

Herat in the Fourteenth Century

(assumed locations after Allen 1981, Fig. 2; Szuppe 2004; Gaube 1977)

602 - Numbers acc. to Allen 1981; (r): restored; map: Th. Urban

- Pavilion, Palace
- Garden
- Madrasa
- ⤴ Mosque
- ⊞ Tomb
- △ Khaneqah

Résumé – New Perspectives on Ancient Herat

The foundation of Herat, and particularly the citadel, is commonly attributed to Alexander the Great.¹ Historical records, however, date back to at least 6th-century BCE inscriptions. Hence, written sources reflect about 2,500 years of history encompassing periods of great importance and affluence as well as phases of decline, conquests and natural disasters that affected the city and its populace. Yet, the town was never completely depopulated or destroyed, but always recovered within a few decades² and is one of the longest continuously settled urban centres in the region. This settlement continuity and the steadily growing urban population seriously restrict archaeological explorations, confined until 2005 to the Unesco-project carried out between 1976 and 1979.³ Studies of Herat's urban development were therefore mostly based on historical sources, the rather scant architectural testimony⁴, 18th/19th-century maps, drawings and images, the present-day layout and topographic features.

Within the available options, the selection of sites for our project was guided by the target to obtain the maximum possible information on chronology and development through time. In the enwalled Old City proper⁵, open spaces are limited and ancient remains covered by meter-high deposits of post-Timurid rubble. This situation precludes large-scale explorations required for the reconstruction of an ancient urban landscape and makes archaeological re-



Fig. 796 *Tabula Asiae IX*, showing Areia and neighbouring regions. Woodprint, Sebastian Münster, 1540–50, based upon Claudius Ptolemy's 'Geographia Universalis' (150 CE); first published in 1540 (courtesy U. Franke)

search a hazardous, expensive search for the proverbial needle in a haystack, with no success guaranteed. In the Gouhar Shad and Hosayn Bayqara complexes, in contrast, where space is available and excavations are expected to produce important architectural evidence, the lack of archaeological deposits rules out chances to expose cultural development.⁶ Therefore, the citadel, located in an elevated position overlooking the city, and Kuhandaz, a mounded site to its north⁷, both believed to be the heart of the ancient city⁸, were predestined places for archaeological exploration.

The results of this research have to be seen in this very context – in the vast area of the city they open but small windows to the past, revealing spotlights rather than large-scale and long-term developments. They, nevertheless, shed new light on the origins of the town, its long history and material culture. Below, the historical references are summarised and reviewed in the light of the archaeological evidence in chronological order, from the beginnings in the 1st millennium BCE to the 19th century, and as far as relevant here.

1 Among the populace and authorities of Herat as well as in the general literature, e.g. Brandenburg 1977, 27.

2 Gaube 1979, 31.

3 Focussed on the citadel with a different perspective (Bruno 1981); see also above, pp. 21–25.

4 Particularly for the pre-Timurid period. Best known are the Ghurid portal of the Great Mosque and the now destroyed mausoleum of Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad (d. 1203); see Lezine 1963 and, more detailed, Allen 1981, no. 428. – Golombek 1983. – Melikian-Chirvani 1970. – Glatzer/Stuckert 1980.

5 Measuring c. 1,500 m in east-west and 1,600 m in North-South direction.

6 Most regrettably, it was not possible to carry out this project after completion of the Herat Museum. Minor excavations were carried out by Th. Urban, T. Stevens and the HALO Trust for Unesco, but these were very small and had a completely different frame and purpose. Hopefully, the protected site will be watched by the authorities to prevent unprofessional larger-scale excavations.

7 See Figs. 527; 694 and Map p. 732 (title image).

8 For example Ferrier 1856, 170. – Gaube 1977. – Grenet 1996, 379–381.

Urban History and Development

The Beginnings: The 1st Millennium BCE

Haraiva, the land south of Margiana and Bactria, east of Parthia, north of Drangiana (Sistan) and northwest of Arachosia (Kandahar; Fig. 796), was most likely conquered by King Cyrus II (559–530 BCE). It is mentioned as *Areia* in Herodotus' taxation list; its capital *Artacoana*⁹; the 'notable city of that region and one of great natural strength', allegedly had a royal fortress and measured 530 m in perimeter, a measure that equals a 132 x 132 m large square, a diameter of c. 170 m, and the surprisingly small size of c. 1.7 ha.¹⁰ That town was allegedly destroyed by Alexander the Great and rebuilt as *Alexandria in Areia* in 330 BCE.¹¹

Both ancient cities are commonly equated with modern Herat, in view of the favourable environment and an assumed settlement continuity until the 9th/10th-century, when Islamic Herat featured more prominently in the written records. Archaeological evidence for this proposal was lacking or ambiguous: a lost surface collection¹², an unprovenanced cuneiform cylinder seal, dated first to the Babylonian, later to the Achaemenid era by W. Vogelsang, is now assigned to the early 2nd millennium BCE.¹³ The date of the citadel and the mounded area as well as the northern embankment in Kuhandaz remained inconclusive as well.

The recent excavations of 1st-millennium BCE occupations in Kuhandaz (Trench IV) and on the citadel (Trench 1) established for the first time a link between modern and historic Herat. The more than 12 m high clay structure exposed on the citadel has been built upon loess deposits forming a natural elevation. The large number of embedded potsherds and a single habitation phase in its central portion imply a close-by settlement and link this horizon to remains in Kuhandaz. Built on top of natural deposits in both areas¹⁴, they represent the oldest occupations. Dating is based on comparative evidence and 11 radiocarbon samples. While the latter cluster between the 10th and the 5th century BCE¹⁵, the stylistic comparisons rather indicate a date to the lower margin of this time span, covering pre-Achaemenid and Yaz-III-related horizons as well as the Achaemenid era.



Fig. 797 Pre-Islamic Herat: attested early and mid-1st millennium BCE (pink), commonly assumed Hellenistic (red) and Sasanian outlines (blue) as proposed by Grenet 1996

The lack of *in situ* pre-Islamic deposits elsewhere, including the assumed antique earthenwork in Kuhandaz north, indicates that this occupation was restricted to those two areas. While the reported size of 1.7 ha is hypothetical and, in any case, rather small, it could well correspond to both Kuhandaz and the upper citadel. It is hence tempting to place the fortress of ancient *Artacoana* on the citadel and a settlement in Kuhandaz. No information is available from the Old City.

The Long Gap in Between

In contrast to *Artacoana*, no archaeological traces of *Alexandria in Areia* and a Hellenistic presence have been found, and the same is true for the Parthian, Sasanian and Early Islamic eras. This negative evidence stands in contrast to historical references; however, during the older periods rather the region, a borderland between the Parthian and the Graeco-Bactrian kingdoms, than the city of *Areia* is mentioned (cp. Fig. 796). Under Sasanian hegemony, starting as early as Ardashir I (r. 224–240), *Hariy* is listed as provincial capital with a mint. It



Fig. 798 Herat in the 10th/11th century (after Gaube 1977, Allen 1981 and Szuppe 2004)

features more prominently in texts from the 5th century onwards, when it had a large Christian community.¹⁶

Evidence for a related material culture is poor, also in the museum's collections: a few seals found allegedly in the vicinity of Herat and some likewise unprovenanced Indo-Parthian, Kushan and Sasanian coins¹⁷ as well as 5th/6th-century Sasanian stamp seals in the museum.¹⁸ No indications of a Hellenistic, Parthian or Sasanian presence were found in the excavations; the assumption that a fire temple is located below

Shahzade Abu'l-Qasem in Kuhandaz, based on its ground plan recalling a *chahar taq*, remains hypothetical.¹⁹

Comparing Herat's city plan and topography with Balkh and Bukhara, F. Grenet proposed that the square city, with the citadel at its northern boundary, was newly founded by the early Kushano-Sasanian kings, while the Hellenistic town, enclosed by a round perimeter wall that included the citadel at its southern margin, was situated in Kuhandaz (Fig. 797).²⁰

The new archaeological evidence modifies this hypothesis, since no settlements subsequent to the mid-first-millennium BCE occupations are attested in Kuhandaz and on the citadel. Furthermore, the erosion layers and burrows dug into lateral parts of the mudbrick structure on the citadel indicate that it lay open for a longer period of time and, in fact, in none of the trenches remains dating between the 4th century BCE and the 10th/11th century were exposed. Therefore, a shift, if present at all, to the present Old City or an unknown other location must have taken place already after the 4th century BCE.

The whereabouts of *Alexandria in Areia* and subsequent cities remain unknown and are probably beyond reach, but the historical information leaves no doubt that by the 10th century the enwalled square city was a highly developed urban centre with an already long tradition.

Medieval Herat

Following the Arab conquest in 651/52 Herat was of secondary importance compared to Merv and Nishapur, but remained governor's seat during most of its history and of strategic importance in the tugs-of-war of tribal alliances and political or sectarian factions.²¹ It features more frequently in historic records²² from the 10th century and thereafter, some of which give rather detailed, although not always reliable accounts²³ of military events, tax burdens and products, natural calamities such as earthquakes and famines as well as endowments and building programs. They evoke the image of a flourishing political, commercial and cultural centre with an expanding bazaar, a Friday Mosque²⁴ and other religious buildings, a

9 See also Introduction, p. 13. Other towns mentioned by Ptolemy and Isidore of Charax, among others, are Sousia, Akhala and Candace: Altheim 1947, 166. – Bosworth 2007, 153. – Vogelsang 1992, 225; Vogelsang 2004, quoting Arrian, Curtius, Diodorus, Pliny and Strabo. – Alram 2016; see pp. 12–25.

10 Even though certainly hypothetical, and although a 160 ha-large site as Pasargadae is not to be expected.

11 Vogelsang 2004, 205; for further references see p. 13 and Franke 2016b.

12 Swiny and Le Berre, unpublished; see also Ball 1981.

13 Torrens 1842, dated by H. Rawlinson, later: Vogelsang 2004, 205. The original was lost already in 1842; see here Fig. 11, p. 1 (Ball, Preface) and p. 14 (Introduction). – W. Ball and U. Franke are grateful to D. Bonatz, R. Bernbeck, J. Macginnis, L. Martin, J. Marzahn and D. Stein, who identified it as Old Babylonian seal and rate the inscription as rather meaningless, possibly with magical content. D. Bonatz pointed out the unusual order of the persons. The option that it is a fake appears unlikely in view of the early date of its purchase.

14 Beginning at a height of 923.00/924.00 m asl on the citadel and 925.50 m asl in Kuhandaz.

15 Trench 1a, three samples: p. 130, Tab. 4, Phases 2 and 3; Trench IV, Kuhandaz, eight samples: p. 729; the latter were run at a different laboratory and are slightly older than the ones from the citadel.

16 A church still existed in the 10th century on the half way to a Zoroastrian fire temple in the mountains north of Herat (Markward 1931, 11; 26. – Vogelsang 2004, 206. – Szuppe 2004, 206). Another town founded by Shapur I and referred to as 'Pushang', 'Bushang' or 'Fushanj', is equated with modern Zendejan or Ghorriyan (Ball/Gardin 1982 no. 1259, discussed in Franke 2015b and in a wider context in Franke/Urban 2018).

17 Alram 2007; Alram 2016, 67; see above Fig. 12.

18 Torrens 1842, 320; 321, but, in fact, there is no comment on the provenance of the stamp seals. – Lerner 2016, see above Figs. 11; 14.

19 Shokoohy 1983, probably after Ferrier (1857/1981, 1981) who reports that in folk tradition a magnificent fire temple stood opposite a Taherid mosque, i.e. Shahzade 'Abd Allah, see p. 689. The temple mentioned by Estakhri (note 16) is supposedly further away. Ferrier's assumption that the Old City extended from Gazorghah to Takht-e Safar and Mosallah is contradicted by the archaeological evidence.

20 Grenet 1996, 377–381; rejecting Gaube's (1979) proposal of an Indian origin of the plan. Chmel'nizkij 1989, 19–25. – Noelle-Karimi 2014, 21; controversially discussed as well by Allen 1981, 33 and Szuppe 2004.

21 Szuppe 2004. – Bosworth 2007, 153; 154; Bosworth 2008. – On Nishapur: Rante/Collinet 2013. – On Samarqand: Karev 2015.

22 This information has been made available in a number of seminal publications, which form the basis of the present summary: Gaube 1977; Gaube 1979. – Allen 1981; Allen 1983. – Szuppe 2004. – Noelle-Karimi 2014. See also the Introduction, pp. 12–21; referenced in more detail in the Herat Museum publication (Franke 2016c).

23 According to Gaube (1979, 52), the most reliable of the early sources is Estakhri, who was copied by Ebn Hauqal and al-Moqaddasi. For the 11th–13th century, the Hudud al-Alam, Yaqut, Qazvini and Mostowfi provide few details beside general praises of the city. Al-Beruni describes Herat as steel-making centre (Çakır Phillip 2016, 426).

24 It was destroyed in an earthquake 1102 and must hence have existed before. Inscriptions are attributed to a 10th-century governor (S. A. Abu al-Hasan. Noelle-Karimi 2014, 19; 209). According to Golombek (1983, 95), the mosque was founded in the later 11th century. – Melikian-Chirvani 1970. – Glatzer/Stuckert 1980.

citadel and impressive mudbrick fortifications measuring four kilometres in circumference, with a ditch and four gates (Figs. 798). Agriculture and farming was concentrated on the irrigated areas to the west, south and east, and already in the 10th century a canal supplied the city with water from the north.²⁵ The Jui-e Enjil²⁶ and the Jui-e Now, among others, irrigated the northern outskirts at least since the 13th-century Kartid era (see title image).²⁷ Of this prosperous period the Ghurid portal to the Friday Mosque, hidden beneath Timurid refurbishments (Fig. 17a; b), and the now destroyed dynastic tomb of Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad (d. 1202; Fig. 18a-c)²⁸ evoke but a faint impression of Herat's splendour prior to the Mongol invasions in 1221/22.²⁹

It was under Kart rule that the town and its hinterland recovered from the devastations inflicted by Djinghiz Khan.³⁰ Around 1300 Fakhr al-Din restored the city walls, probably also the citadel and other buildings demolished during military campaigns. Repairs focussed on the area 'below the citadel', where *inter alia* a large enwalled area was added at its northern foot.³¹ Works were completed by his brother Ghiyath al-Din (r. 1308-1329) between 1308 and 1319; then the fortress was looted again by the Chaghatayid army.³²

The late 14th/15th-century town is described by a number of authors.³³ Tamerlane focussed on Samarqand; for three decades after the conquest the city and the dismantling of its fortifications in 782/1381³⁴ only few building activities are reported. When his son Shah Rokh took the throne in 1405 and moved the Timurid capital to Herat, he ordered the repair of the city walls and the citadel. At first the area around the citadel³⁵ was advanced, later rather the

extra muros northern suburbs were developed by commissioning religious schools, *khaneqahs*, shrines, tombs, caravanserais at the large overland routes and of avenues which linked the city with the gardens, where the court lived in pavilions and tents. This relocation from the crowded city with its ever expanding bazaars³⁶ to the airy outskirts brought along a shift of related functions to the new quarters as well. Below, the main urban features, as far as relevant for the interpretation of the archaeological findings, are summarised, beginning with a short note on the city walls followed by the citadel with Bagh-e Shahr and Kuhandaz.

The **City Enclosure Walls**³⁷ were built at an unknown date and underwent major refurbishment during the 19th century³⁸; the poorly preserved present-day remains probably belong to that time (Fig. 799).³⁹ Until the Timurid era they had grown to a large embankment, oriented along the cardinal directions with a curtain wall on top, a glacis towards a ditch⁴⁰, five gates and, allegedly,

149 towers. The 5th gate at the northeastern part is already mentioned during the Kart period⁴¹; it was not connected with a market, but led to the governmental area, the Friday Mosque and the tomb of Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad (d. 1202).

According to Hafez-e Abru and Zamchi⁴², the city gates consisted of a series of entrances projecting 60 m from the walls (cp. Figs. 520; 521). They were reinforced by several wooden gates separated by a camel's neck, a zigzag-shaped alley to make hostile approaches difficult. At the end of the 15th century Esfezari notes that each gate was made up of three consecutive doors; the Malek gate, with only two iron doors, was an exception.⁴³ The gate towers were built with burnt brick and reinforced with long timbers.⁴⁴ Sayf Heravi mentions the repair of a glacis with soil; further reinforcements took place in the early 15th century.⁴⁵ The corner towers, overlooking the plain and the city, were, at times, used as guest houses.

Under Mu'izz al-Din Kart (r. 1332-1370) an **Outer Wall** (*shahrbandi*) measuring c. 6.2 x 12.5 km⁴⁶ had been built for the protection of the northern suburbs (see title image); it was refurbished by Ghiyath al-Din Pir 'Ali in 1380 against the approaching armies of Tamerlane.⁴⁷ After destruction by Tamerlane it was not rebuilt, because it could not be defended: in times of attacks, the Timurid nobility moved from the outer gardens to the enwalled Bagh-e Shahr at the foot of the

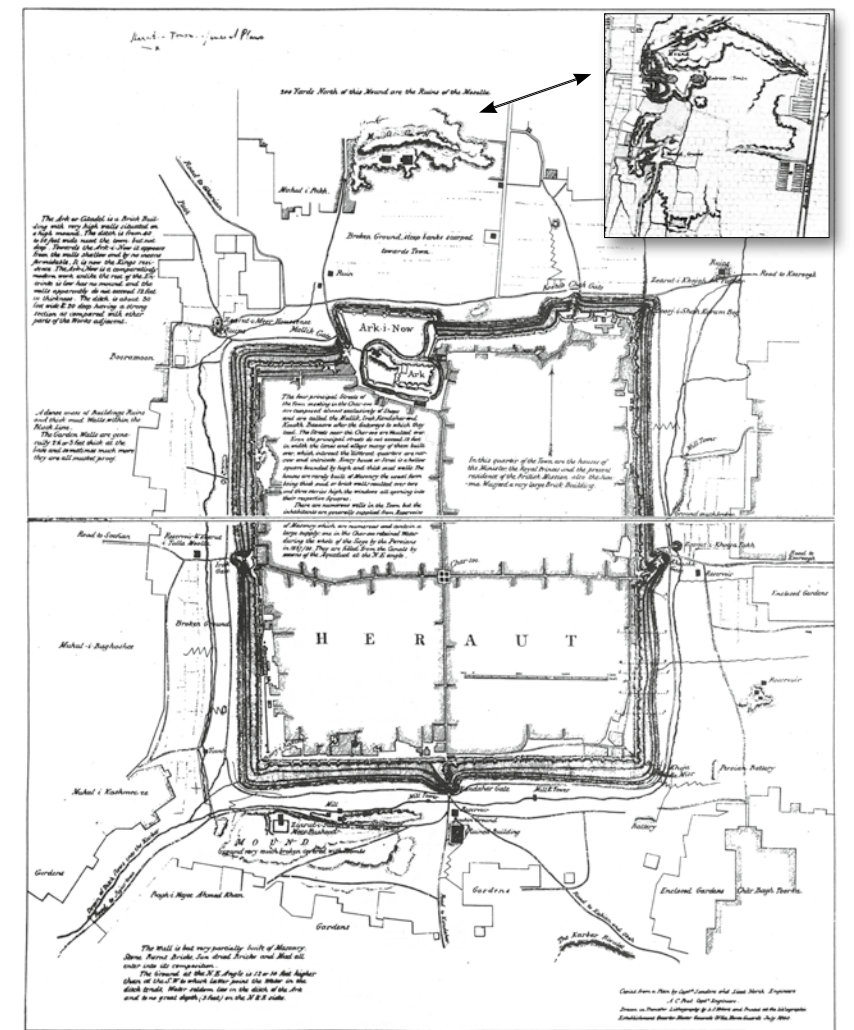


Fig. 799 Map of Herat, British Mission Engineers, General Sanders, 1840 (after Bruno 1981, Fig. 1), and a diverging representation (detail) from 1842 (Grenet 1996, Fig. 7)

citadel.⁴⁸ Its location is not clear, but it must have included Kuhandaz and hence confirms the information that by that time the city had considerably expanded beyond the city walls. No traces of this wall are preserved, unless the northern embankment of Kuhandaz, where residual 12th/13th-century pottery was found, corresponds to the wall. It has to be noted, however, that the map of 1840 shows a sharp angle in this embankment (Fig. 799, detail).

The Citadel, Bagh-e Shahr and Surrounding Quarters: The citadel, linked by its name Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin to a 14th-century Kart commander⁴⁹, is described by Estakhri already in the 10th century as a fortress with a wall and four gates, located inside the city walls.⁵⁰ It was refortified by Fakhr al-

25 Summarising the historical references provided by Ibn Rosteh, Mostowfi, Sayf Heravi, and Hafez-e Abru, Szuppe (2004, 208) states that 400 villages belonged to the *villayat* in the 10th century and that the city could muster 190,000 soldiers before the Mongol conquest (1221/22).

26 Allen 1981, 12.

27 Gaube 1979, 58. - Noelle-Karimi 2014, 17.

28 For further illustrations see Franke 2016c, Figs. 6; 7.

29 The city was attacked at least in 1175/6, 1202, 1204 and 1206 (Bosworth 1963, 262).

30 Sayf Heravi, writing in the early 14th century, provided the most detailed account (Paul 2004). Mostowfi reports in the late 13th/14th century that the town had 12,000 shops, 6,000 hot baths, 659 colleges, and a population of 440,000 (Knobloch 2002, 118-131). On the Kart dynasty see also Bosworth 1984/2014.

31 *Idgah-e Divari*, later Bagh-e Shahr, see below. And possibly shown in Fig. 535; referred to in the 19th century by General Sanders as 'arq-e now' (Fig. 799).

32 In the city many buildings were damaged as well: the bath, the cistern, the pavilion and Ghiyath al-Din's *khaneqah*; this was swiftly repaired since Ghiyath al-Din stayed there again in 1320 (Allen 1981, 230, quoting Sayf Heravi).

33 Notably Hafez-e Abru, d. 1430; Esfezari, d. 1509 and Khvandamir, d. 1535. Evaluated by Allen 1981; Allen 1983. - Barthold 1938. - Krawulski 1982; Krawulski 1984. - Allen/Gaube 1988. - Szuppe 2004. - Noelle-Karimi 2014. On Timurid architecture see particularly O'Kane 1987, Golombek/Subtelny 1992 and Golombek/Wilber 1988.

34 He also took the treasury and the iron gates of the Bab-e Saray (= Bab-e Malek, which allegedly carried the titles of the Kart *maleks*) to Shahr-e Sabz (Noelle-Karimi 2014, 22).

35 The only building measure carried out under Amiranshah was the construction of a *khaneqah* south of the Friday mosque. Shah Rokh built or repaired a *khaneqah* and *madrasa* in 813/1410, located 'below the *qala*' (al-Samarqandi, quoted by Hafez-e Abru), either to the east, across Ghiyath al-Din's pavilion, or to the north (Mirkhvand; both: Allen 1981, 138-140 no. 486), i.e. in Bagh-e Shahr. The latter location appears unlikely to Allen since the palace was located there. Gouhar Shad, wife of Shah Rokh, lived in the *madrasa* below the citadel (Allen 1981, 141).

36 Already in the pre-Timurid period the bazaars, clustering along the main thoroughfares, expanded beyond three of the main gates along the major overland routes. Bazaar-e Malek extended to the north of Bab-e Malek in the Timurid period and was rebuilt *intra muros* with burnt brick and covered with domes to reduce the ever-present dust; see Gaube 1977, 58. - Allen 1981, 31; 39-52. - Allen/Gaube 1988. - Noelle-Karimi 2014, 23; 24. - Szuppe 1992, 27. The courtly life there is well described by Babur during his visit in 1506.

37 Allen 1981, 26.

38 The strength of the fortifications was described in the early 14th century by Sayf Heravi, quoting an eye witness of a siege of Herat by the Mongols in 1307: 'The city cannot be taken by assault even after one and a half year of siege and blockade, as it is well fortified and stands firm. It has a deep moat and solid walls.' Considering the dimensions given by Hafez-e Abru, see note 45, this sounds slightly exaggerated.

39 The differences visible in a large number of prints and paintings from the late 19th century illustrate the ambiguity of the depictions.

40 Hafez-e Abru, Noelle-Karimi 2014, 22. The ditch was mostly dry. During the attack of Djinghiz Khan's son Tolui, a man fell down the glacis (*khakriz*) into the dry ditch amid attacks with bow and arrow and stones (Allen 1981, 27, reported by Juzjani). In the 19th century also Captain Sanders mentions that the ditches were flooded only occasionally by opening irrigation channels.

41 According to Sayf Heravi (Noelle-Karimi 2014, 23); later addressed as Qepchaq gate. Szuppe's hypothesis (2004, 211) that the location of the two gates was directed by the need to circumvent Kuhandaz, cannot hold true, since the mound did not reach up to the citadel.

42 Allen 1981, 36.

43 Noelle-Karimi 2014, 23; see also Samizay 1981.

44 1.80 to 2.40 m long (Allen 1981, 36).

45 Allen 1981, 28; reported by Hafez-e Abru (early 15th century) who also gives a size: 6 m wide, 3 m high, while Mirkhvand says that the ditch (*khandaq*) was 20 m deep.

46 1 by 2 *farsang* according to Esfizari (15th century), quoted by Noelle-Karimi 2014, 22; 23; she refers to similar walls in other cities (Chmeldzikij 1989, 19-25). See also Allen 1981, 31. - Gaube 1977, 220; 221. - Szuppe 2004, 214.

47 Allen 1981, 31; 32: the wall is mapped as a square by Gaube (1977, 220 Karte 1), while Allen (1981, Map 2) shows an irregular shape, extending from the middle of the square city to the north.

48 Allen 1981, 209.

49 A general of Shams al-Din I and Fakhr al-Din Kart; see Allen 1981, 34; 138-140; 149, 158; 209; 228-231.

50 Szuppe 2004, quoting Estakhri. The measure of 18 x 42 m given by her after Allen (1981, 34) is too small. The correct dimension is appr. 110 m in east-west and 48 m in North-South direction.