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in Afghanistan 1957-2007

Fifty Years of Research in the Heart of Eurasia

Proceedings of the symposium held in
the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente,
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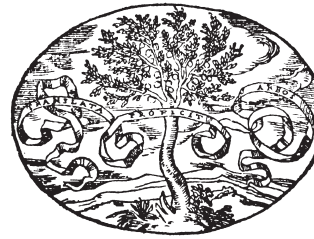
edited by Anna Filigenzi and Roberta Giunta



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Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente
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FINBARR BARRY FLOOD

MASONS AND MOBILITY: INDIC ELEMENTS IN TWELFTH-CENTURY AFGHAN STONE-CARVING

In the last decade of the twelfth century, much of north India was brought under the political control of the newly ascendant Shansabanid sultans of Afghanistan. The Shansabanids or Ghurids (so-called because their traditional power base was located in the mountainous region of Ghur) enjoyed a meteoric rise to power from the 1150s onwards. The apogee of Ghurid power came during the reign of the brothers Ġiyāṯ al-dīn Muḥammad b. Sām (r. 558-99/1163-1203) and Mu'izz al-dīn Muḥammad b. Sām (r. 569-602/1173-1206). The brothers ruled in a condominium, the former overseeing the westward expansion of the sultanate from Firuzkuh in west-central Afghanistan, the latter expanding Shansabanid dominion eastwards from the former Ghaznavid capital (Bosworth 1991).

The last decade of the twelfth century also saw a significant campaign of architectural patronage in both Afghanistan and north India. This campaign led to the

* I would like to express my thanks to Professor Gherardo Gnoli, Dr Anna Filigenzi, and Dr Roberta Giunta for their invitation to attend the meeting celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan. I would also like to offer a warm thanks to Professor Maria Vittoria Fontana, Dr Roberta Giunta, Dr Martina Rugiadi, and Dr Simona Artusi for their kindness and hospitality during my visit to Rome.

rebuilding of the Friday Mosque of Herat on the one hand, and the construction of a series of Friday Mosques in the newly-conquered Indian territories on the other, chief among them the Qutb Mosque erected in Delhi from 1192 onwards (Flood 2005a, 2007). In contrast to the Afghan monuments of the Ghurids, which were constructed from brick using the arcuate forms favored in Persianate architecture, the Indian mosques are built in stone, make extensive reuse of earlier architectural materials, and employ the trabeate techniques of construction that predominated in north India.

Since its inception in the early nineteenth century, modern scholarship on the Indian mosques constructed for the Ghurids and their mamluks has been characterized by a number of questionable assumptions. These include the denial that Muslim patrons invested any aesthetic value in the reused carvings from which Indo-Ghurid mosques were constructed; instead, the Indian mosques are usually seen as the products of a grudging compromise between the desires of Ghurid or Turkic patrons to recreate the 'mosque back home' in an alien landscape, and the ability of Indian stone masons to adapt their repertoire sufficiently to comply (Id. 2007). Related to this scenario is the assumption that the mosques result from a negotiation between highly mobile Turks and sedentary Indian masons trained in idioms and styles deeply rooted in the soil of the conquered lands.

The carved marble cenotaphs at Ghazni recorded by Samuel Flury (1925) and later by IsMEO, and recently systematically studied by Robert Giunta (2003a) challenge both these assumptions. The monuments are important historical and art historical documents in their own right, which shed new light on the development of Afghan stone carving during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Additional interest lies in the evidence that they offer for the proliferation of Indic elements in Afghan stone-carving of the late twelfth century, and perhaps even the presence of Indian stone masons working for Muslim patrons in the heartlands of the Ghurid sultanate. To the best of my

knowledge, they have not previously been discussed in this respect, although the phenomenon raises interesting questions about aesthetic taste, cross-cultural reception and visual cognition in late twelfth-century Afghanistan.

As Alessio Bombaci noted (Bombaci 1958, 1961), Indic elements are rare in Ghaznavid art and architecture of the eleventh and early twelfth century. They are not, however, unknown. Perhaps the best example is provided by a Ghaznavid marble relief now in the Linden Museum in Stuttgart (Kalter 1987: 64, fig. 55). The provenance of the carving is unknown, but it is related in content and style to a corpus of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic panels found at Ghazni, and likely to date from the early twelfth century. Maria Vittoria Fontana has recently demonstrated that the scene illustrates an *'ajā'ib* tale concerning the role of monkeys in the harvesting of beans, a rare example of a narrative scene in Ghaznavid art (Fontana 2005a). The scene is framed by a pilaster bearing a bifoliate capital clearly recognizable as a stylized variant of the over-flowing vase (*pūrṇaghaṭa*) capitals common in north Indian architecture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In addition, a series of terracotta colonnettes crowned with similar capitals were recovered from the palace of sultan Mas'ūd III at Ghazni (dated 505/1112; see Artusi, this issue: fig. 7), suggesting that the Indic elements may have been more pervasive in Ghaznavid architectural decoration than has previously been thought.

One possible vector for the reception of such architectonic elements is suggested by a reference in the work of the the eleventh-century Ghaznavid historian al-'Utbī to the importation of (wooden?) beams or columns (*judhū'*) from Sind and al-Hind for the Friday Mosque of Ghazni built by Sulṭān Maḥmūd Ġaznavī in 409/1018-19 (al-'Utbi 1869: 2, 292). It is even possible that Hindu temples existed in Ghazni itself, providing the inspiration for such modes of Indic ornament. During this period, Ghazni had an Indian quarter housing the Indian soldiery of the Ghaznavids and

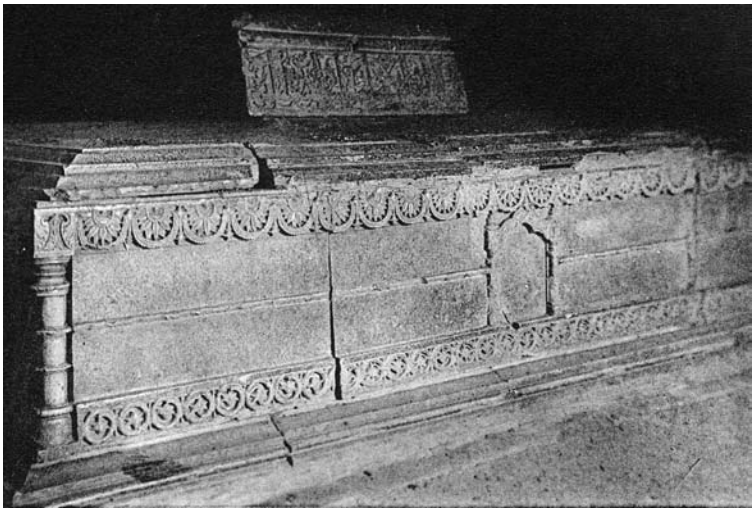

Fig. 1 - Ghazni, twelfth-century cenotaph. (After Flury 1925).

their families. Despite the silence of the Ghaznavid sources on the subject, these Indian communities appear to have been afforded a significant degree of freedom to follow their own cultural practices. For example, a chance reference in a contemporary Syrian text mentions the practice of *satī* or self-immolation in Ghazni, informing us that the wives of these Indian soldiers would commit themselves to the flames when their husbands were lost in battle (Wormhoudt 1997: 317). The presence of Hindu temples serving this Indian community can probably be assumed, even if the sources do not herald their existence, and might suggest another possible vector for the reception of Indic elements such as the *pūrṇaghaṭa* capital.

However, despite the occasional appearance of the *purṇaghāta* capital in minor contexts, there is little evidence that Ghaznavid political expansion into the Indus Valley and the Panjab or the frequent Ghaznavid raids on north India had any substantial impact upon Ghaznavid art and architecture. This situation changed rather dramatically at

the end of the twelfth century, during the period of Ghurid expansion into India, when Indic ornament begins to proliferate in Afghan stone carvings. The carved marble cenotaphs from Ghazni provide some of the best examples of the phenomenon. Among them is a white marble cenotaph popularly identified as that of the Ghaznavid ruler Mas'ūd I (r. 1031-41; Flury 1925: 84-87, pl. XX), but which Roberta Giunta (2003a: n. 74) has shown is comprised of materials of at least two different periods, with the elements comprising the rectangular body datable to the late twelfth century.

Fig. 2 - Kumbharia, Gujarat, detail of marble carving, Mahavira Temple, 1062 A.D. (Courtesy of American Institute of Indian Studies, Neg. no. 211.35).

Two horizontal friezes define the upper and lower edges of the cenotaph (Fig. 1): an upper *padmajāla* (lotus chain) band, and a narrow lower band decorated with a *padmalatā* or lotus vine, while the corners of the cenotaph are framed by ringed columns with bifoliate capitals bisected by a single *ardharatna* (half-diamond) motif: numerous parallels for all three elements can be found in the eleventh- and twelfth-century monuments of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Similarly, the banded or ringed colonettes set at the corners of the cenotaph find numerous analo-gies in the eleventh- and twelfth-century stone monuments of Rajasthan and Gujarat (Figs. 2-3). These columns often rest on inverted petal bases and are provided with capitals

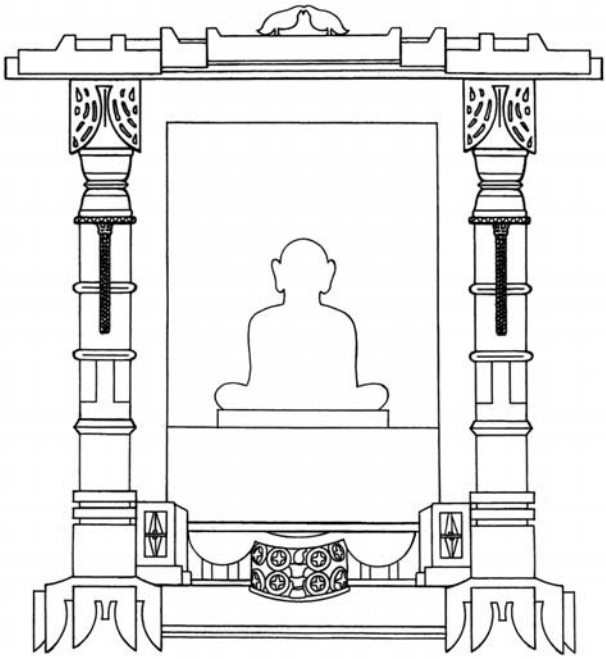

Fig. 3 - Kumbharia, Mahavira Temple 1062 A.D., detail of exterior shrine. (Drawing by Max Schneider).

in the form of *kalaśa*s or auspicious pots, or lantern-like capitals on which *ratna* or rhomboid jewel designs are deeply undercut (e.g. Giunta 2003a: C10, C15). Like other of the details, these elements replicate common details of Rajasthani and Gujarati marble carving, as seen in Fig. 2.

Two of the Ghazni carvings that integrate Indic elements are dated 600/1203, confirming that the proliferation of these features in Afghanistan coincides with the period of Ghurid expansion into north India. The first is a fragmentary panel from a cenotaph carved with a repeated design of trilobed arches similar to those carved on the marble dadoes in the palace of the Ghaznavid sultan Mas'ūd III (505/1112; Bombaci 1966: pls. XXXIX-XLI), but here overlain with a stem bearing

Fig. 4 - Ghazni, marble cenotaph dated 600/1203. (By kind permission of the IsIAO, Dep. CS Neg. 1524/1).

inverted flower buds (Giunta 2003a: n. 58). The surviving terminal of the panel is carved with a projecting pilaster surmounted by a *pūrṇaghaṭa* capital, the leaves once again reduced to triangular abstractions (Fig. 4). This abstraction or geometricisation, which is common to other of the Ghazni carvings, faithfully echoes contemporary Indic stone carvings, where the triangular form abstracts the fully representational vase-and-foliage capitals found in other contexts (Patel 2004: 121).

Despite their use of Indic details, the carving on this, as on many of the marble slabs from Ghazni is characterized by a flattened two-dimensionality alien to Indic carving, but in keeping with the style of earlier twelfth-century stone carvings from Ghazni, including those from the palace of Mas'ūd III. In other words, the reliefs are marked by the deployment of Indic forms according to the stylistic conventions established in Ghazni long before the Ghurid conquest of north India.

The second dated carving from Ghazni is a foundation text recording the construction of a mosque in 599/1203 during the reign of (*fī dawla*) the Ghurid sultan Mu'izz al-

Fig. 5 - Ghazni, marble *miḥrāb* dated 600/1203. (By kind permission of the IsIAO, Dep. CS Neg. 1524/8).

dīn Muḥammad b. Sām (Giunta 2003b). The polylobed arch of the foundation text is born on twisted columns that stand on circular bases lightly incised with stylized inverted lotus petals and are surmounted by bifoliate capitals (Fig. 5). Like the baluster and ringed columns commonly employed on other of the Ghazni carvings, the twisted columns employed here replicate a type of architectonic feature familiar from the stone temples of north India. Among the few dated examples are the columns flanking the entrance to the Sas Bahu Temple at Gwalior (A.D. 1093), but similar columns are also found in the eleventh- and twelfth-century temples

Fig. 6 - Delhi, Qutb Mosque, entrance to the royal chamber (*mulūk khāna*).

Fig. 7 - Bust, fragment of a funerary relief dated 591/1195. (Courtesy of Bernard O'Kane).

Fig. 8 - Bust, funerary relief dated 595/1199. (Courtesy of Bernard O'Kane).

of Rajasthan. The reuse of a door-frame carved with very similar columns to frame the entrance to the royal chamber in the Qutb Mosque, Delhi, a decade or so earlier (around 1192; Fig. 6) underlines the need to consider the reception of such Indic elements in a transregional frame (Flood 2007: 102).

The lotus motifs, baluster, ringed, and spiral columns, *pūrṇaghaṭa* and *kalaśa* capitals, lotus bud finials and lobed or *toraṇa* arch forms employed on the Ghazni reliefs all recur on a series of smaller funerary stelae (measuring roughly 0.60 by 0.50 m) from Bust in southern Afghanistan, which employ additional Indic elements absent from the repertoire of the Ghazni masons (Sourdel-Thomine 1956). The stelae are important complements to the Ghazni material, for they are dated. They include a fragmentary tombstone dated 591/1195 (Fig. 7) on which a lobed arch born on baluster columns and bearing lotus buds in its spandrel is supported by a stylized vase-and-foliage capital (*ibid*.: 292-93, n. 2). On another relief dated 595/1199 (Fig. 8), a

five-lobed *toraṇa* arch similar to those found on some of the Ghazni cenotaphs, is supported on *kumbha* or auspicious pot capitals and twisted columns (*ibid*.: 296-98, n. 3), both unknown in Persianate architecture, but common in eleventh- and twelfth-century Indic stone carving. The *toraṇa* frame contains an Arabic epitaph, while lotus flower bosses are set in the spandrels of the arch. The form recalls a *miḥrāb*, establishing an aesthetic and formal relationship with carved marble *miḥrāb*s in the Ghurid mosques of Rajasthan, which reproduce similar lobed forms derived from *toraṇa* arches. The *miḥrāb* in the best-known of these mosques, the Arhai-din-ka-Jhompra at Ajmir (Hillenbrand 1988: 111), is dated 595/1199 (Fig. 9) and is therefore exactly contemporary with the Bust stelae, underlining the common use of Indic forms and motifs throughout the Ghurid sultanate at this period.

This mixing of distinct regional terms and visual 'languages' in the Bust and Ghazni marbles might be compared to the impact that contacts with north India exerted on contemporary linguistic usage. Among the relevant phenomena are the proliferation of words drawn from Indic vernaculars in Ghaznavid poetry (Sharma 2000: 202-203), the Persian peppered with Hindavi words written by the historian Fakhr-i Mudabbir, writing about the Ghurids in Lahore during the early thirteenth century (Alam 2003: 142-47), and the appearance of Persianate words in Sanskrit texts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Prasad 1990: xvii). Seen in this light, the proliferation of Indic forms might be seen as a natural outgrowth of the enhanced contacts between Afghanistan, the Indus Valley and north India after the eastward expansion of the Ghurid sultanate.

There is, however, an alternative possibility. In her work on the Ghaznavid narrative relief now in the Linden Museum, Maria Vittoria Fontana (2005a: 449) raised the possibility that the presence of a *pūrṇaghaṭa* column was intended to evoke the Indian milieu of the '*ajā'ib* tale that

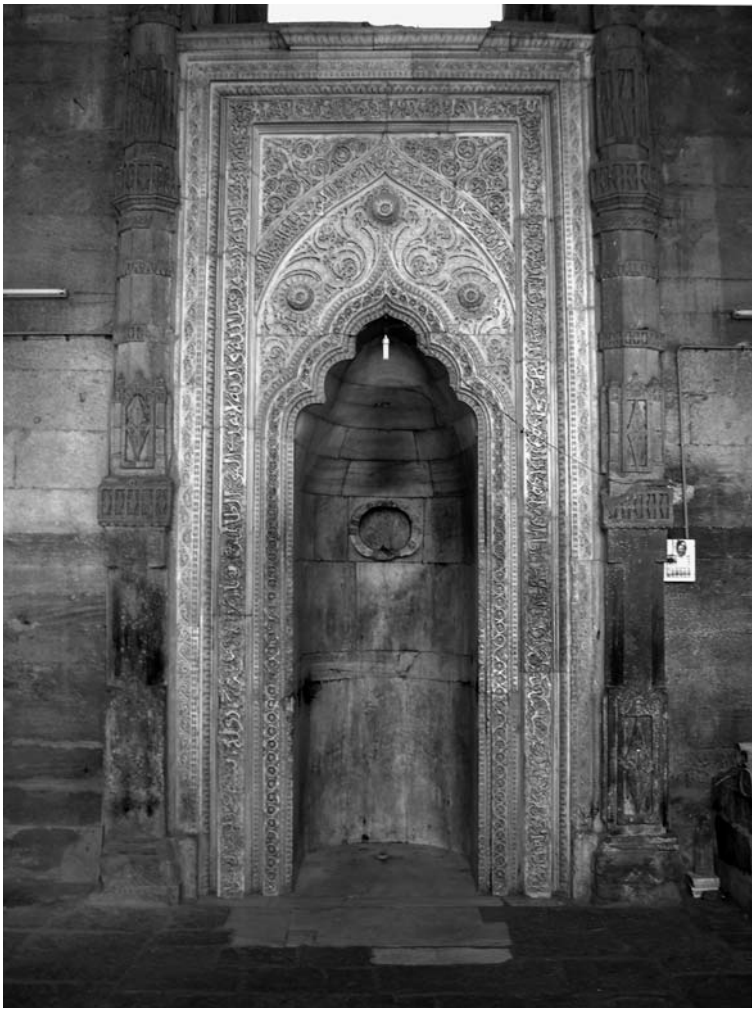

Fig. 9 - Ajmir, Arhai-din-ka-Jhompra Mosque, marble *miḥrāb*.

the relief depicts: in other words, that it represents a deliberate and self-conscious exoticism, an active process of reception. In light of the interesting parallels with contemporary linguistic hybridity, it might be useful here to employ a distinction developed by the literary theorist

Mikhail Bakhtin in another context. Bakhtin distinguishes between what he terms 'intentional hybridity', in which two distinct languages or linguistic styles are juxtaposed and placed in dialogue ('set against each other dialogically'), and 'organic hybridity', in which both fusion and mixture occur but 'the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions' (Bakhtin 2004: 75-76, 304-305, 360-61). In architectural terms, intentional hybridity would presuppose an audience that is architecturally polyglot and therefore able to recognize differences in idioms or styles.

Two factors suggest that the novelty of these Indic forms was apparent to at least some contemporary Afghan viewers. The first is the fact that their proliferation was not a phenomenon of the *longue durée*, of long established patterns of contact and patronage: on the contrary, it was a sudden and short-lived phenomenon datable to the period between roughly 1190 and 1210, at the heighth of Ghurid expansion into India. The second is tendency to juxtapose similar types of ornament executed in quite different idioms or styles. The phenomenon is witnessed on a small scale in the reliefs from Bust and Ghazni (see Giunta 2003a: n. 58), but is also manifest in contemporary Ghurid monuments built in the Indus Valley and north India. A striking example occurs, for example, in the brick decoration of a Ghurid brick tomb built around 1200 near Multan (modern Pakistan). In the decorative cut and molded brick ornament of the tomb, the juxtaposition of homologous modes of vegetal ornament – one loose, scrolling, organic, the other tighter, more symmetrical and stylized – is immediately apparent (Flood 2001: 138).

These juxtapositions of similar subjects executed in different idioms offer, I suggest, an example of what Terry Allen calls 'style as consumer choice'. Allen suggests that imported forms, decorative idioms or techniques (in Allen's case those found in some twelfth-century Syrian monuments) may sometimes have been chosen for their

'exotic' qualities, 'a fashion statement in the advertising language of today's mass market' (Allen 1988: 108). The question of the market is relevant, for the twelfth century sees the rise of the famous urban 'bourgeoisie' in the eastern Islamic world, with a palpable impact on the production and consumption of ceramics, metalwork and manuscript painting. The rise of an inlaid metalwork industry in Herat from around 1150 is directly related to this demographic, for the inscriptions on its products indicate that they were bought and commissioned not by courtly elites, but by members of an urban mercantile elite (Grabar 1968: 641-48). To judge from their inscriptions, the same is true of the cenotaphs and stele from Bust and Ghazni, none of which are royal monuments; the name of sultan Mu'izz al-dīn appears on a single stele from Ghazni but as a dating desideratum rather than a claim of personal involvement. The stelae from Bust are inscribed with the names of *imām*s, *qāḍī*s, *šayḫ*s, and in one case an *amīr*: in other words, persons of status but not of royal rank.

The parallel offered by inlaid Khurasani metalwork may in fact be especially germane, since it has been suggested that increased contacts with India (where inlay was more commonly used) provided the impetus for this development, and that Indian craftsmen may even have been employed in the metal workshops of Herat and Khurasan (Pal 1988: 53; Ward 1993: 72-74). Precedents exist for such migrations: for example, in the *Rājataraṅginī*, the twelfth-century Kashmiri royal chronicle, we read of a craftsman from the land of the Turks (*Turuṣkadeśa*) who was employed to gild a parasol (*chattra*) on a Shiva temple built by King Kalasha, the Hindu ruler of the Kashmir Valley between 1063 and 1089 (Stein 1989, Book 7: 528-31). Gilding was rarely used on Kashmiri metalwork, and the context in which this commission occurs suggests that itinerant artisans were particularly valued for their possession of specific skills that were not common to the artistic production of both regions, despite their proximity.

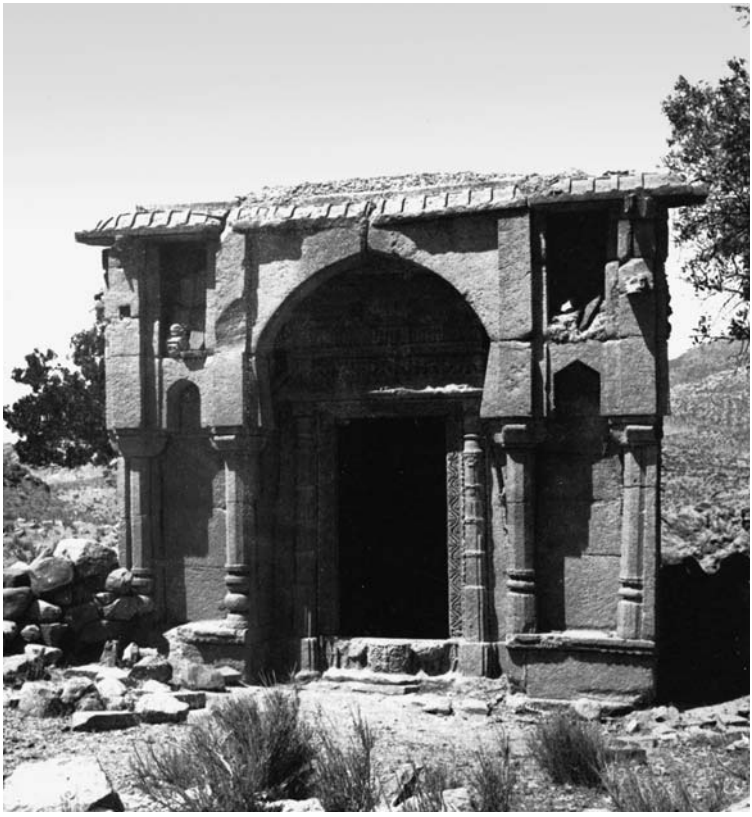

Fig. 10 - Larvand, Masjid-i Sangi, façade. (After Scarcia & Taddei 1973).

The impression that a deliberate taste for visual novelty was manifest in a receptivity to Indic elements in late twelfth-century Afghanistan is reinforced by the most monumental and spectacular expression of the phenomenon, the Masjid-i Sangi (Stone Mosque) at the remote site of Larvand just south of the Ghurid heartlands in central Afghanistan (Figs. 10-11). The monument was first published by Scarcia and Taddei (1973; see also Ball 1990), but the remoteness of the site has meant that it has not received the attention that it

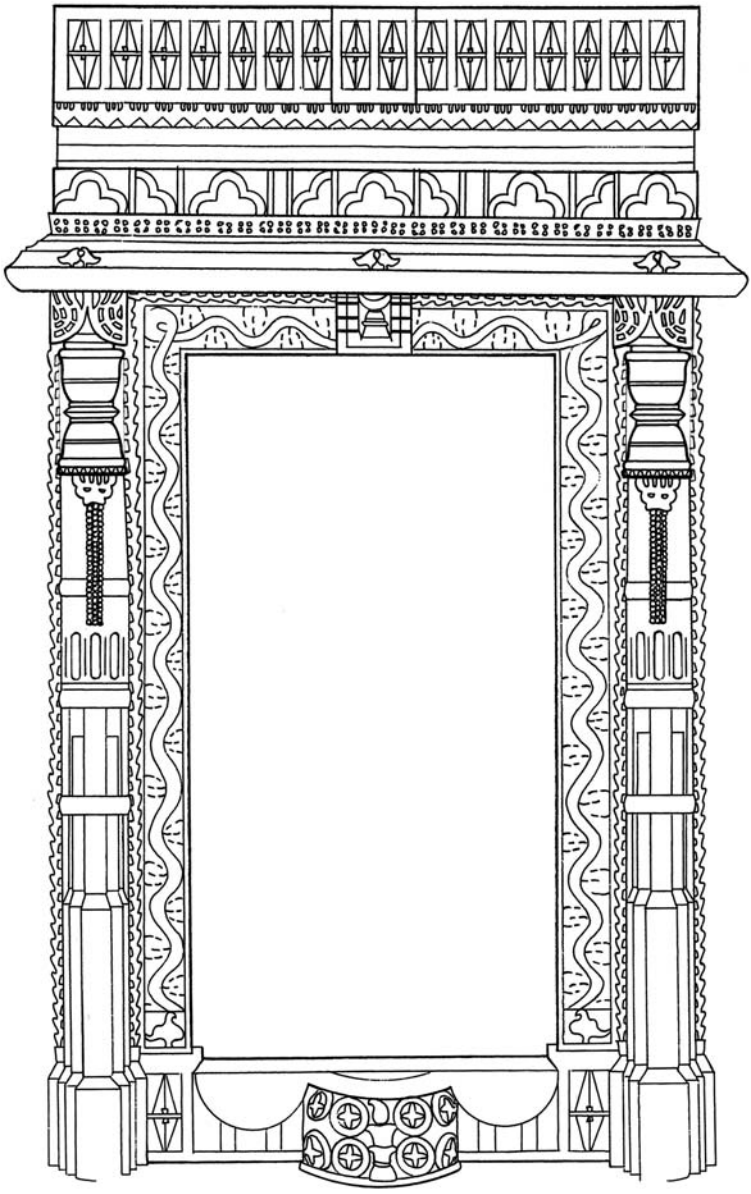

Fig. 11 - Larvand, Masjid-i Sangi, schematic drawing of carvings surrounding the entrance. (Drawing by Max Schneider).

deserves. Moreover, its significance for histories of circulation and reception has never been assessed in relation to the contemporary appearance of Indic elements on a more modest scale in the stone carvings from Bust and Ghazni.

The Masjid-i Sangi is a small cuboid structure usually identified as a mosque, but assuming the form of a domed square, the dominant type of funerary monument in eastern Iran and central Asia, and one adopted by the Ghurids for tombs in Herat and the Indus Valley. It is constructed from stone, itself an anomaly in a region where brick was the norm; the novelty is embodied in the structure's name (Stone Mosque). On both historical and stylistic grounds, the structure has been dated to the period of Ghurid ascendancy during the last decades of the twelfth century (Scarcia & Taddei 1973: 105; Ball 1990: 110), but is unusual among Ghurid monuments for its dearth of inscriptions. This dearth of monumental inscriptions is, however, perfectly consonant with the predominantly Indic forms used in its construction and carved ornament.

Like the domes of contemporary Ghurid mosques in India (numerous examples of which can be found at the Qutb Mosque in Delhi), the dome of the Masjid-i Sangi was corbelled and crowned on the exterior with a ribbed *āmalaka* finial, a standard element in the roof ornaments of north Indian temples (Flood 2009: figs. 138-139). The plain appearance of the exterior in general and the façade in particular stands in marked contrast to the sculptural elaboration of the entrance (Fig. 11), its door-frame surrounded by at least four distinct and recognizable Indic moldings (*śākhā*s), the jambs and pilasters richly carved with creeper (*valli*), lotus vine (*padmalatā*), and lotus bud moldings. An array of figural ornament entirely Indic in form and nature adorns the *śākhā*s of the doorway and the overhanging eave above it. This includes three paired regardant birds perched on the eave, a single *kīrttimukha* (face

of glory) on each pilaster, a single auspicious goose (*haṁsa*) on either side of the door at the base of the creeper that frames it and a pair of projecting lion heads or *kīrttimukha*s (now broken) flanking the lotus threshold (*udumbara*). The treatment of this elaborate figural iconography finds parallels in the treatment of the figural carvings on the reused stones from which contemporary Ghurid mosques in India are constructed (Flood 2005b: 26-27; 2009: 212-18).

In their seminal publication on the Masjid-i Sangi, Scarcia and Taddei suggested that it showed strong affinities with eleventh- and twelfth-century temples in the Kathiawar region of western Gujarat. I would suggest, however, that the majority of the carved details and the peculiarities of their syntax point instead to a relationship with the Maru-Gurjara architectural style associated with the patronage of the Chalukya or Solanki rajas of northern Gujarat during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. At least one scholar has suggested that this was a 'common style' that developed among the Hindu polities of the north-west as they came under increasing pressure from the Turko-Persian sultanates of Afghanistan (Meister 1994: 161).

The debt to Maru-Gurjara architecture is most apparent in the carving of the doorframe of the Masjid-i Sangi, which finds analogies in a series of Maru-Gurjara temple carvings from southern Rajasthan and northern Gujarat, including the Jain temples at Kumbharia (medieval Arasana) in northern Gujarat, about thirty miles southeast of Mount Abu (Singh 1975, 2001). The site lies at the confluence of trade routes leading from central India to Sind and northern Rajasthan to Gujarat. It contains six white marble temples (five Jain temples and a Shiva temple), which range in date from 1061 to *c.* 1230 A.D., coinciding with the zenith of the Solanki or Western Chalukya rajas, whose capital of Patan (Anahilavada), lay roughly fifty miles to the southwest.

The details of the door carvings at Larvand – the distinctive form of the curved 'double-bell' shaped capitals

set with square bifoliate capitals, the precise relationship to the *kīrttimukha* (lion face) vomiting pearl strands below, the way in which these strands traverse the single band of this column section, the deep vertical incisions on the median section of the pilasters, the plain appearance of the lower section, and the transition of the pilaster from spherical to octagonal to square section – all repeat a formula employed in the carved architectural frames of the Mahavira temple at Kumbharia (Samvat 1118/1062 A.D., Fig. 3; Singh 1975: 300-306, pls. 1-7; Flood 2009: 210-12, fig. 147). Also common to the Larvand doorway is the overhanging eave with *haṁsa*s (auspicious geese), the creeper carved upon the frame, the *lalāṭa* (shrine) at the center of the *uttaraṅga* (lintel), the lotus-bud molding at the extremities, lotus threshold (*udumbara*) with flanking projecting lion-heads, and the *ratna* (diamond) motifs set on either side of the threshold in the same location as they occur in Larvand (compare Figs. 3 and 11).

The date of the Mahavira temple precludes a direct relationship to Larvand, but analogous forms are found in similar combinations in other Maru-Gurjara carvings from the same region. The formal and structural parallels between these carvings and those at Larvand are sufficiently striking to suggest that some of the masons responsible for the Masjid-i Sangi may have been Jains from this area of southern Rajasthan and northern Gujarat. It is possible that these were carried off during Ghurid raids on the region around Mount Abu, which are documented in 574/1178-79, and again in 593/1197, when Quṭb al-dīn Aybak, the Turkic general of the Ghurid sultan Mu'izz al-dīn, defeated a Chalukya army near Mount Abu and sacked Anahilavada, their capital. After the later victory, Aybak is said to have dispatched a selection of booty, including jewels, elephants and prisoners to sultan Mu'izz al-dīn in Ghazni (Fakhr-i Mudabbir 1927: 23; Raverty 1970: 1, 516).

The receptivity of Afghan stone carving to Indic elements undoubtedly reflects these engagements with

north India, but there is no reason to assume that all of the artisans responsible for integrating these new elements with established modes of Ghaznavid and Ghurid stone carving were slaves. Different modes of patronage might in fact point to different trajectories by means of which Hindu or Jain stone carvers arrived in Afghanistan. The elaboration and location of the Masjid-i Sangi suggests that it was commissioned by a member of the Ghurid elite, but this is *not* true of the Bust and Ghazni stele, which as we saw above bore the names of persons of status but not royal rank. It is therefore just as likely that the Indian stone-masons responsible for some of these Afghan carvings were not slaves, but freemen who migrated westwards seeking expanded opportunities for patronage in the newly ascendant Ghurid sultanate. The biography of Tilak, a Hindu free man who made his way from Kashmir to Ghazni to work as a translator at the court of sultan Mas'ūd I (r. 422-32/1031-41) before rising to high office in the Ghaznavid army and conducting campaigns against both Hindu and Muslim foes of the sultan (Bayhaqi 1971: 522-33; Flood 2009: 78), illustrates what was possible for an enterprising migrant.

Medieval Indian masons were undoubtedly more mobile than is sometimes assumed, and could migrate in search of patronage. These migrations often accompanied shifts in the balance of power, including the territorial expansion of existing polities; examples include the southern migration of craftsmen from the Chalukya kingdom of the Deccan into the territories of the newly ascendant Hoysalas during the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Settar 1973: 419, 421). For some major projects, among them construction of the celebrated Sun Temple at Konarak (thirteenth century), agents were even sent to recruit suitable workmen from the regions (Bolon 1988: 55-56). Whether spontaneous or encouraged by potential patrons, these migrations often entailed a movement from peripheral areas to major cultural centers,

where opportunities for patronage were more plentiful. Recent research by Elizabeth Lambourn has demonstrated the presence of Gujarati marble carvers in East Africa and Indonesia during the fourteenth century, representatives of Gujarati marble workshops, whose carved marble tombstones were then enjoying a popularity across the Indian Ocean (Lambourn 2007: 124).

The military expansion of the Ghurid sultanate into north India in the late twelfth century was far from a 'first contact' situation. Despite the disruptions that it no doubt occasioned, Arabic and Persian sources attest to the continuation of commercial contacts with Muslim merchants living and trading in Anahilavada/Patan, the capital of the Chalukya rajas, and Hindu merchants from the same city operating contemporaneously in Ghazni (Ibn Ibrahim 1886: 25-26, 49; Goitein 1954: 193). The transregional state created by the Ghurid sultans at the end of the twelfth century clearly provided the preconditions for a movement of artifacts, artisans, and artistic forms on a previously unknown scale. The existence of a Gujarati diaspora in Ghazni might have encouraged and facilitated such migrations.

The material that the work of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Afghanistan has brought to our attention thus raises significant questions about cross-cultural architectural reception at the end of the twelfth century. Contemporary receptivity to Indic elements in the carvings from Ghazni and other sites has two major implications for our understanding of artistic production in the Ghurid sultanate. First, the phenomenon casts doubt upon the idea that the use of similar forms and iconographies in the Indian mosques of the Ghurids was no more than a grudging adaptation to local conditions (Flood 2007). Second, drawing attention to the mobility of Indian masons during the period, it reminds us that while locally situated (hence we can identify the likely orgins of the masons), architectural idioms were not necessarily rooted:

through the migration of artisans or artifacts they could travel considerable distances.

The phenomenon underlines the fact that the processes of mediation and negotiation witnessed in Ghurid monuments of the late twelfth century, whether located in Afghanistan, the Indus Valley or north India, were both multidirectional and transformative, constituted not by a unidirectional flow of 'influence' between two stable self-contained cultures, but by a dynamic and mutually transformative condition that endured only as long as the ill-fated sultanate itself. Despite differences in form, media, and techniques, congruences in the Ghurid material from Afghanistan and north India indicate the need to reconfigure our understanding of twelfth-century South Asian cultural geography, privileging patterns of circulation, mobility and exchange over *a priori* assumptions about the relationship between aesthetic taste, artistic patronage and ethnic, regional, or religious categories of identity (Flood 2009).

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