

The Cenotaph from the Mazar Khoja Muhammad Ghazi in Fushanj Claus-Peter Haase and Ute Franke

HNM 03.48.86aa-ai; ap-au; ax; p-z;
HNM 03.49.87a-f; HNM 88.096

35 tiles and tile fragments of a cenotaph
Khorasan, dated: Sha'ban 780/end of November–
December 1378

Earthenware (buff); small mineral blackish and
reddish, rounded and angular red, probably grog;
black and some larger, angular, white inclusions,
many pores; moulded, edges carved vertical,
rounded or diagonal, as structurally required
Decoration: carved/cut; no slip; glazed (light blue-
turquoise, blue, white and manganese-violet)
Size: see Table 1 for the individual tiles
Reconstructed dimensions of socket (cm): l. 193;
w. 88; h. 112

Lower level (cm): l. 193; w. 88; h. 29
Second level (cm): l. 172; w. 69; h. 33
Top level (cm): l. 148; w. 44; h. 50

During the documentation and restoration of a
number of related glazed tiles in the museum it
was realised that these belonged to a cenotaph.
The objects were later identified with the ceno-
taph from the Mazar Khoja Mohammad Ghazi
that originally stood in a mausoleum in Fushanj,
present Zendejan, which was published in 1967
by F. Saljuqi, in 1981 by R. Samizay and, ulti-
mately, by B. O'Kane in 1985¹ (Figs. 31; 32).

A total of 35 tiles and panel fragments were
found in the Herat Museum, and one associated



Fig. 1 Reconstructed cenotaph in the Herat Museum

tile was kept by the Department of Monuments and Sites in the Friday Mosque
at Herat. Of these, 30 tiles and smaller inscription friezes were installed in the
two upper levels of the cenotaph, while a long inscription frieze, comprising
five larger calligraphic tiles with four joining fragments², was fixed on the
close-by wall, as its original position was not clear at that time (Fig. 1).

Description

In its uppermost part the shape of the cenotaph resembles the preliminary
wooden litter which is used for the deceased during the brief mourning
ceremony and is placed on a socket (*takht*) before the person is buried in
the lower ground of the mausoleum (*torba*). In the upper visitation room
(*ziyārat-gāh*), the cenotaph marks the exact location of the tomb. Although
the exact original shape of the structure is unknown, the curved top on at
least three layers of the box-like form (from the Persian term *ṣondūq*) is
typical for important burials within mausolea.

The documentary photos by O'Kane³ show a high box-like level in the centre
with corner columns and fields with repeated medallions and cartouches formed
by a knotted bordure. Above, most tiles belong to the long side of a low inscription
frieze, the corners and the short sides of which are missing. Whereas no fragments
of this long part have been found in Herat, fragments of both short sides and one

¹ Saljuqi 1967, 141–143. – Samizay 1981, 32–
33. O'Kane (1985), also mentioned by Ball/
Gardin 1982, 290 Site #1259, their description is
based on R. Samizay. In 2004, when recorded by
the German-Afghan Archaeological Mission to
Herat, the cenotaph was completely dismantled
(Fig. 34; to be published in Franke/Urban 2016). The
mausoleum and the cenotaph are usually referred
to as the 'Tomb of Muhammad Ghazi at Fushanj'.
The identification of historic Fushanj with modern
Zendejan is not undisputed, since some scholars
identify the historical place-name with the near-
by modern town Ghorīyan; for a summary of that
discussion see Franke 2015.

² From right to left: P1a–d, HNM 03.49.87d; 03.49.87e; 03.48.86at+au. Separately, a left
corner tile: P2, HNM 03.49.87c. See below, Inscriptions No. 3.

³ O'Kane's photos were taken after the uppermost part of the cenotaph had been
removed and were replaced by a smaller marble cenotaph not belonging to it (Figs. 31;
32). We cordially thank Bernard O'Kane for the permission to publish his photos here.

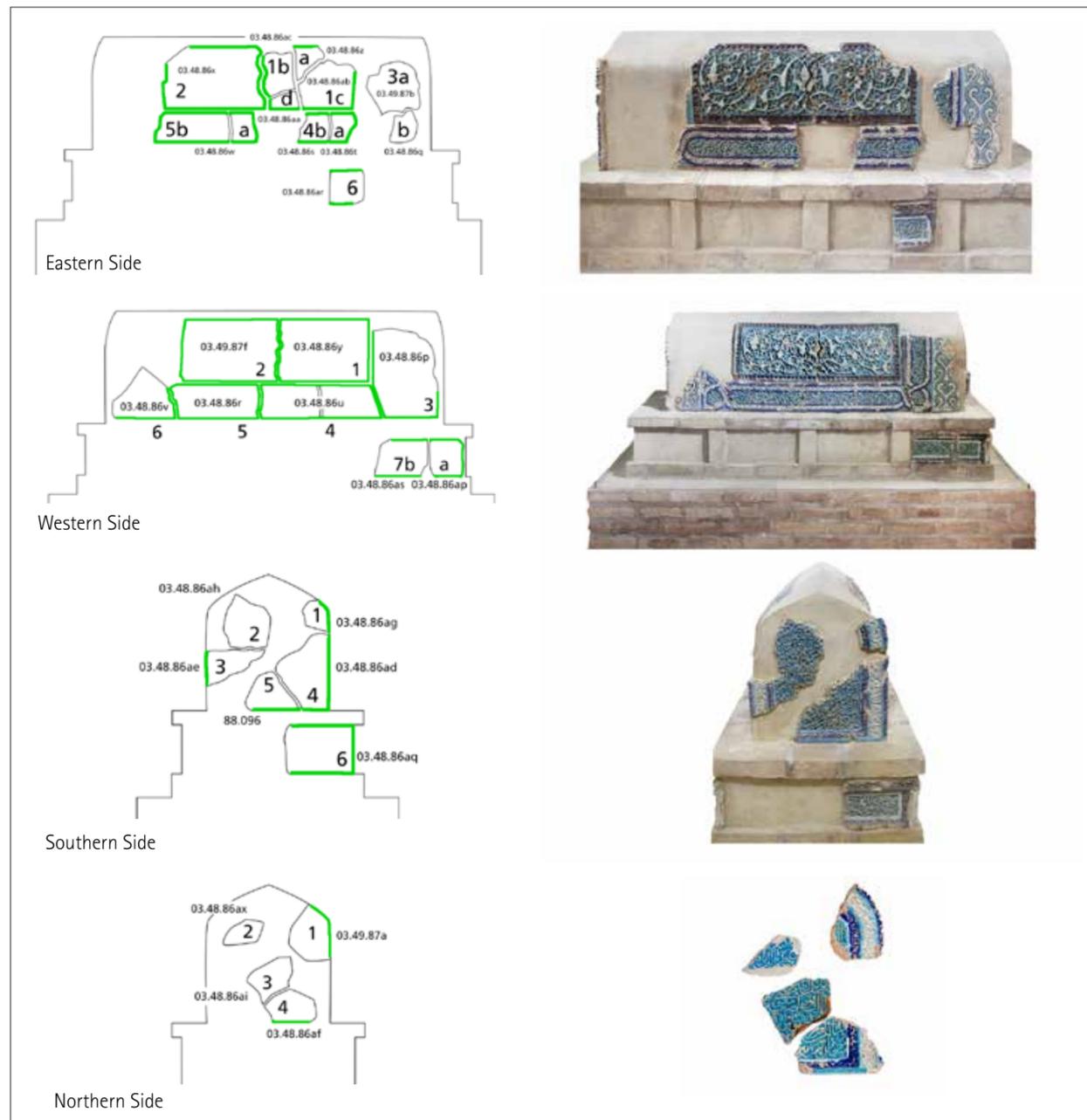


Fig. 2 The position of the tiles on the eastern, western, southern, and northern sides, with short reference and the museum inventory numbers. The reference numbers refer to cardinal directions and sequence. The green lines indicate the borders of the single tiles, showing their individual fitting. The position of the small calligraphic tiles (see Inscription No. 2) is hypothetical.

small corner column are to be seen in the reconstruction in the Herat Museum (Inscriptions No. 2, below). Here the frieze with the taller inscription (Inscriptions No. 3, below) forms the main part of the lowest level, and is preserved on both long sides. The surprising quality of the cut and glazed relief of the panels of this cenotaph is to this day unique (Figs. 2–4), in spite of some related objects from the 14th century, mainly preserved in Uzbekistan (see Figs. 43; 44).

Top Level (Figs. 2–4; 23; 35)

The carefully designed ornaments on the long sides are organised in a central longish field, originally enclosed by a frieze formed by a knotted band with a blue-glazed pearl-and-quatrefoil pattern. The four large tiles that form the centrepiece of

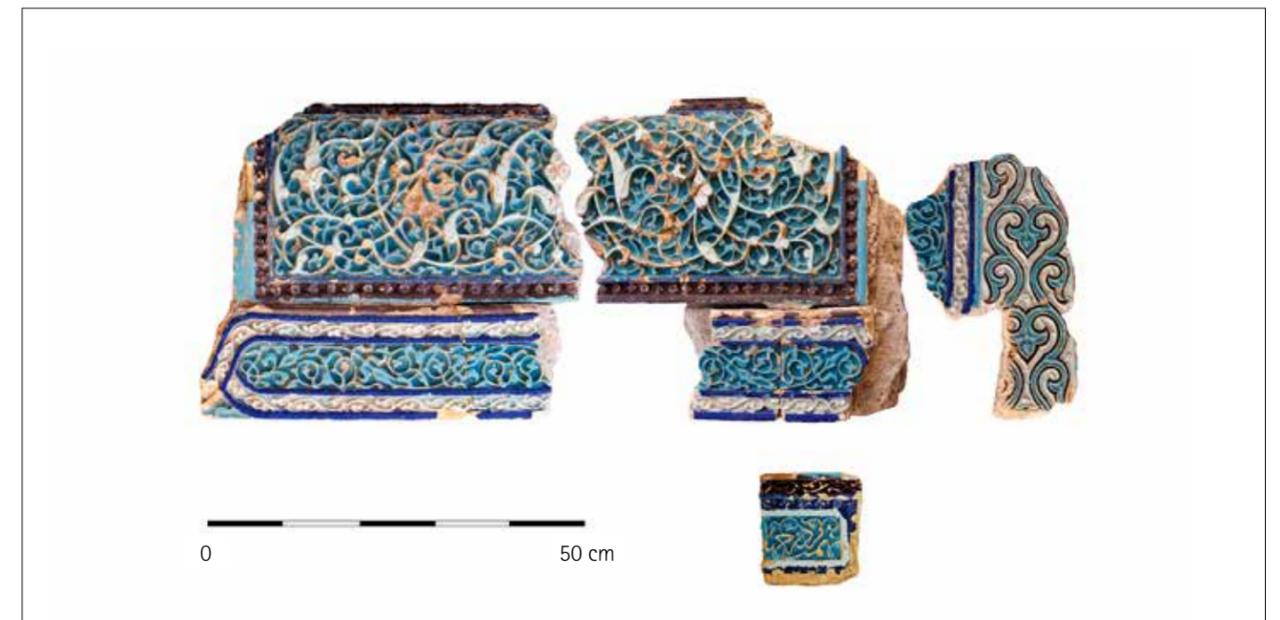


Fig. 3 Tiles from the eastern side (E1-6)

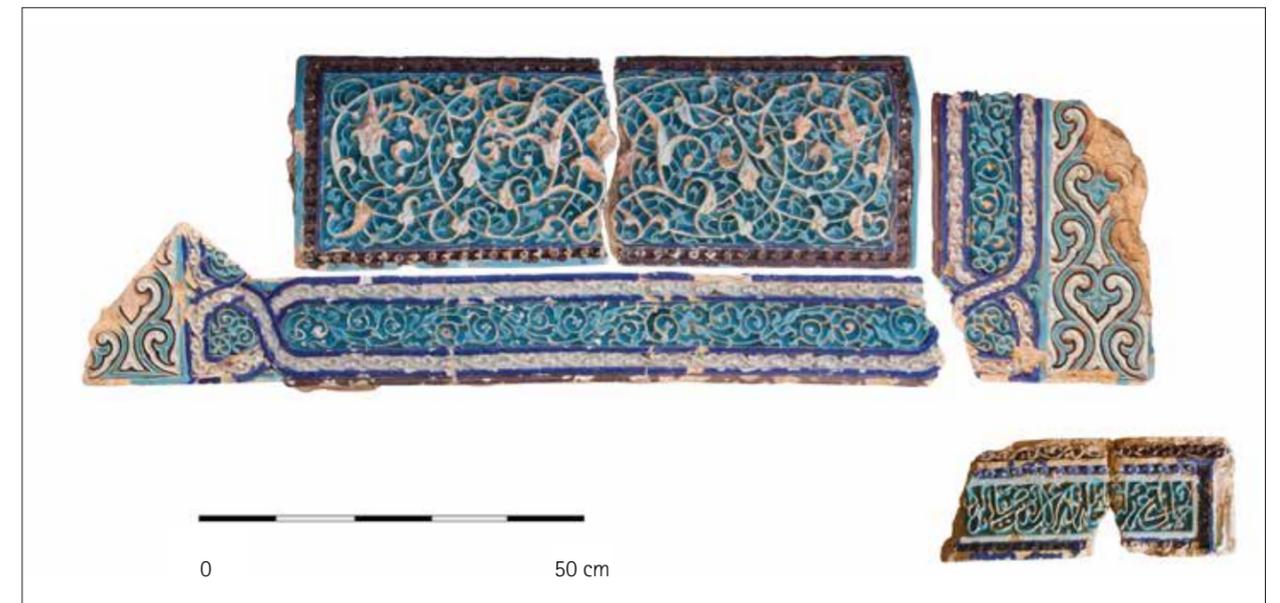


Fig. 4 Tiles from the western side (W1-7)

the cenotaph are curved at the top at an angle of c. 55° to create a pointed vault.⁴

The large panels show symmetrically expanded scrolls with two antithetical spirals on both sides, consisting of a white scroll with

fine, long, white, gabled leaves, originating from a white centre and ending in a white, feathery flower at the outer spandrel. The gabled leaf of the inner spandrel is in turn connected to the root of the central flower. The blue-turquoise ground is furthermore filled with a secondary, monochrome system of scrolls springing from the white spandrel. Only some details are slightly modified on the other side. The field is lined by a smaller bordure with a manganese-violet pearl-and-quatrefoil ornament. The slight differences in size between the eastern and western tiles, which vary

⁴ W1, 2; E1, 2.

in length from 96 cm in the east (E1c, d, E2) to 94 cm in the west (W1, W2), were probably made up for by mortar. The thickness of the tiles ranges between 3.3 cm and 3.6 cm.

These large tiles are framed by an 18 cm wide enclosing frieze showing a turquoise-glazed composite wave-band with Chinese-inspired, spiralling scrolls, with a narrow band showing a white-glazed wave pattern, contoured in cobalt-blue and with, only at the base, an additional upper manganese-violet border.⁵ Forming a knot at either end, the former continues vertically from the large basal tile and frames the upper central parts.⁶ There, it is flanked on the right resp. left by wide friezes showing an intricately carved pattern with narrow, deeply cut, turquoise-glazed trefoils and white-glazed scrolls serving as background, forming palmette-like shapes and simple scrolls. The main ornament was originally probably repeated four times, as if to form a tree with broad branches. Along the bases of the large, central tiles the wave-band frieze is composed of tiles with varying shape. At the western face, the two tiles (W4, W5) are 3.3 cm thick and c. 14 cm wide, their length is 51 cm and 38.5 cm respectively. The length of the complete corresponding tile (E5a, b) on the opposite side is 45 cm. While this frieze is assembled here from two individual tiles, its vertical parts on the lateral sides were produced in conjunction with the outer turquoise- and white-glazed border frieze described above (W3, W6; E3a, b). The complete width of tile W3, with scrolls and palmettes, is 26.5 cm, while its height is only preserved up to the beginning of the curvature at 38.5 cm.

Tiles from the Narrow Sides of the Top Level (see Inscriptions No. 1. Figs. 2; 13; 15; 29; 36; 37)

The two narrow sides show large panels made in one piece. The pointed-arch-shaped and bluish-turquoise glazed tile fragments show only the inscriptions, written in intricate Thulth-Ta'liq calligraphy. The main field is framed by a raised, curved bordure with a Hadith-inscription in ornamental Kufi, glazed in white and lined by a cobalt-blue-glazed band with simple vegetal ornament. There is no lower band of this bordure at the bottom. Both panels are broken and several parts missing, making the arrangement debatable, which is, apart from its shape, based on the readings.⁷

The reconstructed width of the tiles is 44 cm, the height 49 cm. The thickness varies from 3.3 cm in the centre to 5.8 cm at the raised calligraphic border frieze. Despite their considerable size, the tiles do not notably bulge, which was a major achievement in the ceramic crafts.

Second Level: Small Calligraphic Panels (see Inscriptions No. 2. Figs. 5; 8; 9; 14; 38–40)

In the Herat Museum the level below the upper portion was reconstructed at a lower height to receive the tiles of the smaller inscription frieze.⁸



Fig. 5 Right corner of small calligraphic tile (S6)

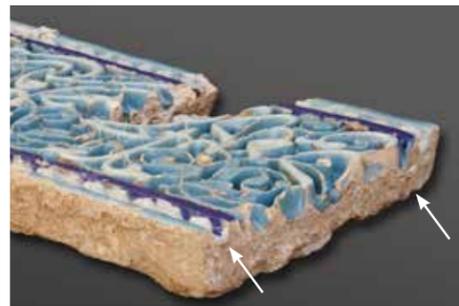


Fig. 6 Left side of inscription panel (P1d), glaze drops



Fig. 7 Right side of inscription panel (P2), remains of mortar



Fig. 8 Lower part of S6, various clay layers



Fig. 9 Top of small calligraphic tile (N6), left: trimming marks



Fig. 12 Slanting edges of calligraphic frieze (P1a), moulded shape



Fig. 13 Slanting edge of southern panel (S4+5), carved shape



Fig. 14 Base of small calligraphic tile (N6), cutter marks for border frieze



Fig. 10 Bordure, top of northern small side (N1)



Fig. 11 Trimmed edges of N1

Their light blue-turquoise-glazed calligraphy in sunken relief corresponds to the large panels on the narrow sides. The two fields are framed by a sloping blue pearl-and-quatrefoil band leading over to the raised border with a band of manganese-violet scrolls flanked by a turquoise border. Two of the three corner fields have stylised small columns glazed in white to mark the corner.⁹ The upper bands continue above the column, evoking the appearance of an architrave. The other tile is preserved only to the blue border, while its right edge is missing (E6).

The width of the tiles is 15 cm, the length of the two joining fragments 41 cm (W7a, b), which is probably only slightly shorter than the original length, since the turning points of the white and blue borders are already recognisable on the left.

Calligraphic Panel (see Inscriptions No. 3. Figs. 6; 7; 12; 41; 42)

Five tiles from a panel, four joining fragments plus a left corner tile, which does not fit with the other segments, form a long inscription frieze.¹⁰ The panel is identical in material, style and quality to the other pieces and is clearly recognisable on O'Kane's photo at the lowest preserved level (Figs. 31; 32). The ornaments and the inscription are executed in sunken relief, and only in some cases have the colours of blue-turquoise and white flown into each other. The outer lining of the pearl-and-quatrefoil bordure is light blue-turquoise, and the inner cobalt-blue.

The upper two thirds of the field are filled with scrolls, which leave enough space in the lower part for the letters of the inscription, filled up by some additional little branches and leaves springing off the bordure or, rarely, off individual letters. The spiral scroll, similar in style to the ones on the upper central portion, is interrupted twice after the first double winding and again between the second and the third panel. At the end, to the left, the drawing behind the letters is not clearly discernible, but a rather clean edge and glaze drops in the section indicate that this tile must have ended here (Figs. 6; 7).

5 W4, 5; E4, 5.

6 W3, 6; E3a, b.

7 S1–5 and N1–4.

8 E6; W7a, b; S6. One tile is broken into two joining fragments (W7a, b).

9 W7a, b; S6.

10 P1a-d: HNM 03.49.87d; 03.49.87e; 03.48.86at+au. Separately, a left corner tile, P2: HNM 03.47.87c.