880s (Ball, 1982, I, p. 133). It was discussed in Afghan publications in the 1940s (Herberg and Davary, p. 57), and an image of it appeared on the cover of the *Majalla-ye Kābul* in 1932-33 and 1933-34, anticipating its subsequent adoption as an Afghan national symbol. In 2002, the minaret of Jām was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List. It is widely recognized as the cynosure of Ghurid architectural patronage (see ĀL-E ŠANSAB, GHURIDS, ḠUR; cf. Hillenbrand), remnants of which are scattered across Afghanistan (q.v.), Pakistan, and north India (q.v.).

Historical context. The minaret bears the name of the Šansabāni sultan Ḡiāṯ-al-Din Moḥammad b. Sām (r. 1163-1203), during whose reign Ghurid control extended from Nishapur in the west to Benares in the East. Although it is not mentioned in the medieval sources, it is widely believed to mark the site of Firuzkuh (q.v.), the Ghurid summer capital (Maricq and Wiet, pp. 55-64). Despite objections to this identification (Leshnik), attempts have been made to correlate the topography of the site to medieval descriptions of Firuzkuh (Vercellin, 1976; Pinder-Wilson, 2001, pp. 166-71). Recent illegal excavations on the hills surrounding the site have reportedly uncovered evidence for a great density of occupation in small multistoried structures, recalling medieval

accounts of Firuzkuh as heavily populated (Stewart, pp. 168-78). Moreover, the existence of a small 12th-century Jewish community at the site, attested by a series of Judaeo-Persian tombstones (Bruno, 1963; Gnoli, 1962, 1964; Rapp), and the reported retrieval of shards of luster and *minai* ceramics (q.v.) probably imported from Kāšān (Sourdel-Thomine, 2004, p. 41), indicate a degree of cosmopolitanism and a local market for luxury goods.

The minaret stands isolated today, but the probable remains of an associated mosque have been identified on a riverine terrace to the northeast (Sourdel-Thomine, 2004, pp. 31-32; Thomas et al., pp. 92-93). As with other apparently free-standing 11th- and 12th-century brick (q.v.) minarets in Ḡazna (q.v.) and Iranian Sistān, the mosque may have been built with more ephemeral materials (O'Kane, pp. 89-97); it is reported that the Friday Mosque of Firuzkuh was destroyed by flooding just before 1200, at the zenith of Ghurid power (Juzjāni, I, p. 375, tr. I, p. 404).

The minaret bears a foundation text. Scholarship has long been split between a reading of 570/1174-75 and 590/1193-94, but recent research has confirmed that the former is correct (Sourdel-Thomine, 2004, pp. 135-39), casting doubt on the oft-cited idea that the monument was erected to commemorate Ghurid victories in India. If the minaret had a commemorative function, it may memorialize the capture of Ḡazna, the former capital of the Ghaznavid sultans (see GHAZNAVIDS), from the Ḡozz (q.v.) Turks in 1174. This was a pivotal event for the development of the Ghurid sultanate, after which Moʿezz-al-Din Moḥammad b. Sām, the brother of the Jām minaret's patron, was installed as co-sultan in Ḡazna (r. 1203-06). The choice of monument may have reflected the nature of the victory that it commemorated, for it seems likely that the minarets of Masʿud III (r. 1099-1115) and Bahrāmšāh (r. 1117-57) at Ḡazna provided the inspiration for the monument at Jām (Pinder-Wilson, 1985, p. 100; 2001, pp. 155-66). The early date of construction points to the precocious development of a distinctive Ghurid architectural style otherwise witnessed in a mausoleum at Češt (q.v.), which is dated 562/1167 (Blair, p. 82), and the spectacular madrasa of 1176 at Šāh-e Mašhad in Ḡarjestān (Glatzer).

Construction. The minaret is constructed from baked brick, with occasional wooden courses and the use of stucco and terracotta for decoration. It stands on an octa-gonal socle, which supports three superimposed cylindrical shafts of decreasing girth crowned by a small pavilion. The interior is occupied by two staircases that do not communicate but once originated in a single entrance oriented towards the northeast, the probable location of the mosque

with which the minaret was originally associated. The reason for this idiosyncratic arrangement is unclear. The exterior transitions between different sections of the shaft were originally masked by projecting balconies borne on wooden armatures adorned with stucco revetment in the form of *moqarnas* vaulting. The complex brick and terracotta geometric ornament of the lowest shaft is not integral to its structure, but applied with a thin course of mortar, a separation between structural medium and applied ornament that is characteristic of Ghurid architectural decoration as whole (Sourdel-Thomine, 1960).

Inscriptions. The surface of the minaret bears a series of inscriptions (see EPIGRAPHY) contained in five encircling bands that range in height from 1.5 to 3 meters. The inscriptions terminate on the eastern face, which one would have beheld when facing toward the west, the direction of the conventional *qebla* (Sourdel-Thomine, 2004, pp. 93-95; Flood, p. 276). The two uppermost bands of the minaret contain religious texts, culminating in the profession of faith. Below is an extract from the Qurʾān 61:13-14. The three lower bands are occupied by increasingly elaborate and bombastic renditions of the name and titles of sultan Ḡiāt al-Din. The inscriptions are executed in angular *kufi* script rather than the cursive scripts that were gaining popularity during the 12th century (see CALLIGRAPHY). Here the sole use of cursive is reserved for the signature of the architect (*meʿmār*), who bore the *nesba* Nišāpuri (Sourdel-Thomine, 2004, pp. 133-34). Nevertheless, a concern with legibility reveals itself in the positioning of the inscriptions, and in the use of turquoise blue glaze for the letters of the central historical text, the earliest recorded use of this feature in Ghurid architecture (PLATE I). The epigraphic ensemble culminates in a spectacular but poorly preserved rendition of the sultan's titles surrounding the octagonal socle. The inscription demonstrates a stunning calligraphic virtuosity, with the verticals (*hastae*) of three-meter high letters forming three alternating knot patterns at their centers, and terminating in dense scrolls, each filled with a single palmette.

The most extraordinary inscription appears however on the surface of the lowest shaft, where the entire text of the Qurʾān's nineteenth sura (Maryam) is inscribed in a series of narrow ribbon-like bands that overlap and intersect to form panels filled with geometric ornament (PLATE II). The form and content of this inscription are unusual, and have fueled speculation that the epigraphic program reflects the particular historical circumstances of the minaret's construction (Grabar).

Interpretation. Taken in conjunction with the interpretation of the minaret as a monument to the Indian victories of the Šansabānis, denunciations of idolatry in the Ṣurat Maryam (19:49, 19:81) have been read as references to the Indian subjects of the Ghurids (Pinder-Wilson, 2001, pp. 170-71). The recent re-dating of the minaret precludes such an interpretation, however, since its construction predates Šansabāni expansion into north India. Instead, analysis of the content of the verses and their spatial deployment suggests that they may have been chosen for their ability to promote the doctrinal position of the Karrāmiya. This pietistic Sunnite sect flourished in Ḡur, which Karrāmi preaching is said to have been instrumental in converting to Islam (Bosworth, 1961, 1969).

The Karrāmiya enjoyed widespread popularity in the eastern Islamic world in the 11th and 12th centuries, competing for patronage, material resources, and spiritual adherents with representatives of other Sunnite legal schools (*maḏhab*s), chief among them the Hanafites and Shaʿifites. The sect was closely associated with the Šansabāni sultans in the decades before the sultans ended the relationship in 1199 (Juzjāni, I, p. 362; tr. I, p. 384). Among the very few material remains of this relationship is a superb four-volume Qurʾān with commentary (*tafsir*) included at the end of each sura. The manuscript, now in the Archeological Museum of Iran (q.v. under MUSEUMS OF IRAN), was commissioned by Sultan Ḡiāṯ-al-Din and completed 584/1189, and is the only manuscript that can be confidently ascribed to Ghurid patronage (Afround, Flood). Like the Jām minaret, the manuscript bears the signature of a scribe with the *nesba* Nišāpuri. The included *tafsir* is by Abu Bakr ʿAtiq b. Moḥammad al-Surābādi (d. ca. 1101), one of the leading Karrāmis of Nishapur (Gilliot), and this choice suggests that the manuscript comprised a Šansabāni bequest to a Karrāmi foundation (Flood, pp. 268-70, 279).

The opponents of the Karrāmiya depict them as anthropomorphists, and even accuse them of harboring quasi-Christian beliefs concerning an embodied Godhead (El-Galli, p. 73; Bosworth, “Karrāmiyya,” p. 667). The Qurʾānic phrase “kun fa-yakūn” (*Be! And it is*) occupied a central position in Karrāmi polemics concerning the relationship between divine nature and the created universe (Flood, pp. 275-76, 279). The phrase occurs eight times in the Qurʾān, including verse 34 of the Ṣurat Maryam. This verse is emphasized on the eastern side of the Jām minaret, where the densest and the most lavishly appointed ornament appears, and which one would have beheld when facing the *qebla*. Here a unique rhomboidal knot is formed by the intersection of different epigraphic

strands containing verses 19:34-35, directly above a singular arched panel that seems to represent a *meḥrāb* (Plates i-ii; cf. Sourdel-Thomine, 2004, pp. 93-95). These verses deny the divinity of Jesus while asserting the ability of God to call whatever He wills into being with his command “kun” (*Be!*). The focal verses thus highlight the contentious issue of anthropomorphism, emphasizing the relationship between God’s eternal essence and His temporal creative powers, but in a manner that rebuts the critics of the Karrāmiya by underlining that these powers did not extend to the production of divine progeny.

The construction of the Jām minaret and the careful orchestration of its sophisticated epigraphic program suggest active collaboration between artisan, theologian, and perhaps patron. The use of Qurʾānic citation to promote a specific polemical position underlines the way in which the sacred text could acquire particular valences related to contemporary exegesis and its deployment in specific historical contexts. This use of Qurʾānic scripture as both text and contextual commentary was later exported to India and is manifest in the choice of Qurʾānic verses that adorn the Qoṭb Mosque, the Ghurid Friday mosque of Delhi, the (Welch et al., pp. 17-26; Flood, pp. 288-89). Adjoining this mosque the Qoṭb Menār (1199 onwards), a massive multi-tiered stone minaret, is perhaps the most enduring, and certainly the most visible, legacy of the Jām minaret, which evidently inspired it (Maricq and Wiet, pp. 65-67; Pinder-Wilson, 1985, p. 100).

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