



Guzara

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The district of Guzara is located in the centre of Herat Province. It borders Injil in the north, Pashtun Zarghun in the east, Adraskan in the south and Zendejan in the west (Figs. 1; 61). With an area of 1,945 km², it occupies 3.45 % of the province's space and is one of the smallest districts. Yet, due to its location in the southern Hari Rud Oasis and near Herat city, it has one of the highest population rates¹, amounting to almost 84 persons/km². The district capital Guzara is located 10 km south of Herat city, but the largest town is Ziyaratgah, with c. 15,500 inhabitants in 2005. The district had only 84 registered villages in 2002, a number that appears too low in comparison, probably due to statistical imprecisions of that time. 34 villages were counted in 1914, 111 villages and 74,000 persons in 1969.² The population rose to 124,900 in 2005, to 142,700 in 2010/11 and to 163,083 in 2019.³ The number of villages was 360 in 2008.⁴ The recent population growth was accelerated by immigrants from Iran; in 2005, Guzara had the highest rate of returnees (10,132 persons) after Herat city and Injil.⁵

The heart of the district is the southern river oasis, stretching along the Hari Rud, which marks its northern limits (Gz 1). Yet, it extends far into the southern gravel plains and mountainous regions (Gz 2). Clear topographic borders are the Koh-e Sangar in the east, and the Koh-e Kaftar Khan and Shikaste Ranges until Koh-e Siah Koh or Koh-e Kismaran in the west. The former mountains reach 2,246 m, the latter 1,600 m in height. The highest mountain in the district is the Band-e Gawjo (2,331 m) in the south, near the border

¹ Central Statistics Organization 2019/20, retrieved 20 January 2020. All statistical data after USAID Afghanistan, from different years.

² Adamec 1975, 149.

³ Central Statistics Organization 2010/11, retrieved 15 January 2016. UNHCR Sub-Office, District Profile 2002 (AIMS 2003, 7) and 2005 (AIMS 2005b, 4).

⁴ USAID Herat Province Agricultural Profile 2008.

⁵ AIMS 2005a.



Fig. 1063 Kort village, c. 4 km east of Gz 30, 1885
Wash sketch, Afghan Boundary Commission (ABC) 1884–86



Fig. 1064 Track to Pir-e Sorkh (Gz 41), in the Koh-e Sangar Range, from north

to Adraskan. The Koh-e Naspanj with the Koh-e Kamar-e Siah stretches in between these ranges near Pahra in the north and the Band-e Bedak in the south. These mountains delimit the river oasis, which forms a large pocket here; it reaches its greatest extension, 24 km in north–south direction with the river in the centre (Fig. 1065).

The mountains discharge their water into numerous seasonal wadis, which cross the dry and barren gravel and boulder plains, especially the



Fig. 1065 Track south of Pir-e Sorkh (Gz 41), in the Koh-e Sangar Range, to north

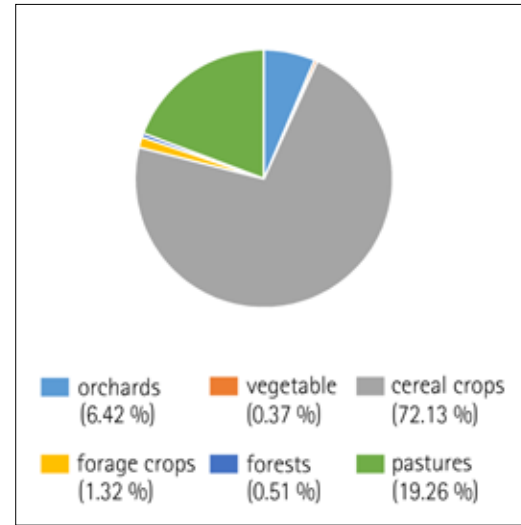


Fig. 1067 Landuse

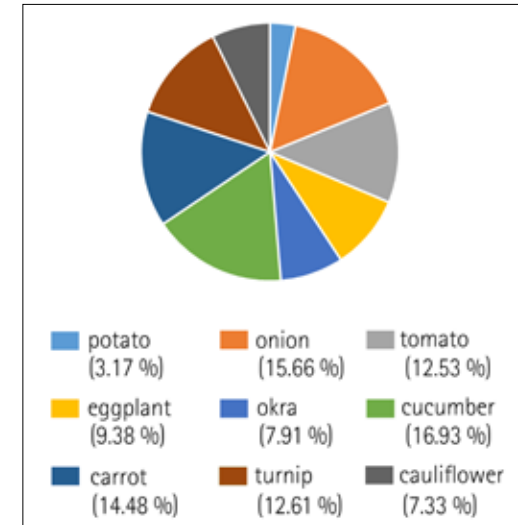


Fig. 1069 Vegetable production



Fig. 1071 Landscape in southern Guzara, highway to Kandahar, near Kandarak



Fig. 1066 Mountain track in Koh-e Kaftar Khan, along water channel

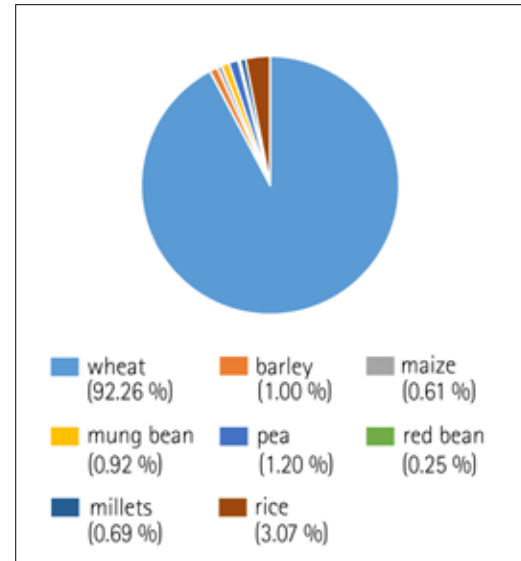


Fig. 1068 Crop production

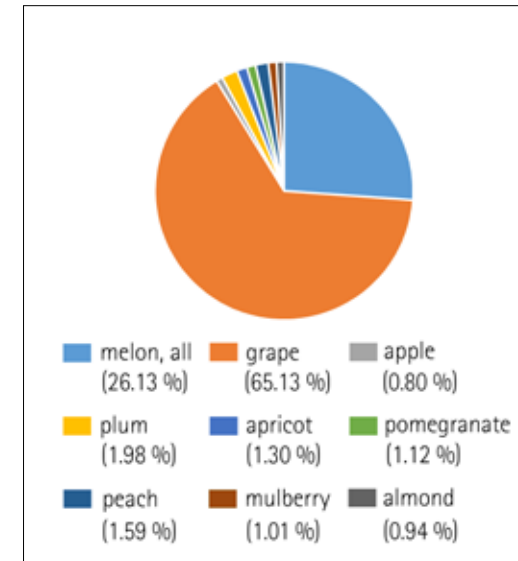


Fig. 1070 Fruit production



Fig. 1072 Agricultural area (grapes) north of Koh-e Nespanj

Deh Mehmar in the north and the Tak-e Mir Shikar in the south. Larger streams, particularly those coming from the Koh-e Sanghar, merge on their way, forming large alluvial fan ranges and feeding the extensive canal network of the Hari Rud Oasis (Fig. 1066). Along their course some rivulets form fertile patches in protected locations, e.g. at Pahra. Yate (1887, 136) describes the village as a 'beehive-shaped' nest of several hundred square domed mud houses, inhabited by Populzai, Barukzai, Taimani, Tahuri, and Tajik; numerous nomads camped there as well in their black tents. Water for irrigation was obtained from a stream flowing towards the Hari Rud and from one or more *qanats*, which are not in use anymore today.

Like neighbouring Ghuriyan, Guzara district has diverse ecological environments, ranging from intensely to less well-irrigated croplands with orchards, to saline non-cultivated spots in the river oasis, to cold dry zones along the mountains and, in the steppes, to gravelly eroded semi-deserts used as pastures. The prevailing cold to hot semi-arid (steppe) climate has hot summers and cold winter nights, and snowfalls in the highest mountains.

The strong 120-day wind carries vast amounts of sand and reduces soil covers. The overall precipitation is below 280 mm/year (see Knitter, this volume).

Soil types⁶ comprise a medium-textured irrigation horizon along the Hari Rud, followed by light serozems and brown desert soils. The natural vegetation in the azonal riverine belt, mostly poplars and willows, is severely affected, and partly destroyed by human activity. Beyond the irrigation zone follow wormwood, wormwood tragacanth and mixed wormwood ephemeral steppes. The latter, mostly dwarf *amygdalus-*

semi-desert zones, are dominated by *artemisia spp.*, *zygophyllum spp.* and, along the dry wadi beds, by thorny species.⁷ These areas are important pastures and grazing grounds, but already affected by a degradation of the typical steppe-grass vegetation. Open *pistacia atlantica*-woodlands with herbs are found in the lower mountain zones (Figs. 1072–1074).

Guzara has 25,000 ha of arable land, of which 16,000 ha are irrigated and 9,000 ha rain-fed. Compared in proportion to size with other districts, such as Kohsan and Zendejan, this

is quite a large area.⁸ The dry-farming land is located near the mountains and along seasonal wadis. The irrigated zones receive water through canals with water pumped from wells and the river. Additional supplies come from the mountains in spring, during the wet seasons and snowmelt. The canal network runs from Rouza Bagh up to the foot of the Naspanj Mountains via Ziyaratgah und Hasanabad. The previously important *qanat* systems have fallen out of use. In 1969, Guzara had 776 water mills, a number reflecting the importance of the district for food production and processing.⁹

The favourable conditions for farming support the cultivation of rice - almost 50 % of the province's yield comes from Guzara, the other half from Injil and Obek (Fig. 1067–1070). The most important crop in the district, however, is wheat (92.3 %). Vegetable supplies for the local market are predominantly onions, cucumbers and carrots, but turnips (34.5 %) and cauliflower (25 %)

6 Soil Map AFG/UN, Land and water survey 1961–62, Ghurian. – Freitag 1972.

7 Freitag 1971a; Freitag 1971b; Freitag 1972. – Breckle 2007a.

8 All statistical data after USAID Herat Province Agricultural Profile 2008.

9 Adamec 1975, 156.



Fig. 1073 Fruit cultivation near Ziyaratgah (Gz 1)



Fig. 1075 Tree plantation, southern Guzara



Fig. 1076 Grape harvest, near Karimabad

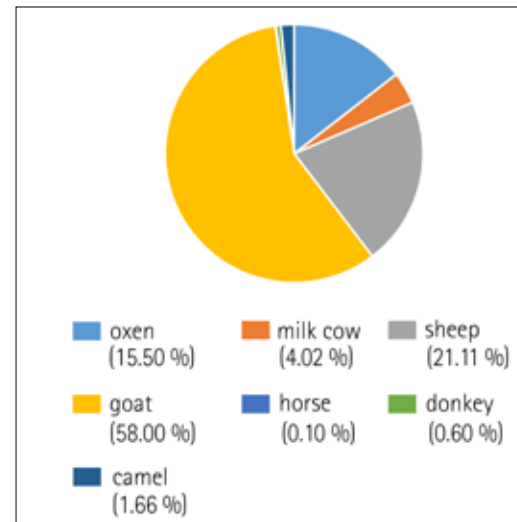


Fig. 1074 Livestock

are more important on the provincial level. Apart from grapes and melons, Guzara is an important producer of pomegranates (32.3 %), peaches (18.1 %) and apricots (12.5 %) in the province.

Husbandry also reflects the different ecological zones and conditions (Fig. 1074). Guzara has the by far highest number of oxen (15,800) in the province, used for traction and transport, and for meat supplies; it keeps the second largest number of milk cows (4,385) as well. Yet, also goats, which are well adapted to the dry climate and gravelly terrain, and are less demanding than sheep, are very common: The livestock of 63,200 animals is the third-highest in the province. Camels are, in comparison with similar districts, quite numerous as well.

Guzara benefits not only from the good ecological conditions, but also from its proximity to Herat city. In the 'post-Taliban' period, the establishment of industrial compounds accelerated, ranging from food processing installations, such as silos and mills, to car showrooms, and cement or concrete and gypsum factories along the crucial Herat-Kandahar-Kabul highway. Pusht-e Koh, Rebat-e Sapcha and Pir-e Sorkh have gypsum production as well. Mines operate at Chashma-e Reg for iron ore and at Rebat-e Sapcha for tin, copper and lead.¹⁰

¹⁰ <https://www.mindat.org/loc-227358.html>;
<https://www.mindat.org/loc-227334.html>;
<https://www.mindat.org/loc-227293.html>;
<https://www.mindat.org/loc-227288.html>;
 accessed 27.4.20.



Fig. 1077 Tower of Qal'e Essar, Kafer Qal'e (Gz 5)



Fig. 1078 Khaneqah Molla Kalan (Gz 3)

Situated at the highway, Guzara profits from traffic and transport. In addition to the highway to Kabul, a major road is the old route from Herat via Pol-e Malan to Zendejan, Ghuriyan and, crossing the river again at Rouzanak or Tirpol, to Kohsan and further on to Sarakhs or Mashhad. Another route runs from Pol-e Malan towards Shindand and Farah, it bypasses Koh-e Kamar-e Siah on its east and crosses the Dasht Tak-e Mir Shikar. From Pahra, a village in a fertile triangle at the foot of the mountain (see above), a direct track of 35 kilometres diverts across the Koh-e Meliki to Zendejan. This route was taken by Maitland's party (1888a, 128; 402) on their way from Quetta to Kohsan and is described as 'very difficult and endless.' With 20 %, accessibility is low: In 2010, Guzara had 20 km paved, 120 km gravel and 500 km unpaved roads.¹¹ (Fig. 1071)

The district is of strategic importance, since it controls access to Herat city across the bridges over the Hari Rud, the highway and the main road towards Farah and Nimruz. The Pashtun Bridge is a critical bottleneck on the way to Herat Airport and for all its associated structurally and economically important facilities, factories and caterers, and, last but not least, the nearby military, UN- and ISAF stations.

Due to an enduring political instability, the district is torn apart by local armed disputes between Popalzai and Alizai clans, and by regional faction fighting and military assaults of

¹¹ Herat Provincial Profile 2010-11, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

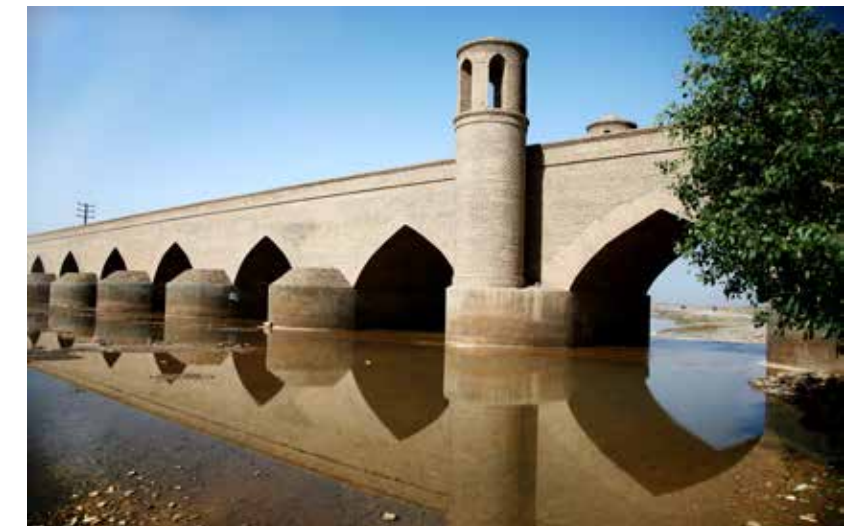


Fig. 1079 Pol-e Malan (Gz 40)

commanders from Adraskan, Farsi and Shindand, who besieged and partly conquered the Pashtun Bridge and Herat three times between 2004 and 2011. Political killings and abductions as well as attacks on administrative national and international offices, coupled with an increase in crime rates, became so common that the district was not accessible anymore after 2006, apart from transit traffic to the airport and on the Kandahar-Kabul highway.¹² Considering the instability, the overall impact and threat of mines in Guzara are nonetheless rather low, being in the middle range for the countryside and with nine villages affected in 2003. Landmines are most prominent along the Kabul highway, up to the southern border of the district.¹³ These security problems hampered the survey predominantly in its final stage after 2006, when some parts of the district had already been recorded, but further visits were prohibited. Before 2006, movement was possible in the plain and in

¹² See for later developments: Brick Murtazashvili 2016, 237-239.

¹³ HIC_PromIS 2001; ALIS 2004. AIMS MAP 'Western Region: Impact of Landmines' 2003. Afghanistan. UNDP-UNMAS Landmine Impact Survey 2004.



Fig. 1080 Mine clearing on the road from Herat Airport to eastern Guzara



Fig. 1081 Fortress at the foot of the mountains south of Herat (Gz 28)

parts of the mountains, depending on the daily situation. Several trips were taken to the south, mostly in the direction of Koh-e Sanghar (Gz 41) and Koh-e Naspanj (Gz 14), to Koh-e Meliki farther west, and on the highway towards Adraskan (Gz 42). The river oasis was safer and has a better-developed track network, but enwalled fields and compounds and a dense vegetation restricted visibility and hampered movement.

In total, 55 sites were recorded, some with multiple functions. Site Gz 23 was not visited, it was recorded by Kruglikova (2005, no. 158); numbers Gz 19 and Gz 24 had to be omitted.

Almost 50 % of the findspots are settlement sites, 13 small and 13 larger ones, 10 of which are artificial mounds with a height of more than 2 metres; Gz 1, Gz 49 and Gz 56 are approximately circular in shape. Four sites are possibly pre-Islamic: Gz 15 may date to the mid-1st mill. BC, the others are of indeterminate age (Gz 16–Gz 18). Of the other datable sites, five are from the

10th–12th centuries, 12 from the 13th/14th to the early 16th century. Many of these are located in the irrigation belt, in or near villages, but quite a number of the smaller dwellings are situated in the now dry and barren plains, suggesting that these areas may have been cultivated until at least the Timurid period.

30 of the recorded sites, with the exception of tombs and cemeteries, are monuments from the Islamic period. These include seven *caravanserays* and two fortresses, Gz 28 near the plain and Gz 5 on a hilltop, close to the rock cistern Gz 14, and the fortified hilltop settlement Gz 43, all dating between the 10th and 13th/14th century. In comparison with other districts the lack of (detected) fortifications and fortified groups of buildings (*qal'e*) in the plain is noteworthy. Most of them date from the mid to the late Islamic period.

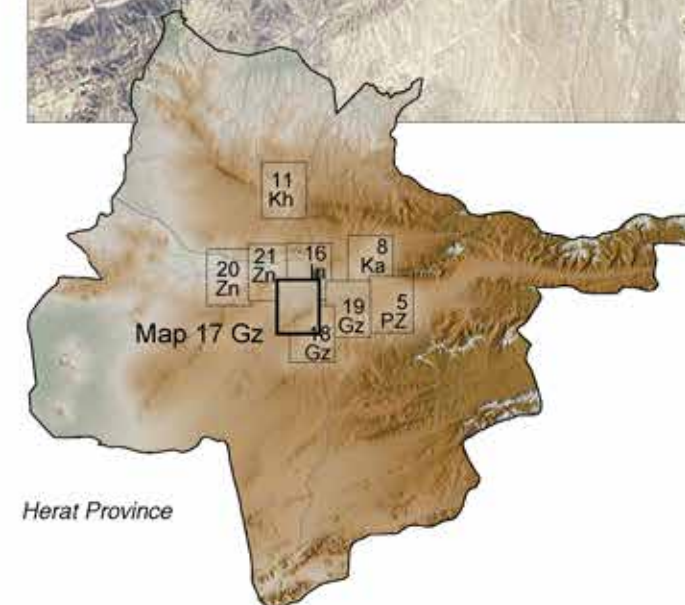
All religious monuments, such as mosques (5), *khaneqahs* (3), and shrines (5), but excluding venerated tombs, are located in the oasis belt or just beyond its present southern border.

The largest and most important mosque in the district is Gz 10 in Ziyaratgah. This small town, located 19 km from Herat in the south-eastern part of the irrigation belt, some 8.5 km south of the road to Zendejan, is an outstanding example of the extra-urban building engagements of the Timurid court and its elite. It contains a fort, a cistern (Gz 9), a monumental Friday mosque (Gz 10), the Masjed-e Chehel Sotun (Gz 8), the Masjed-e Gonbad (Gz 11) and three nearby shrines or *khaneqahs* (Gz 3; Gz 4; Gz 6). Another smaller group of sites was recorded at Hasanabad, where a small mosque and a cistern, a nearby fortress and an ancient *qanat* were noted (Gz 12; Gz 13; Gz 15–17; Gz 20) along with two archaeological sites (Gz 16; Gz 17), with possible pre-Islamic and medieval occupations.

Other notable monuments include Gz 30, an unfortunately fully restored shrine on the road from Herat to Pashtun Zarghun, the *khaneqahs* in the village Deh-e Minar (Gz 33) and Gz 35, 6 km east of Ziyaratgah, with a nearby neighbourhood mosque (Gz 37) and cistern (Gz 38). All routes to these areas have to cross the Pol-e Malan (Gz 40). Known historically since at least the 12th century, its original fabric is now almost completely replaced by modern materials.



satellite image: Atlogis Geoinformatics



Map 17
Injil (In)
Guzara (Gz)
Herat Province
Survey 2004-2006