

Foreword

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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'.¹ 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.² 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*,³ 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.⁴ 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 1970s⁵, 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.