

**Ancient Herat Vol. 2 – Ute Franke / Thomas Urban, Excavations and Explorations in Herat City**  
with contributions by Warwick Ball, Benjamin Mutin, Cécile Buquet-Marcon, Stephanie Langer (+), Roland Besenval (+),  
Nader Rassuli and Ajmal Ayomuddin

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Ancient Herat Vol. 2

# Excavations and Explorations in Herat City

by

Ute Franke and Thomas Urban

with contributions by Warwick Ball, Benjamin Mutin,  
Cécile Buquet-Marcon, Stephanie Langer (+), Roland Besenval (+),  
Nader Rassuli and Ajmal Ayomuddin

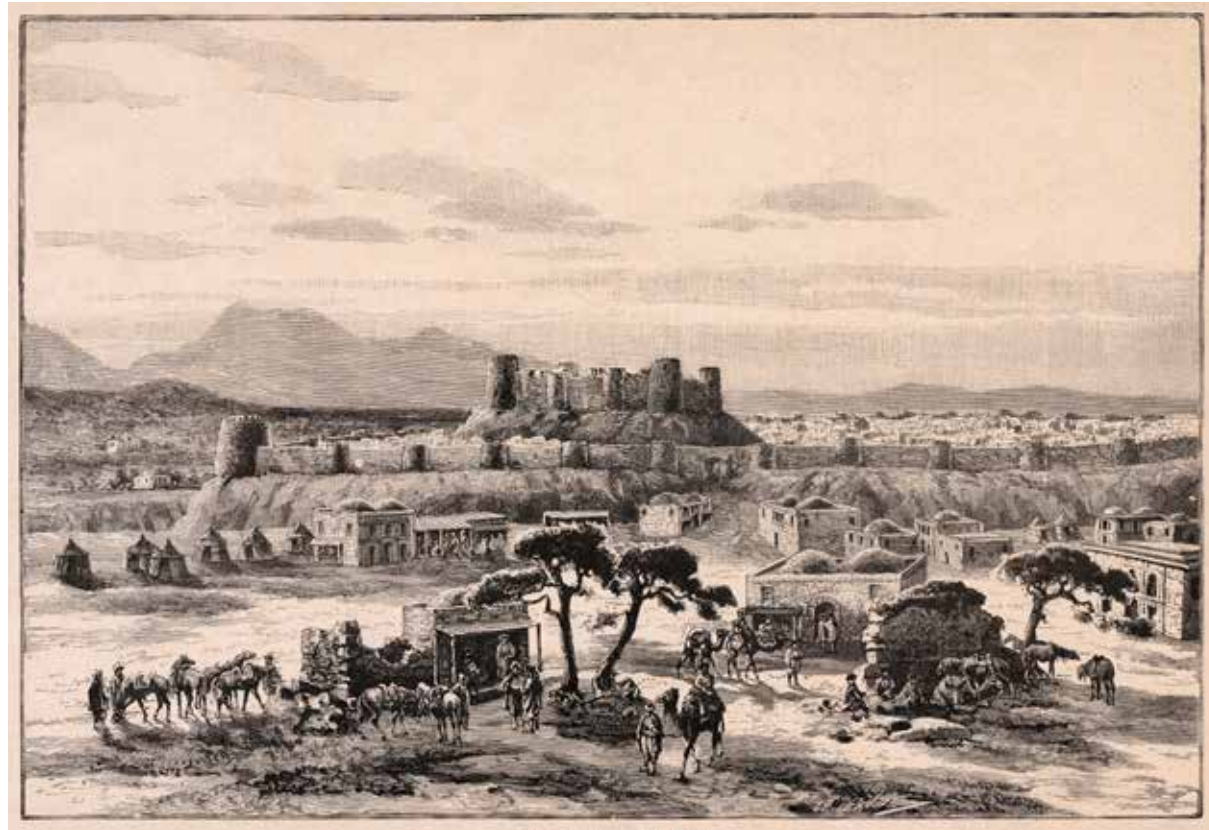
# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Warwick Ball</i>	
<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>Ute Franke</i>	
<b>Notes to the Reader</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Illustration Credits</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<i>Ute Franke</i>	
<b>Location and Historical Background</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>History of Research</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>In Quest for the Roots of an Old City</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>The Pottery from Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin: An Overview</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<i>Ute Franke</i>	
<b>Provenance</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Methodological Approach: Scope and Constraints</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Pottery Groups and Types</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Glazed Groups</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Unglazed Groups</b> .....	<b>69</b>
<b>Résumé</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>Archaeological Research in Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin</b>	
<b>Excavations in the Upper Citadel – Trenches 1a and 1b</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<i>Ute Franke</i>	
<b>The Excavations: Documentation and Findings</b> .....	<b>96</b>
<b>Trench 1a</b> .....	<b>99</b>
<b>Trench 1b</b> .....	<b>121</b>
<b>Stratigraphy and Chronology</b> .....	<b>129</b>
<b>Small Finds and Pottery</b> .....	<b>154</b>
<i>Ute Franke</i>	
<b>Guidelines for the Pottery Catalogues</b> .....	<b>182</b>
<b>Trenches 1a and 1b – Pottery Catalogue</b> .....	<b>183</b>
<b>(Plates 1–137)</b>	

Investigation of the Citadel Glacis – Trench 2	321	Unesco Excavations 1976–79 – Pottery Rediscovered	680
<i>Thomas Urban</i>		<i>Ute Franke</i>	
Architectural Context and Stratigraphy	322		
The 'Deep Sounding'	327		
The Sections	328		
Résumé	330		
Pottery and Small Finds	332		
<i>Ute Franke</i>			
Trench 2 – Pottery Catalogue (Plates 138–162)	341		
<b>The Timurid Gateway – Excavations in Trench 3</b>		<b>Excavations and Explorations in Kuhandaz and the Old City</b>	
<i>Thomas Urban</i>			
Archaeological Context	367	<b>Excavations in Kuhandaz</b>	689
The Ground Plan of the Gate Complex	373	<i>Ute Franke, Benjamin Mutin, Cécile Buquet-Marcon</i>	
The Towers	377	Excavations 2005 – Fortification and Trenches I and III	691
The Bridge over the Moat	381	Small Finds and Pottery	697
The Interior Rooms	382	Trench II (Area K)	703
The Glacis	388	Small Finds and Pottery	710
Later Architectural Contexts in the Gate Complex Area	392	Trench IV	727
Stratigraphy – Building Phases of the Gate Complex	395	Résumé	731
Room Book	396		
Résumé	448		
Small Finds and Pottery	464		
<i>Ute Franke</i>		<b>Further Explorations – Herat City Survey</b>	
Trench 3 – Pottery Catalogue (Plates 163–277)	499	The Old City Survey	733
		<i>Benjamin Mutin, Roland Besenval (†)</i>	
		Herat Old City – Bazaar-e Malek and Chahar Su	736
		<i>Ute Franke</i>	
		The Gazorgah Archaeological Zone	738
		<i>Ute Franke, Thomas Urban, Nader Rassuli, Ajmal Ayomuddin</i>	
<b>The Timurid Gateway – Reconstruction and Conservation</b>		<b>Résumé – New Perspectives on Ancient Herat</b>	743
<i>Thomas Urban</i>		<i>Ute Franke</i>	
Preceding Measures	615	Urban History and Development	744
Time Schedule	621	The Beginnings: The 1 <sup>st</sup> Millennium BCE	744
Construction Stages	625	The Long Gap in Between	744
Epilogue	650	Medieval Herat	745
		Post-Timurid Herat	749
		Epilogue	751
<b>The Sounding in the Lower Citadel – Trench 4</b>		<b>Bibliography</b>	752
<i>Ute Franke, Stephanie Langer (†)</i>			
Context and Stratigraphy	653		
Small Finds and Pottery	658		
Trench 4 – Pottery Catalogue (Plates 278–296)	661		

## Foreword

### Warwick Ball



View of Herat, from northeast. Woodprint, 1885 (courtesy U. Franke)

Herat is one of the great, classic cities of Central Asia. The name first enters recorded history as *Haraiva* in the Bisitun inscription, the name of the Achaemenid satrapy located in western Afghanistan, rendered in the Greek sources as *Areia*. The name alone reflects its huge importance in Iranian historical tradition: the name of a city, a river, a country and a people. The name derives from the Avestan *aryá* meaning 'pure' or 'truth', the same root from which 'Aryan', 'Iran' and ultimately 'Eire/Ireland' derives, as well as 'Herat' and 'Harirud'.<sup>1</sup> The city's great antiquity therefore is attested in its very name, although until the current excavations very little was known of this. Herat is more famous for its Islamic history. It was a flourishing city in the early Islamic period, becoming the administrative centre of the Ghurid Empire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. When the Mongols sacked Herat in 1222 Juzjani recorded a death toll of over two million, a measure more of the size and prosperity of the city and region than of Mongol ferocity, whether or not Juzjani's figure is accurate.<sup>2</sup> The size and prosperity of Herat is further attested by how quickly it revived afterwards. Its greatest glory was when Herat was the capital of the Timurid Empire between 1405 and 1506. Although Samarqand is more often associated with the Timurids, it is often downplayed that Samarqand was only a single generation capital. Tamerlane's son, Shah Rokh, moved the capital to Herat in 1405 and it was here that the Timurid age reached its peak, with the reign of Sultan Hosayn Bayqara regarded as its golden age.

It is a privilege therefore to introduce this magnificent volume on such a great city, the second of three volumes on the work of the German-Afghan Archaeological Mission to Herat between 2005 and 2012 under the general direction of Ute Franke. The first volume to appear, *Volume 3, The Collections of the Herat Museum and Archive*,<sup>3</sup> provided a detailed history of the city and region, with an introduction and background to the Mission's work, before providing a superbly illustrated and detailed catalogue of the Museum collections. The focus of the present volume is the excavations in the Old City, mainly at the citadel mound underneath Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin and at the mound of Kuhandaz (the latter in collaboration with the DAFA). Herat's immense citadel dominates the plain for miles around - indeed, Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin is probably the greatest surviving citadel in the eastern Islamic lands outside South Asia. Until the recent studies and renovations by both the German-Afghan team and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, however, it remained little studied. The present volume has rectified this, with investigations in the upper citadel, the citadel glacis, and the Timurid gateway. The deep sounding - Trench 1a - in the upper citadel, as well as excavations in Kuhandaz, has furthermore revealed evidence for Iron Age settlement at Herat for the first time, confirmed by a series of radiocarbon dates ranging from the ninth to the fifth centuries BCE. Previously, the only archaeological evidence for pre-Islamic Herat were some Sasanian gems and an Old Babylonian cylinder seal allegedly picked up in or near Herat in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The investigations by Ute Franke and her team therefore might well have located the 'long lost' Achaemenid satrapal capital.

Archaeological work in Afghanistan in the past has focussed mainly on the east and - especially - the north of the country, a 'Bactrocentricism' that has led to the neglect of the western half, a bias that does not reflect historical reality. The only major urban excavations outside these regions were the British excavations at Kandahar in the 1970s<sup>5</sup>, which the Herat excavations compliment. This magnificent series of volumes presenting the results of several years' of field-work by Ute Franke and her team will do much to correct this bias, placing Herat and the Herat region firmly to the forefront of Afghan archaeology. The data thus presented will remain as standard works of reference for the foreseeable future.

1 Mallory/Adams 2006, 433; 434. - West 2007, 29-31; 142; 143.

2 Morgan 1986, 74; 75.

3 Franke/Müller-Wiener (eds.) 2016.

4 Torrens 1842. I am indebted to John Macginnis for identifying its Old Babylonian date.

5 McNicoll/Ball 1996. - Helms 1997.