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ARCHITECTURE AND NARRATIVE: THE KHWAJA ABU NASR PARSA SHRINE. PART 2: REPRESENTING THE COMPLEX IN WORD AND IMAGE, 1696–1998

In part 1 of this study,[1] using the evidence contained in contemporary narrative sources, I offered the following conclusions about the founding and evolution of the Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa complex at Balkh during the first quarter millennium of its existence. First, the Naqshbandi shaykh Abu Nasr Parsa, who died in Balkh in 1460–61, was probably originally buried in a simple grave, perhaps inside an enclosure (*hazīra*), in the outer city of Balkh. Within a year or two, the Timurid general Mir Mazid Arghun built at the grave (by now a shrine or *mazār*) a large domed mausoleum (*gunbaz*, what one source referred to simply as "a spacious structure"). This was apparently intended as a family necropolis for there is evidence that Mir Mazid buried first his father then his brother there.

Second, at the same time Mir Mazid also built a madrasa "encircling" or "encompassing" (*madrasa-i muhīṭ*) the mausoleum and Abu Nasr's shrine, probably in the style of such complexes of the time (e.g., at Herat, Samarqand, and Shahr-i Sabz). This complex may have been almost immediately put under the control of the descendants of Abu Nasr. They also succeeded him to the office of shaykh al-Islam of Balkh. By 1550, the complex had fallen into disrepair and about that time was completely refurbished by a fourth generation Parsa'i, Khwaja ʿAbd al-Hadi. Between 1552 and 1574, ʿAbd al-Hadi's brother and successor as shaykh al-Islam, Khwaja ʿAbd al-Wali, built and endowed another madrasa adjacent to the shrine on its south side. In 1597, in all likelihood with the encouragement of ʿAbd al-Wali, the Shibanid heir-apparent ʿAbd al-Mu'min did major construction on the mausoleum, probably adding the massive entryway (*pīshtāq*) with flanking stacked iwans set at an oblique angle to the main iwan or simply covering the shrine with a revetment of tile (*kāshī-kārī*). Bernard O'Kane, who has studied the structure most closely and recently published his findings, concluded that if ʿAbd al-Mu'min did not entirely rebuild the building, he at least completely redecorated it and thus created the visual impact it conveys today.[2] This is an important finding. It clarifies the controversial evolution of the building and underscores a larger phenomenon: the susceptibility of monumental commemorative structures to reinterpretation and consequent renovation.

A third conclusion presented in part 1 was that from the late sixteenth through the late seventeenth century (approximately 1584–1684), the Parsa complex developed as the center of an educational district in which at least four more large madrasas were built and endowed (1584, 1612, 1616, and 1684) so that by the end of the period there were six in all in this area of southern Balkh.

Finally, part 1 of this study traced the Parsa (or Parsa'i) family in Balkh (there is also an important branch of the family at Bukhara) through eight generations. During that quarter millennium, the family maintained its privileged and locally powerful position in Balkh society as shaykhs al-Islam, administrators of the shrine, and supervisors of the teaching and pilgrimage aspects of its operation.

THE SHRINE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

After the relative abundance of material on Abu Nasr Parsa's shrine for the fifteenth–seventeenth centuries, with the Parsa family playing a major and highly visible role in the social and political life of the region, the silence of the eighteenth-century sources on the shrine comes as something of a surprise. Some early eighteenth-century narratives speak of the shrine, but only regarding events prior to 1696. Yet the period between 1696 and 1747 has no shortage of memoirs and political narratives covering the last years of the Chinggisid house of the Tuqay-Timurids (alternately known as the Janids or Ashtarkhanids), the subjugation of the region by Nadir Shah Afshar—claimant to

the Chinggisid and Timurid mantle of world-conqueror, and the rise of a new imperial power, the Durrani Afghans, under one of Nadir Shah's former generals, Ahmad Khan. Yet one is hard-pressed to find any information at all about the shrine complex, not to mention information on the family that had managed it for two and a half centuries. The fact that the shrine survived the eighteenth century is prima facie evidence that there was a managerial group navigating it through the political shoals of the time. Yet actual evidence of this and of any continuing role of the Parsa'i family has yet to be unearthed.

As we have seen in part 1, the main theme of the history of the first two and a half centuries of the shrine's existence is the prestige of the Parsa family and their continued control of the shrine through two major dynastic changes: the ouster of the last Timurids at Balkh by the Abu'l-Khayrid Shibanids in 1526 (the city changed hands repeatedly between 1507 and 1526) and then the ouster of the last Abu'l-Khayrid Shibanids by the Tuqay-Timurids in 1601–2. The relatively abundant information about the shrine during this period may to a degree reflect the relative predictability of social and political life in which—south of the Oxus—Balkh was the center. Political stability as well as the prosperity that marked much of the world in the late sixteenth century allowed at Balkh as elsewhere for the means to reflect on the past and thus provide a record for future generations. Whether as a result of diminished local importance or simply because other concerns took precedence over memorializing the period and its main actors between 1696 and 1737 when the Iranian occupation began, the record of the Parsa family after the beginning of the eighteenth century vanishes.

In part this may have been due to changing political circumstances and in part to a changing world economy which rendered the region increasingly peripheral, thus reducing the resources available to elites like the Parsa'i and their patrons. Certainly their role in local politics would have been affected in a negative way by the events of the 1690's. At that time, as power in the khanate was becoming more and more concentrated in the hands of the Uzbek amirs and the role of the Chinggisid rulers was becoming increasingly nominal and symbolic (again a process perhaps stimulated by economic conditions), the Parsa family became directly involved in the struggles waged by the Uzbek amirs to promote their own candidates for the khanate's throne. After the abortive installation of Salih Khwaja Parsa'i in 1696 as khan at Balkh by Mahmud Bi, leader of the Qataghan Uzbeks, and his brief "reign," the family disappears from the record, or so it appears.

It is not as if there were no documentation of events at Balkh in the early eighteenth century, in the decades leading up to Nadir Shah's conquest of the region. We can trace the political leaders of Balkh and their amirid supporters through the confirmation annexes added to the waqf charter of the ʿAlid shrine at Mazar-i Sharif covering the period 1709–38 as well as through some later Bukharan chronicles.[3] With the gradual decline of the power of the Chinggisid house and the entrenching of these Uzbek warbands in certain regions, Balkh became less the center of what is now northern Afghanistan (the region between the Hindu Kush–Paropamisus Range in the south and the Oxus River in the north) and more a contested region. Political power was divided among several, often warring centers, the main ones being Qunduz under the Qataghan Uzbeks in the eastern part of the former Balkh appanage and Maymanah, in the western part, under the Ming Uzbeks. For the better part of a century and a half these two clan organizations remained in control of their respective regions and were rivals for what lay between them, notably Balkh itself and the nearby and growing shrine center of Mazar-i Sharif. As the power of these Uzbek organizations waxed and waned there were opportunities for other groups and individuals with managerial experience to emerge dominant. I have dealt elsewhere with the emergence of the chief administrator of the ʿAlid shrine at Mazar-i Sharif as a local power, and it is not difficult to imagine that whoever managed the Abu Nasr Parsa shrine also came to enjoy the same challenges and opportunities.

We have no information on how the Afsharid ten-year occupation of Balkh might have affected the Parsa shrine. Nor is there information yet on how the Iranian withdrawal in October 1747 and the resurgence of the Ming and Qataghan rivalry, interspersed with periodic attempts by the new Afghan imperium to project its power northwards, affected the activities of the shrine and its administration. It is only in the early nineteenth century with the emergence of a figure named Ishan Sayyid Naqib (or Ishan Naqib, or, as styled by an oral source that Jonathan Lee cites, "Ishan Sayyid Parsa Khwajah Naqib"[4]) that the Abu Nasr Parsa shrine very indirectly returns to the historical record.[5] Ishan Naqib was appointed governor of Balkh in 1817 by

the Manghit amir of Bukhara in one of the moments when Bukhara had managed to reclaim some control of the region south of the Oxus. Lee's informant assured him that Ishan Naqib was a member of a "Gawhari" line of Parsa'i whose center was "Qasan near Qarshi."[6] Yet his informant, in constructing a genealogy, begins it with an apparently fictitious founder named Mir Haydar Qutb al-Din. This Mir Haydar married the eponymous "Gawhar, a daughter of Timur Lang" a daughter who was never recorded, at least under that name, in the *Muʿizz al-ansāb*, the official Timurid genealogical record, or in early Timurid sources.[7] The modern-day informant Sayyid Muhyi al-Din Gawhari provides no credible link between the early Timurid-era founder and the early nineteenth-century figure, Ishan Naqib, from whom he traces his descent. So the origin of the name "Parsa" or "Parsa'i" as used in the late twentieth century remains open to question. Even if not directly linked to the line which managed the shrine until at least the end of the seventeenth century, the fact that the name Parsa survived the eighteenth century's alarums encourages the idea certainly that the shrine and the family retained an unbroken connection down through the years even if unremarked by the recorders of history. There is one last hint of the survival of the family or the survival of a family associated with the tomb that comes from a late twentieth-century traveler to Balkh, Louis Palmer. Palmer, an admirer of Idries Shah, and not a little bit "East-struck," went to Afghanistan in the middle of the Soviet occupation, convinced that somewhere there he would find the world center of Sufism, not to mention its "secrets." He managed to reach Balkh where he writes of visiting the tombs of "Agha Shah" (Khwaja ʿAkkashah) and Abu Nasr Parsa. The "mystery of the Sufi presence" having been "made a little clearer to him after the visit to the shrine of Parsa," he was taken to the home of a certain "Mir Firoz, the most respected local contemporary representative of the school." By "school" he probably meant Sufism generally, but it is not inconceivable that Mir Firoz was associated in some way with the shrine—and thus the reason why Palmer was introduced to him—and perhaps was even a latter-day Parsa'i.[8]

Ishan Naqib held Balkh for about twenty years and although he was deposed by the amir of Bukhara in 1840, his son Ishan Uraq retrieved some of his father's power and remained a force in the city until the final and decisive absorption of the region in 1849 by the Afghan state centered in Kabul.[9] After this, any sign of Parsa'i at all at the shrine can only be inferred from very odd pieces of information like that provided by Lee's informant and Palmer's brief note.

FRACTURED TRADITION I: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SHRINE

While the Parsa family has receded from our view by the middle of the nineteenth century, the shrine itself, on the other hand, was about to be launched into a world of imperial agents, spies, art historians, and nation-builders. It is first brought to the attention of the outside world by the arrival in the region of officials of the East India Company and its successor, the government of British India. The first Western foreigner to see and remark on the building was William Moorcroft, Superintendent of the Stud in India, who passed through Balkh in 1824 en route to Bukhara while ostensibly seeking better sources of equine stock. Both he and his colleague George Trebeck fell ill and died near Balkh before they could return to India, but Moorcroft's notes were retrieved and then edited and published in 1841. About the city Moorcroft wrote, "There are no relics of antiquity, nor any buildings of note, except the mausoleum of Khwaja Parsi [sic], which has been elegantly fronted with enamelled tiles."[10]

Eight years later, another British agent, Alexander Burnes, also passed through Balkh and even includes a "description of Balkh" in a two-volume work of travel and history that was published in 1834. At the time he wrote, the Moorcroft-Trebeck materials had not yet been published, but it is possible he had seen Moorcroft's notes. No one apparently pointed out the Parsa complex to Burnes and if it appears at all in his writing, it is one of "three large colleges of a handsome structure, now in a state of decay, with their cells empty." These are the only buildings he speaks of, although he spent three days within the city limits.[11] It is quite possible that this short reference is to three of the madrasas built between 1594 and 1684 and may in fact include the Abu Nasr Parsa complex. If so, it is the last time any such group of madrasas is noticed and recorded.

The Afghan Boundary Commission

The image of the building in European writing would really begin to take shape on 6 July 1886, an important date in the history of the shrine. The previous

day, the Afghan Boundary Commission, a joint Anglo-Afghan party surveying and demarcating the northern boundary of Afghanistan, camped just north of Balkh.[12] Three of the technical specialists from the British side, Major P. J. Maitland, Capt. W. Peacocke, and Major C. E. Yate, took the opportunity to visit the ancient city site and ride through its ruins. Later, they would record their impressions of the Parsa'i shrine, although in different formats and with different audiences in mind. To understand the perspectives from which they wrote and the cultural expectations and proclivities each brought to his understanding and interpretation of the building, we would need to know a good deal more about their personalities, backgrounds, training, and political inclinations than can be inferred from the few clues we have in their writings. Only Yate (1849–1940) lived long and brilliantly enough to have earned an entry in the the *Dictionary of National Biography*.[13] But that biographical sketch is so formulaic and adulatory as to be nearly useless for our purposes. Neither Maitland nor Peacocke appear in standard biographical references but, as members of the colonial elite in India and as participants in the boundary commission, for which extensive records exist, much more about their lives is undoubtedly available. But even without formal biographical details their writings yield insights. P. J. Maitland, whose observations were consigned to a journal, wrote, "Rode out to have a look around the famous Balkh! There is really nothing of any particular interest in the place, and certainly nothing of any great antiquity."[14] After describing his ride around the outer walls of the city, he continued,

> ...winding through narrow lanes, among orchards and high-walled enclosures, we made our way to the ziyarat of Parsa-i-Wali. It is half-ruined and was never worth going far to see, the tile work is fair, but not to my mind a patch upon that of the musalla and minars at Herat. A pair of voluted columns, at the angles on each side of the principal arch, are curious. There are several Arabic inscriptions in huge letters in the tile work, which do not help the artistic effect, and the interior of the recess under the main arch is so covered with dirt that the tiles cannot be seen. Such as it is however, the ziyarat is the showplace of Balkh.[15]

Peacocke, an officer in the Royal Engineers, recorded rather different impressions:

> The only old building of any importance in the city that yet retains any form or shape is the ziyarat and Madrasa of Khwaja Abunasar Parsai. Both buildings are said to have been built by Abdullah Khan. There is a date and inscription to that effect on the ziyarat and the date as translated by the resident mullah is 550 years ago which does not agree with the general dates given for Abdullah Khan, viz AD 1538–1597. The ziyarat is still standing complete, and is covered with enamelled tiles. The madrasa is more or less in ruined state... .[16]

The third member of the commission whose written impressions have come down to us was then Major, later Baronet, C. E. Yate, whose description was published in his book *Northern Afghanistan or Letters from the Afghan Boundary Commission*:

> The only two buildings of any note that I could find the remains of in Balkh were the Masjid-i Sabz and the Madrasa. The former consists of a handsome dome ornamented with green tiles and marks, I believe, the grave of the saint Khwajah Abul Narsi Parsar [sic]. I did not go into it but I asked some bystanders if there was any inscription in it, and I was amused to be told in reply that formerly there was one, but the English had carried it away. When I asked if any Englishman had come to Balkh and carried it off, they said, 'Oh no! but they got a Ressaldar at Peshawar to give a man a thousand rupees to go and fetch it'! The Madrasa or college is all in ruins, and nothing but the lofty arched entrance remains. I was told it was called Madrasa-i Syad Subhan Kuli, after a descendant of the Amir Taimur, who built it, in which case it was of no very great date.[17]

Here we have three different observers who visited the same spot either together or certainly within a few hours of each other. They shared approximately the same background and, I assume, many of the same values. They had come to Balkh at the very end of the work of the boundary commission and after a rather extended stay in the vicinity of Herat where they had wintered (1885–86). At the time they were there, the great complex of Gawhar Shad (d. 1457), the wife of Shahrukh, was being demolished on the orders of the Afghan amir, ostensibly to improve the field of fire should a predicted Russian attack ever materialize. Yate was particularly struck by the grandeur and beauty of the not yet fully demolished complex of madrasas and tombs and provides a fairly detailed description of what remained.[18] It was somewhat against this backdrop that the men responded to the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, the first comparable piece of architecture they had seen since leaving Herat. They also viewed the building in the context of their training in the classics which gave Balkh special importance as a city founded by

Alexander. Yet, despite the apparent similarities in their backgrounds and likely outlooks, their reports could hardly be more different given the circumstances under which they encountered the building.

As a classicist, the excitement for Maitland in particular of seeing "the famous Balkh" came from Alexander of Macedon and Greek history, not from the Barmakids, Ibn Sina, and Jalal al-Din Rumi. The Islamic monuments were simply curiosities, objects to summarize and dispose of. Maitland deprecates the mausoleum, emphasizes its deterioration, compares it unfavorably with the Herat "musalla and minars," criticizes the "Arabic inscriptions in huge letters" which detracted from the "artistic effect," draws attention to the dirt with which the mausoleum was covered, and concludes, apparently sarcastically, that despite all this it is "the showplace of Balkh." Despite the dismissive tone, there is a certain integrity to Maitland's description, perhaps because it lacked literary pretension and seems not to have been intended for a wide audience.

Peacocke comes across as the engineer he was, a man accustomed to mathematical precision, puzzled by the discrepancy in the information he was receiving, yet conscientiously recording all the data he received, with his own reservations noted. He noticed ʿAbd al-Muʾmin's inscription over the main arch and clearly recognized its significance. His informant, "the resident mullah," told him that the inscription included information on the builder and the date but misled him about the contents. Peacocke realized it was impossible to read the date as "550 years ago" and still attribute the building to ʿAbd Allah Khan who had died less than 300 years before. He is perplexed and he lets his confusion show through. What is odd about this though is that he did not have one of the Persian-speaking dafadars, sub-surveyors, or munshis on the commission attempt to read it. Perhaps it was not until later when he had checked up on ʿAbd Allah Khan's dates that he realized the information he had been given could not have been accurate but by then it was perhaps too late to return and attempt a reading of the inscription. In all probability, too, this was not particularly important to him, and even had an opportunity presented itself he might not have bothered. One particularly intriguing part of his description is the reference to the "madrasa" that was in a ruined state. It is quite possible, perhaps even likely, that he was referring to Subhan Quli Khan's madrasa but also that he was referring to the arcaded building attached to the south side of the mausoleum. If so it is the last known reference to the "encompassing madrasa" built by Mir Mazid and described in the sixteenth-century work, *Majmaʿ al-gharāʾib*.

Yate, whose words were intended for the general English-reading public, positions himself in the narrative as a person of superior knowledge, fully capable of assessing the information he was receiving. Like Peacocke, he cites anonymous citizens of Balkh as his sources, but by tagging them merely as "bystanders" he renders them even less credible than does Peacocke in characterizing his source as "the resident mullah." Yate's skepticism about the story he was told is palpable. Read today, the story in fact sounds as if the informants, rather than being credulous fools, were actually having a laugh at Yate's expense. It is also curious that, while Peacocke could see and record something about the inscription, Yate never even gives the impression that there was one, and in fact tells the story of its theft. This is particularly strange considering that while he was in Herat he had sent out a certain Mirza Khalil—"our Persian writer"—to investigate whether there was a date inscribed on the congregational mosque.[19] Yet here he apparently shows no real curiosity. It is possible, of course, that like visitors before and since the men were on a tight schedule and simply could not spend the time. Yet they made summer quarters at Shadyan, up in the hills south of Mazar-i Sharif, and were still in the area through mid-September. Despite Yate's remark that "we could have spent more time at Kilif and Balkh,"[20] no one apparently ever returned to study the building further. It is also possible that their informants of 6 July preferred not to reveal what they knew of this building to the foreigners. This congeries of impressions became a major legacy for later scholarship.

The three Englishmen are, of course, representatives of their time—an age enamored of the classical past, interested in collecting material related to the cultures they encountered, especially material from antiquity (statues and coins), and eager to translate and interpret what they encountered, though often from very partial knowledge and sometimes utter ignorance of the background and context of the objects so observed. Of the three men, Peacocke seems to have tried hardest to get to the bottom of what was, to the three of them, an architectural puzzle.

There is some reason to believe Yate at least was sufficiently versed in Persian to communicate directly with the local residents, and the British party also had considerable linguistic expertise in their military es-

cort and staff of sub-surveyors and secretaries. But those men, if they were consulted, apparently had no background to evaluate what was said about the building. Amidst the debris of legend and probably some on-the-spot invention are scattered a few grains of demonstrable fact—notably the deformed and genealogically misattributed names of Abu Nasr Parsa and Subhan Quli Khan. These few grains are evidence of a continuing oral tradition, bits and pieces of which non-indigenous vectors were free to transmit to distant and mostly unsuspecting milieus. Here, too, we now see the mythic figure of ʿAbd Allah Khan (d. 1598) as symbolic "builder" nicely paired with Chinggis Khan as symbolic "destroyer" making its appearance in European writing.

There are at least three reasons why the 1886 observations are important for the history of the shrine. First, they were all produced at the very same time by men of similar background yet they read very differently and so exemplify a characteristic of the entire written record—the fact that the writer's views and concerns are at least as important to the narrative, if not more so, than the shrine itself. Secondly, these reports came to be staple sources for later writers and scholars describing or analyzing the mausoleum. There is a kind of "Afghan Boundary Commission tradition," which can be traced down to our own time. It reproduces the confusion over the complex and the madrasa standing opposite as to the dates of construction and who the builders were. Its survival and reconstitution are partly due to the inability or unwillingness of later writers to make use of indigenous sources other than the unattributed ones mediated through these British officers. Lastly, these reports are symptomatic of a kind of telescoped view of Balkh's history that was and still is fairly common. From this historical perspective, there are two great moments in Balkh's past—a moment of glory ascribed to Alexander the Great and his heirs and a moment of infamy ascribed to Chinggis Khan and his inheritors. Dr. John Gray, physician to the Afghan amir ʿAbd al-Rahman (r. 1880–1901) from 1889 to 1891, neatly synopsizes this view of Balkh's history. In 1889 he accompanied the amir to Mazar-i Sharif and, although he did not visit Balkh, he could not refrain from describing it when he wrote his memoirs. "Balkh, 'the mother of cities'... was a flourishing city in the time of Alexander the Great. The population, however, was so nearly exterminated by Genghis Khan, and again by Tamerlane and his successors, that it is doubtful whether it will ever again recover even a moiety of its former importance."[21] Such a compression of two thousand years of history into a few dozen words is not untypical of the place in history which students of Western civilization have accorded Balkh. Alexander of Macedon represented the civilized West, Chinggis Khan the barbarous East, and Balkh the stage on which the part of each was acted out. It was a worldview well represented in the observations of the British members of the boundary commission and even of nationalist Afghans later on, and it had an impact on the evolution of the shrine.

Austrian and French Visitors

In 1916, thirty years after the British commission members collected and recorded their information about the shrine, an Austro-Hungarian party also passed through Balkh. The group was departing Afghanistan after a fruitless attempt to persuade the Afghan amir, Habib Allah Khan, to ally his country with the Central Powers and open a front against Britain on the Northwest Frontier. One of the expedition's leaders, Oskar von Niedermayer, did, however, manage to compile some material for a book on Afghanistan's architecture, which he published in 1924 in collaboration with one of the world's leading historians of Islamic architecture, Ernst Diez.[22]

In the book, the Parsa'i shrine was identified as a "mosque." Presumably this is what locals told the Austrian group it was, although Diez, an astute art historian, adds that clearly the plan was that of a *gunbaz* mausoleum (*Grabkuppelbau*). He assumed it was Timurid based on its similarity to mausolea he had studied in Khurasan. Although only Yate had referred to the building as a mosque (Peacocke and Maitland call it a ziyarat) it is not clear that Diez consulted Yate's book. Diez was the first to provide the building with a scholarly analysis for a European audience.

The next group of Europeans to visit Balkh and to record the shrine was the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA). Under the leadership of Monsieur A. Foucher, the group spent some eighteen months in Balkh in 1924 and 1925 mainly searching, however, for some signs of the Hellenistic city.[23] In the course of their soundings and surveys, Foucher and his collaborator Madame E. Bazin-Foucher also inventoried the Islamic monuments, the most prominent of which was the shrine of Abu Nasr Parsa. In doing so they breathed new life into the 1884

Afghan Boundary Commission tradition for they relied heavily on Yate's account of it.[24]

During the months that the French expedition spent at Balkh no new information from local sources seems to have been forthcoming or if it was, it was not published. But DAFA did photograph the building from a variety of angles and distances, and those photographs are now themselves important historical records (see below).[25]

Byron's Balkh

In May of 1934, nine years after the French had left Balkh and a decade before their work would be published, an Englishman named Robert Byron rather serendipitously arrived in Balkh. Byron is an extraordinary figure. He was born in 1905 and died at the age of 36 when the ship he was on was torpedoed by a U-boat in the Atlantic in 1941. By the time he arrived in Balkh, at the relatively youthful age of 29, he had already published four books, two travelogues, and two major works of art history, *The Byzantine Achievement* (1929) and *The Birth of Western Painting* (1930). An autodidact in art history and an iconoclast with a very quick temper, he had little tolerance for the conventional art historical wisdom of his day. "Byron was warmed not by Western notions of beauty but by ideas and procedures that undermined them—those implicit in Byzantine art and Islamic architecture," Paul Fussell remarked in his introduction to the 1966 re-issue of Byron's most famous work, *The Road to Oxiana.* However, despite his vociferous and perhaps partly tongue-in-cheek derision of the classical heritage in Western art, Byron does suggest in the title of his book that he, too, could not completely escape walking in Alexander's footsteps (unless it was his editor who insisted on the title). But complementing—and in many ways offsetting—his harsh opinions of things he did not like, his detailed, precise, and well-informed descriptions of the buildings he took pains to see are unsurpassed, particularly when one has in mind that he was never formally trained in Islamic architectural history nor did he have any command at all of either Persian or Arabic. Yet when he later sat down to write up his architectural travels through Iran and Afghanistan he knew the right sources to go to in order to flesh out his descriptions. In addition, his photographs, now at the Conway Library of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, also show a prescient sense of what is important for architectural history. In the case of the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, in particular, one of his photographs includes the now vanished inscription over the main entrance left by the renovator of the shrine, 'Abd al-Mu'min, with the date 1005 (1597–98), an inscription which at least one other European, Peacocke, had seen but been misinformed as to its contents. No one else had noticed, let alone recorded, the inscription, including the sources contemporary with it. The significance of the photograph as a source for the inscription has only recently been brought to light by Bernard O'Kane.[26]

Byron published some of his photographs of the building and two brief scholarly articles about it, the first in 1935.[27] That piece is noteworthy for several things: the quality of the photographs (although the one containing the inscription was not published at that time), Byron's familiarity with the scholarly literature on Timurid history, and not least the information he provides about the shrine's place in Afghan urban planning in the 1930's.[28] He is also the first European to show an awareness of the existing literature on the Parsa family, if not on the shrine itself.

In the second brief notice of the building that he wrote, as a contribution to Arthur Upham Pope's *Survey of Persian Art* in 1938, he was also able to avail himself of the scholarship of V. V. Bartol'd (through Hinz's German translation of *Ulug Beg i ego vremia* made only two years earlier).[29]

In the 1935 article, Byron says the following,

> With the exception of a ruined arch, containing traces of rather unattractive faience, and accorded the name of Madrasa by local tradition, [here the madrasa of Subhan Quli Khan, 1660–62, is clearly meant] the Shrine of Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa is the only surviving structure within the walls of Balkh that offers any artistic interest. From it will radiate the layout of the new city which is being planned by the present energetic Governor of Afghan Turkistan, Muhammad Gul Khan.[30] Restoration of the building is under contemplation.
>
> In 1419, the poet Jami, aged five years, was taken by his father to meet the holy Khwaja Muhammad Parsa, who had arrived from Bukhara in Jami's home town, Turbat-i Shaykh Jam, on his way to Mecca. Sixty years later, Jami recalled this meeting as the occasion of his first mystical experience. Khwaja Muhammad Parsa died in the same year at Madina. But Jami, in his account of the saint's life says, "After him, Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa was the fruit of his good tree." This disciple to whom so magnificent a memorial was ultimately erected, has received little notice in that small portion of the Timurid

> historians and biographers whose works have been translated into European languages. We read in Khwandamir that at one of the many colleges in the suburbs of Herat, Khwaja Parsa "discharged the function of lecturer with a liberal salary." A further reference to him appears in Muʿin al-Din Muhammad [Isfizari]: In 1454 Babur, grandson of Shah Rukh who died of drink in Mashad a year later, had marched north to repel an invasion on the part of Abu Saʿid, Sultan of Samarqand. "Despite the fact," says Muʿin al-Din, "that on receiving the news of his approach, Abu Saʿid had left Balkh to return to his capital, Babur nevertheless continued his march. On arriving at Balkh he was received by the venerable Sufi Abu Nasr Parsa, who did everything to make him give up his expedition but without success." Here then we have a date, 1454, combined with the statement that Khwaja Abu Nasr was already venerable. The building may therefore be ascribed, in all probability, to the third quarter of the fifteenth century.

Byron then goes on, in the remaining page of his article, to describe the building and its decoration. A few years later in the *Survey of Persian Art*[31] he contributed a chapter on Timurid architecture but actually says less there about the shrine and its history than in the six hundred or so words he devotes to it in the 1935 article. However, plate 474 of the *Survey*, Byron's photograph of the entry iwan of the *gunbaz*, clearly reveals (now that Bernard O'Kane has noticed and enlarged it from the photograph) a partly effaced roundel containing the remains of ʿAbd al-Muʾmin's inscription of 1005 (1597–98), the one that Peacocke mentions but the content of which he was misinformed about.

Byron was no Persianist, as his chief biographer and friend Christopher Sykes makes quite clear. For the historical account, he used Barbier de Meynard's translated excerpts from Isfizari's *Rawżat al-jannāt fī awṣāf madīnat Harāt*[32] and although he does not cite it, he also probably consulted Price's *Chronological Retrospect* for the Khwandamir extract.[33] He apparently did not notice the inscription despite the fact that it appears in his photograph. Had he done so and found someone to read it for him, much later scholarship might have turned out quite differently.

"New Balkh" and the Role of the Shrine in It

Byron, in addition to his painstaking efforts to give a historically accurate picture of the building and the man whose name was associated with it, also reveals in an aside the new meaning which the Afghan government was beginning to attach to the shrine, a meaning that would have an enormous impact on the building's form over the next sixty years. He writes that he first heard of the government's plans to rebuild Balkh from the Afghan consul at Mashhad and his arrival in Balkh in May 1934 coincided with the presence of the man who seems to have been the main advocate, or at least the principal instrument, of the redevelopment of Balkh as part of a nation-building scheme. This was Muhammad Gul Khan Mohmand, Minister of the Interior and special envoy to northern Afghanistan.

The idea of rebuilding Balkh seems to have originated in the flood of nationalist ideas sweeping the world at the time. In the early 1930's Afghanistan was very much a part of the global community of ideas and one idea in particular found a warm reception among Afghan officials, or at least the Pushtuns among them. This was the notion of an ancient race, the Aryans, who had conquered India in the middle of the second millennium B.C. and from which "race" of warriors came those speaking the group of languages identified as Indo-European or Indo-Aryan. In those years the idea of a superior Aryan race was growing out of the anti-Semitism at the heart of the Nationalist Socialist movement in post-war Germany, and because of it German diplomats and scholars had come to see a kinship between themselves and the Afghans as Aryans. The Afghans themselves had a kind of kinname for the Germans, *Gayrman-kākā* ("big brother German" or "Uncle German").[34] This affinity was only in part ideological. It probably had as much to do with continuing German antipathy towards Britain and a residue of goodwill towards Afghanistan that was born of German efforts, though unsuccessful, in World War I to forge an alliance with Afghanistan against the British in India.

A number of Germans came to Afghanistan shortly after the end of World War I and served the government as freelance technical specialists. One in particular, Walter Harten, was involved in Amir Aman Allah Khan's grand scheme to create a New Delhi-style capital complex, Dar al-Aman, on the outskirts of Kabul, and Harten's name survives on a bridge he designed over the Kabul River (the Pul-i Artan).[35] Germans and Afghans had overlapping political and economic interests in developing the relationship, and by 1933 the Afghans, who had gained their diplomatic and military independence from Great Britain in 1919, saw in

Germany's growing strength an important counterbalance against the presence on their borders of two powerful nations, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. Germany was an attractive "third force" since it posed no threat to the country's territorial integrity.

This foreign policy fit in well with, and encouraged, ideas of an ancient kinship between Germans and Afghans as Aryan peoples. World War II put an end to that chimera in Germany but in Afghanistan it lived on in a muted form. Until the recent jihad era, schoolchildren would learn that the ancient name of Afghanistan was Aryana; the Persian and Pashto language journal of the Afghan Historical Society was called *Aryānā*; the national airline was Ariana; and in the nationalist historiography the notion that Afghans (more specifically, the Pushtuns since the Hazarahs, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, and Chahar Aymaq, were not, in this formulation, considered "Afghan") were the purest Aryans persisted as conventional wisdom.

At the time of Byron's visit to Afghanistan (1933–34) Aryanism had entered public discourse and was apparently having some of the same consequences it was having in Europe. In November 1933, in northwest Afghanistan, on his first attempt to reach Afghan Turkestan from Herat, Byron encountered a group of Jewish refugees headed for Herat.[36] Later he would hear that the Afghan government had issued an order expelling the Jews. The following spring while in Mashhad he had a conversation with a friend about the reason for the expulsion, a discussion that brings the existence of Aryanism and its correlate, anti-Semitism, to light. The discussion turns on the trade in Persian lambskins (*qarakul*).

> . . . The really profitable part of the lambskin trade is shared between Russia and Afghanistan. But why the Afghans must needs get rid of the people who conduct their part of it, and so make Persian middlemen a present of the profits, is a mystery we still have to unravel.[37]
>
> Meshed, May 6th—A possible light on this mystery was vouchsafed us yesterday by my old friend the Afghan consul. We were discussing an announcement in the paper that the Afghan government had decided to build Balkh, and I asked him what the point was, since Mazar-i-Sherif, the capital of Afghan Turkestan, and a flourishing city, is only seventeen miles away. He answered that Balkh was a historical city, the Home of the Aryan Race. That mania must have spread from Germany. Till a year ago the Afghans claimed they themselves were Jews: the lost tribes of Israel.

Promoting Aryanism literally took a more concrete form in the decision to build a "new Balkh." Signs of the government's motives and the steps taken to realize the project are found in the newspaper *Iṣlāḥ* and the semi-official *Sālnāmah-yi Majalla-i Kābul* (*Almanach de Kaboul*), an annual issued under the auspices of the Anjuman-i Adabi, publishers of *Majalla-i Kābul*, a government-sponsored literary journal.

The almanac lists all cabinet members and their staffs, and in its early years at least (the yearbook was first published in 1311 [1932]; the magazine began publication in 1310 [June 1931]) it usually has a section on the projects and achievements of each ministry as well as a roundup of world events for the year. The 1312 (1933) edition of the yearbook opens with a long essay entitled "The Race of the Afghans" which is divided into two parts, "the Aryans" and "the Pushtun." Further on in the section listing the projects of the Ministry of the Interior is a subsection entitled "The Founding of Municipalities and the Rebuilding of Cities" and under that the following:

> Balkh—which has been a large historically important city of the homeland (*waṭan*), the place of original freedom (*maḥall-i rahāyish-i awwalīyah*), and the cradle where our nation was nurtured (*mahd-i parwarish-i millat-i mā*); even more [the cradle] of the majority of the Aryan race (*balkah ghālib nizhād-i aryan*)—its grandeur and historical glories in the eras before and since the coming of Islam especially in the 6th and 7th centuries Hijri [12th and 13th centuries C.E.] are well known in different histories of the world. But after that, in the era of Chingiz, this city and the historical buildings of the homeland were destroyed and burned. It never again flourished and until now it has remained in the state of decrepitude and decay into which it then fell. Since the historical and geographical importance of Balkh obliges us to turn our attention to it, therefore the *riyāsat-i tanẓīmīyah* deems it essential to make this historic city flourish once again on a modern plan. So, from the engineering office (*az ṭaraf-i da'irah-i muhandisī*) a city plan (*naqshah-i 'umūmī*) has been drawn up on sound principles and the work of building has begun. In this regard, necessarily, in New Balkh a [new] municipality and office of reconstruction (*dā'irah-i ta'mīrāt*) has been formed, so that preparations can be made for [work in] 1313 [1934–35].[38]

Slightly earlier, the 22 December 1933 issue of *Iṣlāḥ* contained an article, "The Idea of Building Balkh and Aybak." It reproduces a report in the local newspaper in Mazar-i Sharif *Bīdār* that Muhammad Gul Khan's

office was seriously contemplating the idea of rebuilding two of northern Afghanistan's historic cities. (Any plans for Aybak, apparently quickly fell by the wayside.) Three months later, *Iṣlāḥ* reported the beginning of work at Balkh and reproduced a telegram from Muhammad Gul Khan to the new king Muhammad Zahir Shah (his father, Muhammad Nadir, had been assassinated the previous November) announcing it, as well as a congratulatory reply telegraphed from the king.[39] Muhammad Gul's telegram dates the official inception of work to 5 March 1934, although when Byron arrived two months later, he did not notice any visible activity.

The almanac of 1314 (1935–36) would attribute the decision to rebuild Balkh to the new king, Muhammad Zahir Shah.[40] It seems fairly clear that the driving force behind the project was Muhammad Gul Khan, a Mohmand Pushtun who had been interior minister since 1929. Attributing the project to the king two years later looks like a polite gesture.

In 1933, Muhammad Gul Khan, besides being minister of the interior, was also *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah* for Afghan Turkestan (the "Northern Provinces," *wilāyāt-i shumālī*).[41] The title *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah* may be roughly translated as "minister plenipotentiary" or "special envoy." Such an office would be established and its holder appointed and sent from Kabul to any region where a project or problem needed special attention. The *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah* had authority over all local military and civil officials.[42] Part of Muhammad Gul Khan's mission as *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah* was to oversee a number of development projects in Afghan Turkestan. Another part, apparently, was to deal with the political consequences of the relocation of large numbers of Pushtun tribesmen and women into the historically Turkic (Uzbek) and Tajik region.

Before coming to the north, Muhammad Gul Khan Mohmand had been sent as *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah* to three other regions, in all of them to deal with the aftermath of major uprisings against the central government. He was already known to British intelligence in 1933 as a Pushtun chauvinist, pressing hard for Pushtu to be the sole language of government and, more controversially, encouraging the resettlement of Pushtuns in the north and the displacement of local non-Pushtuns.[43] The project at Balkh with its Aryan and Pushtun supremacist overtones would seem to have been, if not his own brainchild, at least something that he would have wholeheartedly supported as a national project, given his known inclinations.

In the memory of northerners, Muhammad Gul Khan occupies a very controversial place. To the non-Pushtun residents he embodied the evil of Pushtun supremacy and even forty years later, his name was anathema to Persian-speakers. Akhror Mukhtarov records the following about his tenure as *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah*.

> The last significant changes in the fortunes of the city [Balkh] were tied to the uprooting of the indigenous inhabitants of Balkh and the influx of a Pashto-speaking population in the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century during the governorship [sic] of Wazir Muhammad Gulkhan, whom locals nicknamed "the second Chingiz Khan." The cause of this inhumane policy, the expulsion of the bulk of the population, was the chauvinistic mood of the Afghan regime at the time. The inhabitants of Balkh were, as we know, Persian-speaking, a fact which contemporary Afghan historians recognize. Muhammad Gulkhan's policy was to eradicate the language by a virtually complete relocation of the city's residents and an accompanying immigration of Pashto-speaking nomadic and semi nomadic tribes. Simultaneously, he took steps to ensure that existing monuments and grave markers provided no reminder that anyone other than Pashtuns had ever lived in the city. In the words of one resident, Mawlana Khwajah ʿAbd al-Rashid, the scale of Muhammad Gul Khan's forced removal of the indigenous population was so vast that at present [late 1970's] only some five to ten families of native Balkhis are still to be found [there].[44]

What Mukhtarov, himself a Tajik, was told may have exaggerated Muhammad Gul Khan's activities but the bitterness of the story is itself telling and although it is difficult to find corroboration for these decades-old memories, it is clear that life for many of the people of Balkh was remembered as having radically changed for the worse because of Muhammad Gul Khan.

It was a happy coincidence (from the standpoint of understanding the new meaning being proposed for the Abu Nasr Parsa shrine) that brought Muhammad Gul Khan and Robert Byron to the building at precisely the same moment on 25 May 1934.[45] Byron was probably unaware of the office of *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah* when he somewhat misidentifies Muhammad Gul Khan as "Minister of the Interior for Turkestan" and in another place as "Governor of Afghan Turkestan."[46] Perhaps he confused him with the governor of Afghan Turkestan at the time, a man with a similar-sounding name, Gul Ahmad Khan.

Although Byron appears to have been unaware of

any social tensions at Balkh, he did, however, learn a good deal about the urban redevelopment plan. He knew, as he wrote in the *Bulletin of the AIPAA*, that the Abu Nasr Parsa shrine would be the centerpiece of urban redevelopment with streets radiating from it. He was not, however, optimistic about the chances of Balkh actually regaining any of its former urban importance. "The plan of the new city," he wrote, "is as ambitious as Canberra, but no one who can help it will come from Mazar to this fever-stricken air; one might as well rebuild Ephesus in the hope of displacing Smyrna."[47]

He does not mention it but the streets radiating from the shrine would be connected in the plan by a series of concentric ring roads presumably eventually to be developed with commercial and residential buildings. The plan was a smaller version of aspects of the urban plans of Western cities like Milan, Paris, and Washington with streets radiating from central points. It was without question one of the many schemes intended to move the country towards nationhood and modernity. That it should make a Sufi shrine the focal point of Aryan dreams is somewhat difficult to explain but perhaps the building was viewed not so much as expressing any religious sentiment as simply an example of the architectural heritage of the "Aryan race."

The building as icon was also important in the nation-building project. For its second year of publication (1932–33), *Majallah-i Kābul*, the literary magazine, used as its cover design a collage of ten monuments, one of which was the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum. The monuments chosen should probably be seen in the 1932–33 context as symbolic of the most significant features of a national identity as imagined by an urban, politically savvy Pushtun-dominated elite. The ten monuments represented several themes crucial to Afghan nation-building: origins in antiquity (the Buddhas at Bamyan), past imperial glory (the Ghaznavid victory tower, the arch at Lashkargah, and the Ghurid minaret of Jam), central state power (the Bala Hisar fortress in Kabul, the tomb of Amir ʿAbd al-Rahman Khan), modernity (the Pul-i Darunta, a suspension bridge over the Kabul river northwest of Jalalabad), national religion (the minaret of Jam, the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, the ʿAlid tomb at Mazar-i Sharif), anticolonialism (the Manar-i Istiqlal [Independence Pillar] commemorating the 1919 War of Independence from Britain). Although more could probably be read into the choice of buildings for the collage, they are only of interest here to suggest the kind of thinking that held sway in the governing circles of the country in the 1930's and that underlay the scheme to redevelop Balkh.

Although the project outlined in the 1933 almanac is mentioned twice more in subsequent editions of the *Sālnāmah*, once to attribute the plan to the king as mentioned earlier and finally in 1317 (1938–39) to report that work "was proceeding swiftly" on the plan,[48] actual financial investment in it must have been hard to come by. Nonetheless, some work was clearly done to realize the plan. The French ambassador, René Dollot, who was in Afghanistan from November 1934 until August of 1936, reported that a new bazaar had been constructed and that this was "the first step towards the renaissance of the ancient capital of Bactria."[49] In addition, work must have been done on the mausoleum (the photographic record shows it) and a considerable effort was expended on the street grid which today remains indelibly inscribed on the ground. The perfect symmetry of the traces that remain indicate that a major effort was made to survey and excavate the streets. Aerial photographs of Balkh taken in the 1970's show at least six regularly spaced concentric circular streets, or portions of streets,[50] radiating out from the shrine until they encompass an area of approximately the same extent as the area enclosed by the walls of the inner city of Balkh. These streets were to be intersected by eight radials leading out from the hub formed by the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum and the park surrounding it.

Although the 1317 (1938–39) almanac sounds an optimistic note about progress on the plan, in those same pages, which are devoted to the prospects for tourism and the sights that would attract visitors, the writer sounds a somewhat plaintive note when describing Balkh itself. Hardly any of its former glory could any longer be seen, he notes, and he expresses little hope that things would change soon.[51] In the five or six years between Byron's visit and the compiling of the 1939 almanac, the fantasy of reconstructing the city as the cradle of Aryanism must gradually have been destroyed by the prospects of the staggering investments that would have been required to rebuild the extensive ruins of the medieval and early modern city.[52]

Yet despite the failure to realize the overall scheme, the Abu Nasr Parsa shrine which was already the focal point of the city as the only standing and serviceable large structure in it, clearly benefited. Money was certainly appropriated for work on the shrine and work began not long after Byron's visit. In addition to the

work on the shrine itself, the excavation of the street plan, and the building of some shops, the area immediately in front of the mausoleum was leveled and a kind of plaza or square, the "bull's-eye" for the concentric street pattern, was created. The effect of this was to separate the mausoleum from its longstanding function as necropolis. It is not that the mausoleum could be entirely divorced from its funerary aspects and simply turned into a monument to architectural skill and aesthetic taste, but its focus could be shifted; it could stand as a memento mori for those approved personages whose lives resonated with nationalist objectives. But it would no longer be a general place for burial, accessible to the local population or to any who thought that promise lay in the vicinity of the saint.

FRACTURED TRADITION II: THE RECONFIGURED SHRINE IN WESTERN WRITINGS

At the same time that Byron was in Balkh, two Italian priests, Egidio Caspani and Ernesto Cagnacci, who had come to Afghanistan to join the Italian legation in Kabul, traveled to the north and visited the shrine.[53] In a brief note in a book they published much later about Afghanistan, they, too, place the shrine at the center of "New Balkh," an indication that Muhammad Gul Khan's urban plan was already at least partly realized and apparent. "Il centro della Nuova Balkh è un grande piazzale messo in parte a giardino, ove si erge la "Moschea verde... ." They then go on to describe its history, the location of the tomb of Abu Nasr Parsa in front of the "green mosque" and the reason why the mosque is called "green" (because the *kāshī* tiles are "Turkish green" or turquoise).[54]

The two men were in Mazar-i Sharif in the spring of 1934 to meet some compatriots arriving via the Soviet Union.[55] But the published photograph (fig. 234 of their book) shows that the dome is already far restored from the condition in which it appears in Byron's photographs, and it is likely that the photograph dates from a later time. Both men remained in Kabul through the Second World War, a difficult time for expatriate Italians, and had little to do but explore the countryside and its historical landmarks.[56] Perhaps they returned to Balkh during this time or made more trips before the war broke out.

The war and its aftermath brought other Westerners to Balkh. In the mid-forties, a young American scholar and intelligence officer, Richard Nelson Frye, managed to make his way to the region.[57] He wrote a brief article on Afghanistan's architecture after this visit, and although the text of the article contains no reference to Balkh or to the shrine, it does include a photograph of the mausoleum, showing a restored dome with none of the scaffolding that appears in the Barnabite pictures.[58] The article does not precisely date Frye's visit to Balkh, but in 1951 another American, Donald N. Wilber, freshly assigned by the newly formed U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (successor to the OSS) to an undisclosed mission in Afghanistan, also traveled to Mazar-i Sharif. Wilber was already well launched on a career combining espionage and Islamic architectural history. Interested both in the buildings of Balkh as well as those who had visited the region, he came across the signature "R. N. Frye" with the date August 20, 1943 while leafing through the guest book of the Mazar-i Sharif museum and duly noted this down for future reference.[59]

Frye would make another significant contribution to scholarship on the shrine when he penned a brief entry on Balkh for the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*:

> The visible monuments of Balkh include the ruins of extensive walls (ca. 10 km. perimeter) enclosing the modern village, and two shrines on the square of the present village. One is the Green Mosque in Tīmūrid style but probably built at the end of the 16th century A.D. by an Ōzbek Khān, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin. Facing it is the tomb-shrine of Khʷāja Abū Naṣr Parsā, a Ṣūfī of the 16th century. A nearby *madrasa*, erected by Saʿīd (sic) Subḥān Ḳūlī Khān (d. 1702) has only one arch left.

This description at first suggests the presence of three buildings—the "Green Mosque," the Parsa shrine, and a madrasa—where in fact there were only two structures (as he also seems to have recollected when he speaks of "two shrines on the square"). But by "tomb-shrine" Frye must be referring to the *ṣuffah* or *takht* which has stood at the very entrance of the mausoleum since the Niedermayer expedition's photographs. There is nothing in the Foucher photographs, the only ones to provide a panoramic view of the site, to suggest that there was a third building still standing in the mid-twentieth century, although, as we know, the site did at one time have many more monumental buildings on it.

Frye erroneously shifts Abu Nasr Parsa into the sixteenth century and slightly garbles the name of the madrasa builder (Sayyid, not Saʿid, Subhan Quli). It

is worth noting, however, that he attributes the mausoleum building to the late sixteenth-century ʿAbd al-Mu'min, from which perhaps came the idea that the person commemorated there was also of the same century.

Some of these mistakes have persisted in Western literature, scholarly and otherwise. Wilber described the shrine in a 1956 publication[60] and again, verbatim, in a 1962 work:[61]

> In Balkh, repopulated to a limited degree after the Mongols razed it to the ground, there are two mausoleums of this period [the Timurid]. One, the so-called tomb of Khwaja Aqa Shah,[62] is badly ruined and its outer dome has fallen. The other structure was once part of a complex which honored Khwaja Abu Nasr Muhammad [sic] Parsa, a renowned mystic who died at Balkh in 1460. The arcades of the great court have vanished and the ivan portal which led into it is in ruins. The mausoleum opposite the ivan remains, impressive in size and brilliant in decoration, its colorful faience slowly peeling away from the fabric.

The description of the "complex which honored Khwaja Abu Nasr Muhammad Parsa" confuses two quite different constructions, not to mention conflating father and son. The sentence beginning "The arcades of the great court ..." refers not to a Timurid building but to the *pīshtāq* of the late seventeenth-century madrasa of Subhan Quli Khan (fig. 1). By 1956, that fact should have been well known. The tradition that the tomb belonged to Abu Nasr Parsa and the remains of the madrasa opposite it could be ascribed to Subhan Quli Khan had been published as recently as the year before the first Wilber publication came out, although the author of that article, the American archaeologist Rodney S. Young, also had no idea who "Suba Kuli Khan" was or to which dynasty he belonged.[63]

In 1964 Derek Hill and Oleg Grabar provided a very brief but accurate notice of the building ("the superbly decorated shrine of the holy Khwajah Abu Nasr Parsa built shortly after 1460–61").[64] In 1967, Nancy Hatch Dupree, probably again relying on the Afghan Boundary Commission tradition, revises the story of the shrine to have it "built in memory of a distinguished theologian who died in Balkh in 1597."[65] Four years later, however, she noted and corrected the error of dating in another guide to the country which she wrote.[66] Peter Levi, writing of his travels to Balkh in 1969, and apparently relying on no one, refers to the shrine as "the brilliant shell of a seventeenth century mosque in the center of Amunullah's [sic] star-shaped [sic] and abortive city plan."[67]

Fig. 1. Subhan Quli Khan madrasa (1660–62), entry iwan. (Photo: A. E. Engler, 1940's, courtesy Paul Bucherer-Dietschi)

From fieldwork done in the early 1960's comes what is the first truly scholarly description of the building since Byron. The author was Galena A. Pugachenkova, and versions of this work appeared in a book devoted to the architecture of Afghanistan and in a Western-language publication of the Afghan Historical Society.[68] Perhaps the article was seen by the historical society as a means of publicizing Afghanistan's heritage to a general public rather than as a scholarly article aimed at an academic audience, for the segment on the shrine has no footnotes or bibliographic references. Nevertheless it is the best of the Orientalist scholarship to this point. She writes:

> L'édifice monumental rappelant une mosquée d'offices funèbres se dresse au milieu d'un parc au centre de la ville contemporaine de Balkh. It fut édifié auprès du tombeau d'un personalité soufi de l'époque timouride, Kwaja Hafiz-al-Din Abu-Nasr Parsa, probablement aussitôt après son décès (865 de l'Hégire = 1460/61). La reconstitution d'une partie des carreaux de revêtement tombés fut réalisée sur l'ordre du khan de Boukhara Abdal Mumine en 1598.[69]

This is the first place where the evolution of the building from mid-Timurid to late-Shibanid times is accurately sketched. But if the Afghan Historical Society hoped to promote a more accurate picture of the origins and history, however cursory, of the building, publications in subsequent years suggest the message has not gotten across. In 1973, a Fodor guidebook appeared which seems to have borrowed its history largely from the first Dupree sketch:

> The tomb of Abu Nasr Parsa, also called the green mosque, *Masjed-i-sabz*, is the town's most precious and best conserved monument. It was built in memory of a distinguished theologian who died in Balkh in 1597.[70]

The Fodor guide does, however, modify Dupree's description of the Subhan Quli Khan madrasa slightly, introducing new error, but also eliminating one in her work, though probably inadvertently. While Dupree had described Sayyid Subhan Quli Khan as "another great scholar of his day,"[71] the Fodor guide, managing to transform his name to "Sayd Sultan Quli Khan," calls the madrasa a "Koranic school" but at least does not repeat the misconception of Subhan Quli's scholarly prowess.

Three years later, John Hoag found it difficult to sort out the meaning of the building from the bits and pieces of data available to him:

> This curious structure dedicated to the famous Timurid Sufi Shaykh who died in 1460 or 1461 would appear at first glance to be a tomb, yet it is usually called a mosque and by the local people a *madrasa*, while the historian Khwand Amir called it a *takyah* or dervish monastery.[72]

And in a work published a year later, Alfred Renz continued the inexorable march of confused information about the shrine:

> In der heute etwas tristen kleinen Stadt erinnert daran außer dem Iwanbogen einer Medrese die *Grüne Moschee*, das Grabmal des Kwaja Mohammed [sic] Abu Nasir [sic] Parsa vom Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts (1497?).[73]

Then in 1980, Akhror Mukhtarov began the process of reconnecting the literary with the architectural tradition.

> The mausoleum of Khwajah Abu Nasr Parsa which graces the city center and is now used as the main Friday mosque has enjoyed special veneration from the time of its construction until the present. ... Pugachenkova, working from the architectural features, shows that the mausoleum was constructed shortly after the death of Khwajah Parsa. This is corroborated by written sources. According to Sultan Muhammad [author of *Majmaʿ al-gharā'ib*], the structure was built at the behest of Mir Farid ([sic] Arghun in 867 [1462–3]). But Muhammad Yusuf Munshi [author of *Tārīkh-i* or *Tazkirah-i Muqīm Khānī*] says that Khwajah Abu Nasr Parsa's mazar was built by the Shaybanid, ʿAbd al-Mu'min Khan (who was killed in 1598). This is not, however, factually accurate. Richard Frye, who has attributed the construction of this monument to the 16th century [in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article], probably used Muhammad Yusuf Munshi's erroneous information.[74]

Beyond the Soviet Union and Afghanistan this information went largely unnoticed. In 1988, the magisterial catalogue of Timurid monuments, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan,* was published without the Mukhtarov information and in its historical discussion emphasized some problematic points. The architectural description is quite thorough and I extract for discussion here only the points about the building's history:

> Khvajeh Abu Nasr Parsa c 1460.... The shrine ... commemorates the tomb of a leader of the Naqshbandi order of dervishes... . This structure has always been identified as a mausoleum to shelter the tomb of a holy man. Other evidence indicates, however, that it is a commemorative chapel erected not over but behind the tomb of Abu Nasr. According to local report, the unmarked tomb on the enclosure in front of the entrance is the tomb of the saint.... In the literary sources, the building is referred to as a 'takyah'. There is, however, a subterranean room containing a tomb, which local tradition attributes to someone other than the saint, perhaps the founder of the mosque.... It is conceivable that some of the decoration belongs to a later period. According to Pugachenkova, part of the revetment was replaced by ʿAbd al-Mu'min, khan of Bukhara, in 1598....
>
> *Documentation*: There is no epigraphical evidence for the identification of the shrine as the site of the tomb of Khvajeh Abu Nasr Parsa. According to local report, the inscriptions naming him were removed before Yate's arrival (1880s). Khvandamir speaks of his burial in Balkh and mentions a "takyah...at his head" [the authors cite a passage from the early 16th-century *Habīb al-siyar*]. The biography of Khvajeh Abu Nasr is found in many places....[75]

Again there is a problem of sources and how they are used. Here once more Khwandamir is cited as having called the building a *takyah*, although as noted in part 1, Khwandamir does not call the building a *takyah*, but

uses the term in an entirely different context. This citation of Yate somewhat inflates his story about an inscription into "inscriptions." The authors also miscite Bartol'd's *Ulugh Beg* for information on Khwaja Abu Nasr. Bartol'd makes no mention of Abu Nasr Parsa in the Ulugh Beg book, referring only to his father, the more celebrated Khwaja Muhammad Parsa. The bibliography of historical sources that the authors provide for the shrine entry in their catalogue includes, besides Khwandamir and C. E. Yate, only J. P. Ferrier, who traveled to Balkh in the mid-nineteenth century. But in his published work Ferrier never refers to anything that can be identified with any certainty as the Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa shrine.[76] The one building he refers to directly ("we reached the ruins alluded to, and established ourselves in the remains of an immense mosque") was, if Ferrier had his directions right, on the north side of the city; the Abu Nasr Parsa shrine is on the south side. It is possible that the hearsay report of Hazarahs who were accompanying him that the southern side of the city contained an "enormous mosque" might have referred to the shrine. But he apparently never saw it, or had forgotten he had by the time he wrote his memoirs.

The problems in the Donald Wilber and Lisa Golombek account are typical of the art-historical literature on the building. In part they arise because of the importance in art-historical scholarship of establishing a period, style, and typology for a building. But the Parsa *gunbaz* has resisted both typology and dating in the literature. It is in various contexts a mosque, a madrasa, a *takyah,* and a *mazār,* dated variously to the 1460's, the 1490's, and to the end of the sixteenth century (precisely to 1597 by some). It is deemed Timurid by most, but when Bernard O'Kane compiled his catalogue of Timurid monuments in Khurasan (before discovering the inscription in the Byron photograph) he intentionally omitted the shrine believing it more properly belonged to the sixteenth than the fifteenth century. There has been uncertainty as to whether the *gunbaz* even contains the tomb of the man whose name is attached to it, Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa.

One might well ask why the story about this particular building is so uneven and apparently contradictory as it has come down through time and captured the imaginations of people who have seen it. There are several possible reasons: Balkh has the misfortune, if we can call it that, of having had a pre-Islamic past that, in the minds of those who have tried to reconstruct it, overshadowed its Islamic heritage. The archaeologists, the guidebooks, even modern travelers like Levi, have imagined a Balkh whose greatness is not Islamic but Hellenistic. The Islamic remains are, in Levi's words, "detritus," rubbish that has to be pushed aside before one can find the real meaning of the place. Balkh was doubly misfortunate in that those seeking the Hellenistic roots found nothing and therefore turned their attention to other more responsive sites. Consequently, the Islamic levels through which they drove their sondages were never themselves fully excavated or adequately described.

A second possible reason for the fracturing of the Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa tradition was the shifting of the urban center of the region to Mazar-i Sharif. The ʿAlid shrine there, also fifteenth century in origin, came to claim spiritual, cultural, and ultimately economic and political preeminence in the region. Later in the eighteenth century, when the Afghans conquered the region, they had little incentive to patronize Balkh and its shrines. The Saduza'i Afghans were emotionally committed to the shrine of the Prophet's Cloak (*khirqah*) in Qandahar, and their successors, the Muhammadza'is, were more drawn to the ʿAlid shrine at Mazar-i Sharif, which became the administrative and economic center of the region. Only with the Musahiban dynasty in the twentieth century does there seem to have been a conscious effort to revive and reimagine the shrine, this time as the centerpiece of a "New Balkh."

A third factor, of course, has been the implicit or explicit belief of scholars that there were no written records or that, if there were, they were generally inaccessible. Therefore one could safely rely on the oral tradition in its various guises as captured, or invented, by the British members of the Afghan Boundary Commission. In the twentieth century, as "new" information became available through translations, it, too, found its way, but in no coherent fashion, into the record kept of the shrine. That no one felt obliged to correlate, explain, and rectify grossly incompatible information is perhaps best understood as a factor of the diminished or transformed meaning the shrine has presented to locals and outsiders in recent times. For the Afghan officials of the 1930's and after, the significance of the shrine was found in "modern" ideas of heritage and culture. Officially, the shrine became an example of the architectural legacy of the country, something for display and, perhaps coincidentally,

to be used as a lure for tourists. Other meanings contained in earlier records were of no great interest.

FRACTURED TRADITION III: PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS

A new technique of representing the building and preserving that representation over time reached Balkh in the summer of 1886 with the Afghan Boundary Commission. The new technology was photography, which served both to detail the object in ways words could not and to complement and sometimes contradict the image words produced. The photographic record, which begins in 1886, reveals the building in at least five distinct phases, each phase, I would argue, representing a distinct meaning or group of meanings attributed to the building. Some of those meanings, such as the building as the burial site of Abu Nasr Parsa and locus of spiritual power, are enduring; others, such as the building as symbol of Aryan culture or as anchor of urban development, are quite transient. Some have only local resonance, while others provoke observers far removed from the physical site. As one meaning assumes prominence, the building and its setting change. Without a good deal more research, however, including interviewing individuals directly involved in the evolution of these phases, it is impossible to know precisely what ascribed meaning dominated and determined how the building would change. But the photographs are suggestive and allow us to draw certain inferences even when there is little supporting documentation.

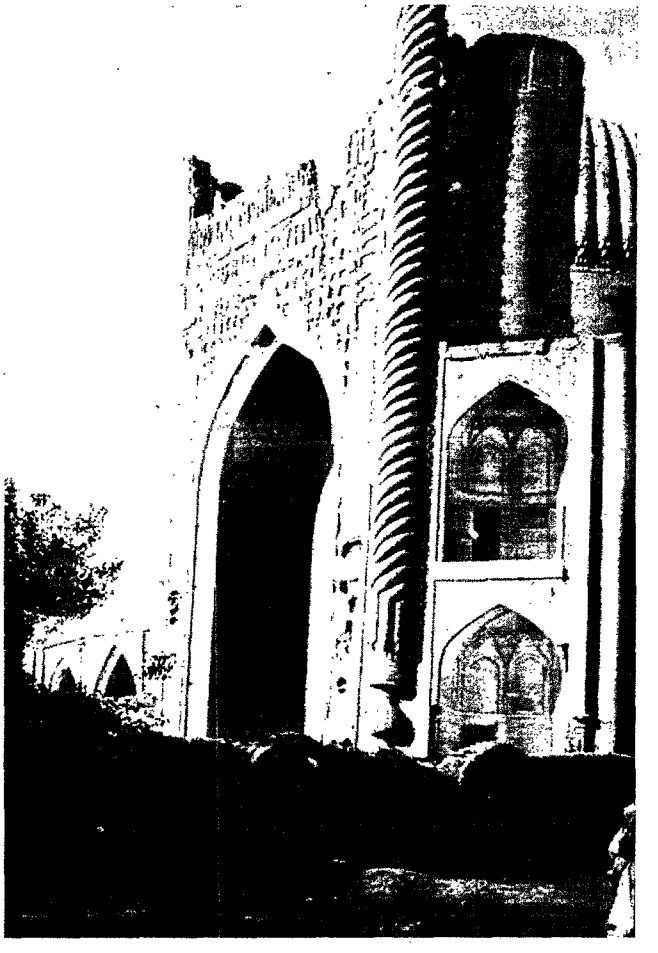

Fig. 2. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, view from northeast. Note forecourt wall. (Photo: C. L. Griesbach, July 1886, courtesy The Alkazi Collection of Photography, New York)

The First Phase: 1886–ca. 1935

The first known photographs of the building were taken in July 1886 by Charles Ludolf Griesbach, a member of the Afghan Boundary Commission. Two of his photographs of the Abu Nasr Parsa complex survive. One shows it diminutive in a panoramic view of the southern part of the city and establishes its relationship to the Subhan Quli Khan madrasa.[77] The second is a close-up view from the northeast. This photo (fig. 2) shows the screen of the façade rising ten to twelve feet above the point of the arch. The evenness of the top of the screen with just a small chunk missing near the northern minaret suggests that this may have been as high as 'Abd al-Mu'min's architect carried it in the late 1590's. In the picture the flanking spiral pilasters continue upward for another six to ten feet or so beyond the top of the screen. The forecourt of the shrine is enclosed by the ruins of a wall whose height appears to be about seven or eight feet, although it clearly went higher than this when it was built. The wall is pierced by three evenly spaced arched doorways that are bricked up. Attached to the building, on the south side of the main entryway and set back slightly from it, is an arcade of three one-story iwans.

The next photographs of the building were taken by members of the Niedermayer expedition when it reached Balkh in 1916. Two close-ups of the building were published in *Afghanistan*, an architectural study written jointly by Niedermayer and Ernst Diez. The image (fig. 3) taken from the southeast shows a façade virtually unchanged in the thirty years since Griesbach

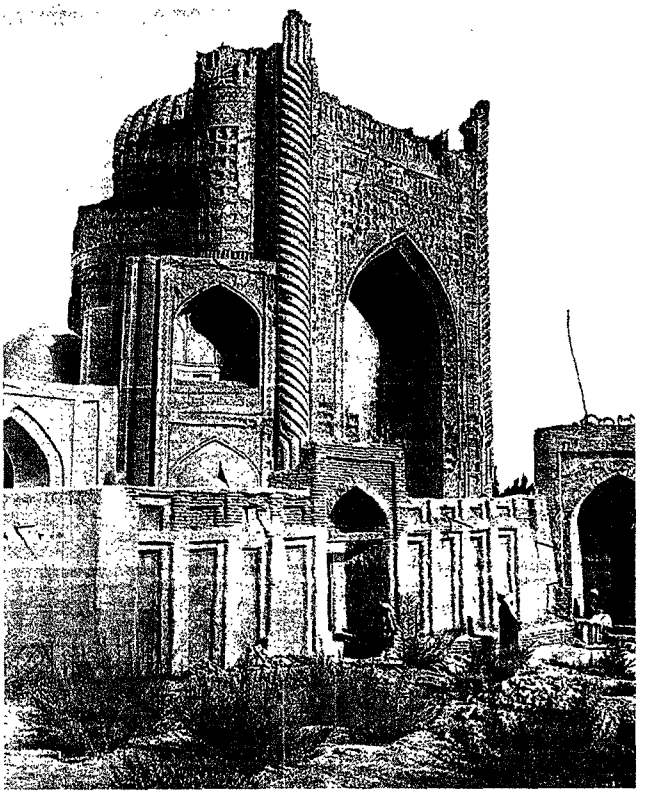

Fig. 3. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, view from southeast. Note forecourt wall, arcade of south wing, closed-in lower iwan, and condition of dome. (Photo: von Niedermayer and Diez 1916, Afganistan, Leipzig, 1924)

had photographed it. There are approximately the same number of gaps visible in the tiling, the screen still reaches the same height above the apex of the entry arch, and the small chunk out of the top of the screen does not seem to have gotten any larger. The first iwan of the arcade to the south is visible now, as is the dome of the room behind the iwan. What is remarkable about this photo is the condition of the wall enclosing the shrine's forecourt. It is in almost perfect condition, unlike the segment of the wall shown in Griesbach's photograph. The two arched entries that pierce the wall have small undecorated pishtaqs that echo the great screen of the shrine. Judging by the relative height of the men standing outside this wall, it must have been twelve to fifteen feet high, the nearer pishtaq façade rising to perhaps twenty feet and the farther and larger another four to five feet higher than that. This wall is an impressive and noteworthy feature of the building. Its location and historical context would indicate this is a very large *ḥaẓīra* enclosing the graves of the Parsa'is and others buried at the feet of Abu Nasr.

The wall and its condition also raise the question whether a renovation of this part of the shrine was going on. It appears almost as if there is actually work in progress. The wall is divided into two zones of plain inset panels, the lower about four times the height of the upper. All the lower panels and five of the eight upper panels have a stucco finish over the brick. But stuccoing of the last three of the upper panels and the upper third of the smaller pishtaq still remains to be done. There is no scaffolding or other evidence of ongoing work. But the condition of the stucco suggests that it is recent and is a stark contrast to the condition of another section of the same wall visible in Griesbach's earlier photograph. One other detail stands out. Flanking the main screen of the shrine are stacked double iwans, the upper one accessible from the staircase inside the minarets at the outer back edges of the screen. The lower iwan on the south side appears to be closed off.

The second of the Niedermayer photos (fig. 4) is a front view of the great iwan and screen. Here is the earliest picture clearly showing the roundel containing the 1005 (1597) inscription of ʿAbd al-Mu'min. It is immediately above the apex of the arch and the top half of the inscription is already missing. This front view, apparently taken from inside the forecourt or *ḥaẓīra* wall, shows three details worth noting. The first is the tile inscription on the back wall of the iwan. It is a single line of the first part of Qur'an verse 84 from Surat al-Isra' (as can be clearly seen in later photos) "*Qul: kull yaʿmilu ʿalā shākilatihi*" (in the Pickthall explanatory translation: "Say: Each one doth according to his rule of conduct"; in Arberry's version, "Say: Every man works according to his own manner"[78]). Depending on who chose the text, it might be read as the architect's ironic comment on ʿAbd al-Mu'min's penchant for covering the surfaces of old buildings with blue tile or a sly comment on the changing tastes that would allow such a gigantic ornamental screen to mask the simple lines of the saint's tomb. On the other hand, if chosen by ʿAbd al-Mu'min it might be read as a solicitation of posterity's admiration and recognition. The inscription forms a square band beginning at the lower right hand corner, running horizontally across the wall then ascending vertically, continuing horizontally and upside down across the top and then descending vertically to complete the square; in this course

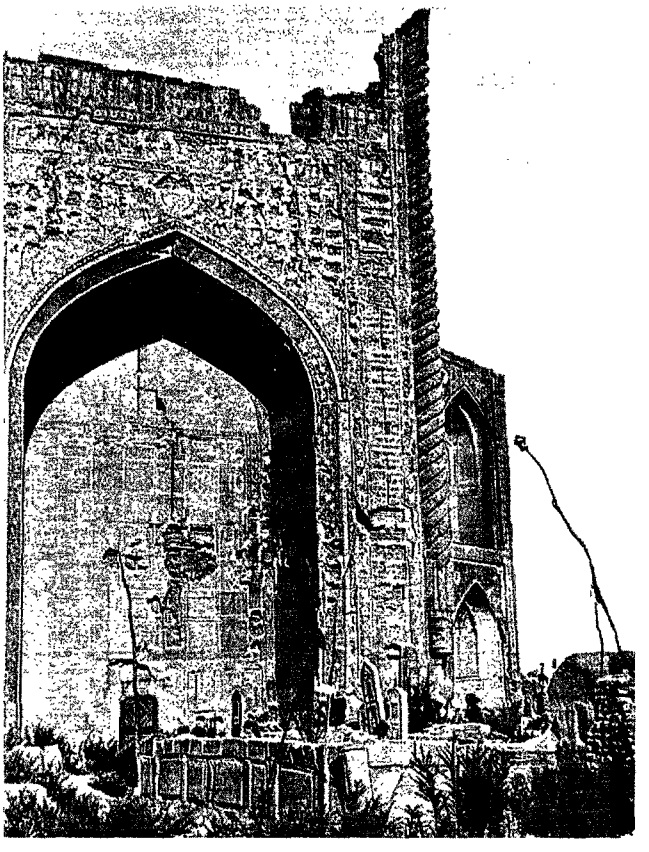

Fig. 4. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, view from east from inside forecourt wall including funerary platform. (Photo: von Niedermayer and Diez, 1916)

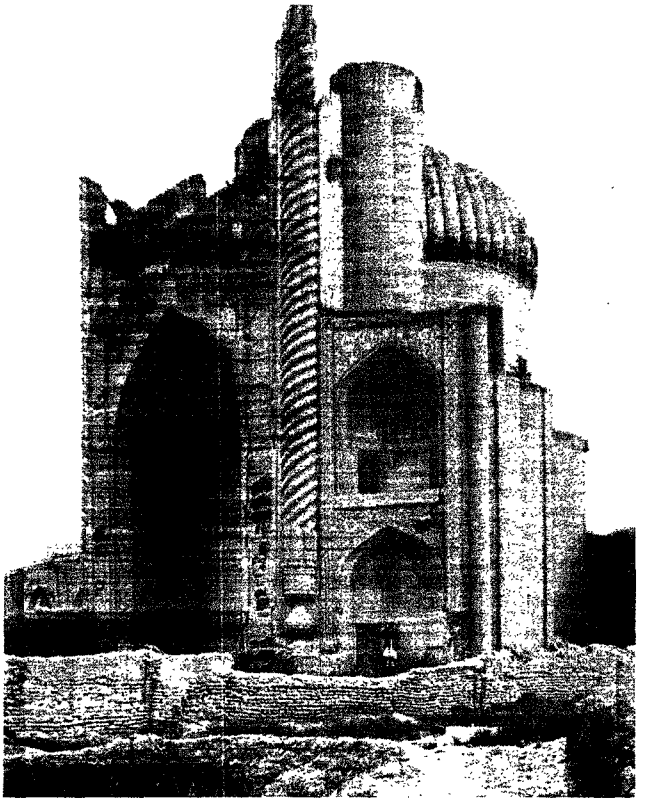

Fig. 5. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, northeast view. Note forecourt wall. (Photo: A. Foucher, 1925, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

the verse is repeated four times, once on each side. One significant aspect of this piece of the decoration is what the photos show happened to it as time passed and tiles fell away and were not replaced (see below).

The second noteworthy detail is the door centered in the back wall of the iwan. This was apparently intended as the main entrance to the interior. What is noteworthy about it is the absence of any other opening in the wall in this photo. It is clear that except for the door, which may or may not have been part of the plan of 'Abd al-Mu'min's architect, the back wall of the iwan was supposed to be an unbroken solid decorative surface.

The third detail worth noting is the *takht* or *ṣuffah* (funerary platform) in the forecourt. In the Niedermayer photo, it bears a strong resemblance to a number of other such platforms of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the Dahbidi platform outside Samarqand, Khwaja Ahrar's platform in Samarqand, the Ansari platform at Herat, and the Shibanid *ṣuffah* now on the Rigistan in Samarqand. The *takht* or *ṣuffah* has at least four visible standing stones and looks as if it could have contained at least some of the many generations of Parsa'i shaykhs al-Islam and shrine administrators. It is a significant aspect of the enduring meaning of the shrine and remains in place today, though considerably altered.

In 1924–25 the French expedition (DAFA) led by A. Foucher photographed the building from all sides.[79] The northeast view (fig. 5), taken from the same spot from which Griesbach had photographed it, shows the same segment of the forecourt wall with its bricked-up arches. There has been some deterioration of the tile work on the shrine in the meanwhile as well as considerable erosion of what is visible of the forecourt wall. But the heights of the main pishtaq screen and its flanking fluted pilasters appear to be unchanged. The small chunk out of the top of the screen does

not seem to have grown any larger.

The DAFA view from the southeast is a striking one (fig. 6). Actually more from the east then southeast, hence more of a frontal view, the photo makes it quite clear that the Niedermayer photograph was taken from inside the forecourt wall. Foucher's photo, taken from a point farther away, now gives a good idea of the extent of the forecourt wall and also its deteriorated condition compared with the Austrian's picture. Much of the stucco work visible in the latter's photo seems to have fallen away in the intervening nine years and a part of the forecourt wall not visible in the 1916 picture has clearly been scavenged or has simply fallen down. Another feature not readily visible in any of the earlier photographs is the very uneven surface of the ground outside the wall, strongly suggesting the remains of eroded mud-brick sarcophagi, as if a broad area in front of the shrine and extending well beyond the forecourt wall had once been a large cemetery. Fig. 6 in fact shows a new, or newly restored, white sarcophagus just outside the part of the wall that is at right angles to the mausoleum. As was not uncommon, the forecourt wall then might have demarcated an inner privileged burial zone, perhaps reserved for family members and other worthies. Foucher's picture of the shrine from the rear (fig. 7) shows a doorway and remnants of a low wall and it is quite possible that the wall seen in the forecourt pictures encompassed the entire shrine and demarcated its most sacred precincts. The wall is symbolic of the function and meaning of the shrine as a sacred burial space and implies the existence of a shrine administration that maintained and managed the separation of the inner and the outer spaces.

From the photographs of Griesbach, Niedermayer, and Foucher, it appears that the wall in front of the shrine stood some 50–100 feet in front of the building and from south to north ran parallel with the arcade wing. Where it drew even with the stacked and chamfered double iwan on the south side it turned at right angles and ran away from the shrine for what appears to be 100–150 feet, then turned at right angles and ran parallel with the main entry, perhaps across to a point even with the chamfered stacked double iwan on the north side. It then turned back and continued at an oblique angle (?) to skirt the north side of the shrine. This is about all one can say from looking at the photos.

A dramatic change in the wall is shown in figs. 8 and 9, undated photographs but apparently from the

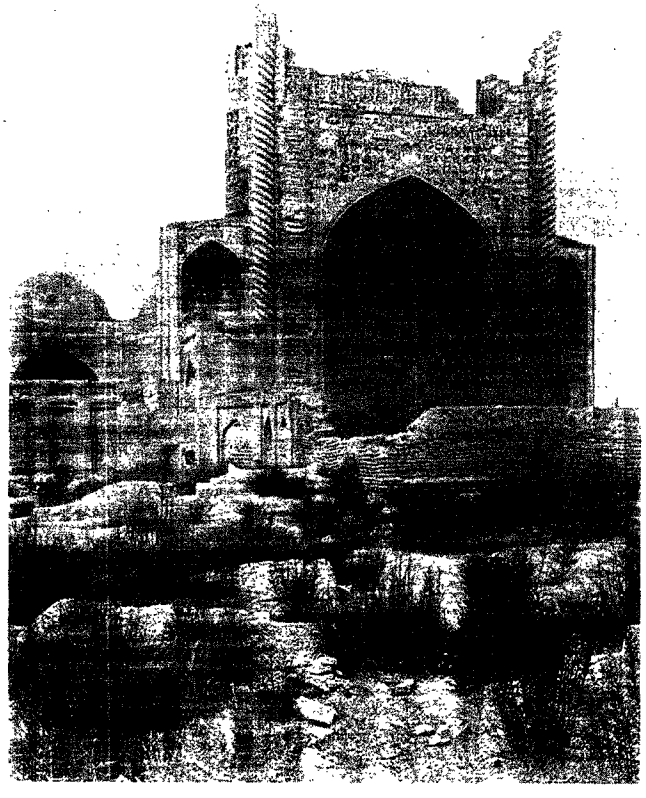

Fig. 6. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, southeast view. Note condition of forecourt wall and apparent cemetery outside wall. (Photo: A. Foucher, 1925, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

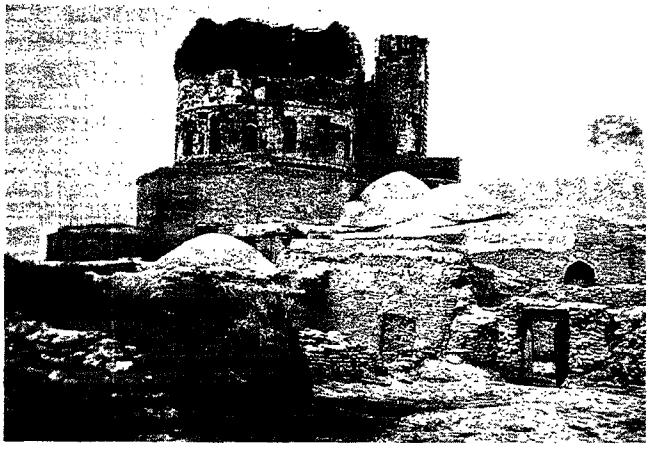

Fig. 7. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, southwest view. Note condition of dome and south wing. (Photo: A. Foucher, 1925, from *La Vieille Route*)

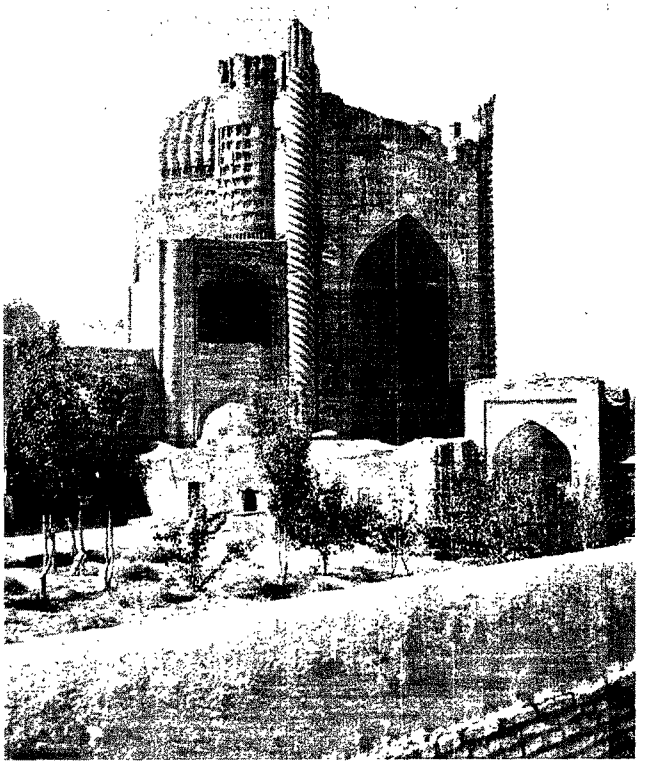

Fig. 8. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, southeast view. Note new wall in foreground and disappearance of old wall. (Photo: ca. 1925–34, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

DAFA archive for they bear the same series number as the Foucher photos in the Musée Guimet collection. Fig. 8 clearly shows that the paneled wall visible in both the Niedermayer and Foucher photographs has been knocked down. A nub of the wall is still evident (fig. 10). In place of it a new more extensive outer wall (fig. 9) was erected. Fig. 8 also reveals a low building within the grounds that has been added to the front of the shrine. This becomes even more evident in photos taken by Robert Byron in 1934.

Nine years after the French archaeological team departed Balkh, Byron arrived in May and took a number of photographs, some of which appeared in his 1935 article for the *Bulletin of the American Institute of Persian Art and Archaeology* and others in 1938 in Pope's *Survey of Persian Art.*[80] From Byron's pictures it is impossible to tell whether the forecourt wall still existed. He makes no mention of anything but the shrine building itself. Other features that show in his pictures, like the arcade extension on the south side of the shrine (fig. 11) and the marble-faced funerary platform (fig. 12), also elicited no comments from him. The things they symbolized (the continuity of the Parsa'i family, the function of the shrine as burial ground perhaps being expanded in his own time, the inner sanctum created by the wall) were not immediately apparent to him. The quality of his photogra-

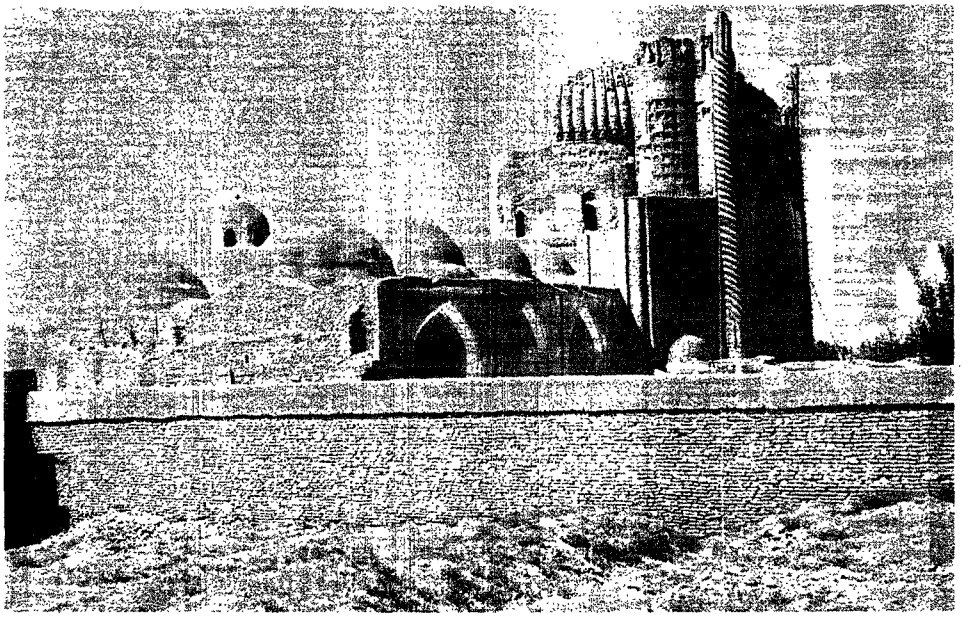

Fig. 9. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, south-southeast view. New wall in foreground. (Photo: ca. 1925–34, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York)

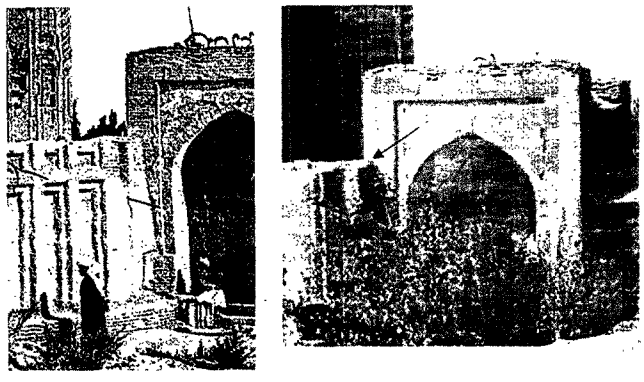

Fig. 10. Detail from figs. 3 and 8.

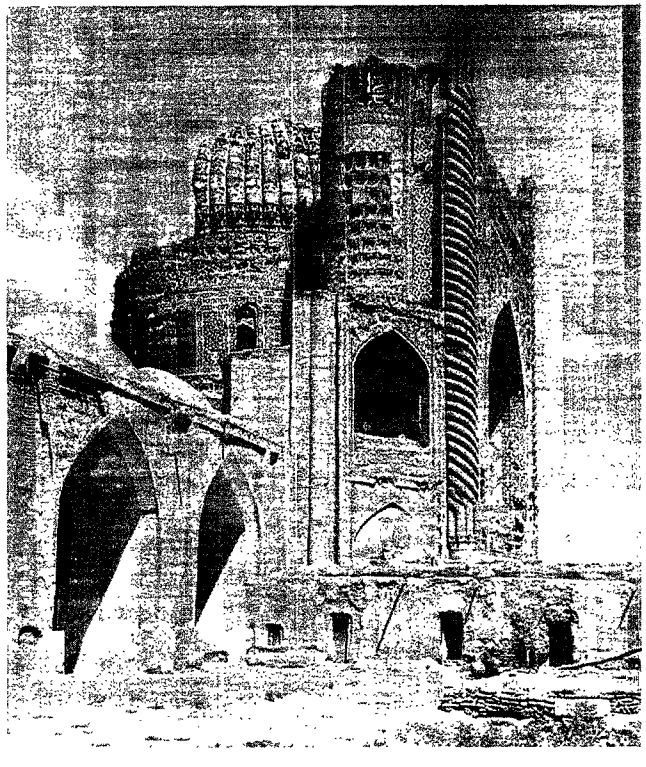

Fig. 11. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, southeast view with two bays of south wing and one-story structure attached to closed-in iwan. (Photo: Robert Byron, 1934, Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)

phy is very high, and by enlarging the photograph (fig. 12) that appears as plate 424 in the *Survey of Persian Art*, O'Kane was able to decipher ʿAbd al-Mu'min's inscription of 1005 (1597). Byron's photograph of the shrine from an acute southeast view (fig. 11), from inside the forecourt wall, shows the arcade in excellent condition comparable to what appears in the undated fig. 9. It also clearly shows the curious low structure attached to the shrine at the point where the arcade meets the chamfered stacked double iwan.

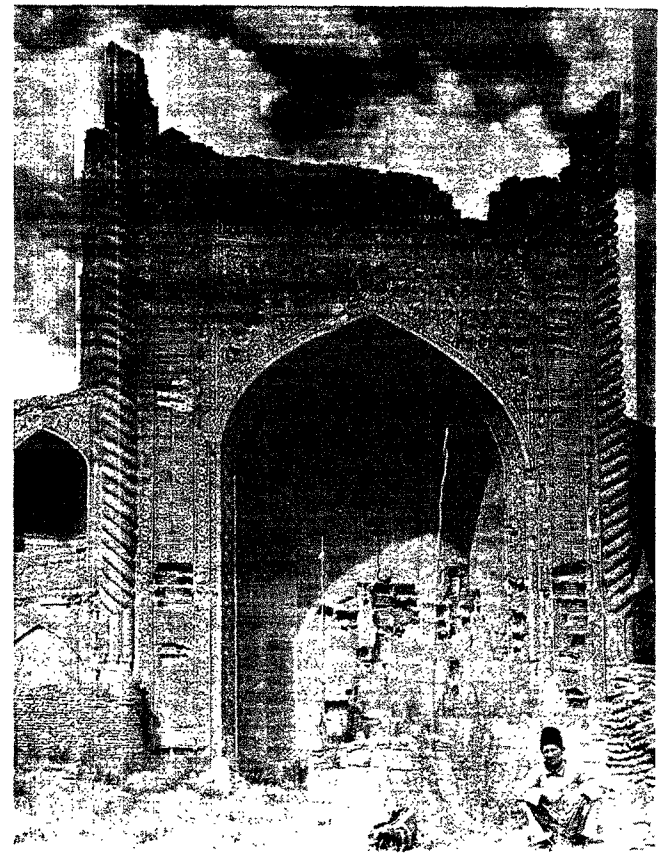

Fig. 12. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, east view. Note roundel with inscription over arch, band of inscription on back wall of the main iwan. (Photo: Robert Byron, 1934, Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)

What was this building? It was not a *ḥaẓīra*, or burial structure, since this would have most likely been unroofed. It looks as if it could have been housing of some kind, perhaps a dormitory for students of the "encircling madrasa" although we have no evidence this was still functioning in the twentieth century. Or perhaps it was a hostel or *khānaqāh* for pilgrims to the shrine. In either case it should probably be understood as reflecting the local meaning of the shrine.

Byron's pictures show modest change in the complex since Griesbach's time, or at least from what Griesbach showed in his single picture. Niedermayer's, Foucher's, and the undated DAFA photos show a badly

damaged dome, more than half missing in Foucher's image (fig. 7) as well as the undated DAFA pictures and likewise missing in the later photos of Byron and Eric Schroeder (these latter published by O'Kane). Griesbach's image might be interpreted as showing damage to the dome at the rear, but the angle is not helpful. Moreover, his contemporaries, Maitland, Yate, and Peacocke, who viewed the building and recorded their impressions, make no mention of any specific damage. Maitland does refer to the structure as "half-ruined," but both Yate and Peacocke offer directly contrary impressions, Peacocke saying "the ziyarat is still standing complete" and Yate speaking of the "handsome dome ornamented with green tiles," with no suggestion of any damage. In any event, whatever caused the damage to the dome apparently had no effect on the screen or the flanking pilasters, which remain unchanged in all the photos from 1886 to 1934.

The Second Phase: ca. 1935–ca. 1956

The preceding group of photographs represents the shrine in what may be called the first state in which photography recorded it. This is not to suggest that these photographs represent the "original" state of the shrine complex. Subtle changes must have occurred over the centuries as maintenance work was required. The differing styles of tile work, for example, give one indication of the sort of minor change that must have been steadily going on. But sources predating the age of photography emphasize the same functions and meanings of the shrine as do the photographs of the period 1886–1935. The shrine is the site for the acquisition of knowledge, for burial, for pilgrimage, and for contact with the next world through the grace and power of the buried saint. These meanings are reflected in the burial ground, the changes in the wall which marks an inner and outer area for burials, the "encircling madrasa," and the low, apparently residential, building that had been added at some point to the southwest-facing lower iwan flanking the main entry iwan. For the first fifty years for which photographs of the shrine are available, only minor changes are to be seen: the erosion of the forecourt on the southeast side, the deterioration of the stucco on the forecourt wall between 1916 and 1924, perhaps a few more tiles missing from the screen. What can be seen of the shrine's ancillary features—the wall around the forecourt, the low-roofed structure extending from it, the arcade to the south, the funerary platform—all are suggestive of a complex whose meaning is relatively unchanged.

It is about to have its structure, its meaning, and its photographic image thoroughly revamped, however. In his 1935 article in the *Bulletin of the AIPAA,* Byron says at the end of the first paragraph, "Restoration of the building is under contemplation." But it was anything but restoration—if by restoration one means returning to some earlier state—that the responsible officials, especially Muhammad Gul Khan, had in mind when they authorized work on the shrine. "Restoration," if that was what Byron heard, was really a code word for a reinterpretation of the building, for appropriating it for new purposes and meanings. Richard Frye's 1943 snapshot of the building (fig. 13) shows a dramatically different building from that depicted by Griesbach, Niedermayer, Foucher, and Byron. The shrine has been utterly reworked, partly no doubt in accordance with the Aryan dreams of the Afghan government, partly simply to "modernize" it, and to replace at least some of its spiritual and religious meaning with a cultural and artistic one. From this point on, the official interpretation of the building is that it is the "historic legacy" of the would-be nation, a symbol of past glory, artistic achievement, and of the nation's future promise. It would be the centerpiece of the "New Balkh," a shining monument to nationalist aspirations.

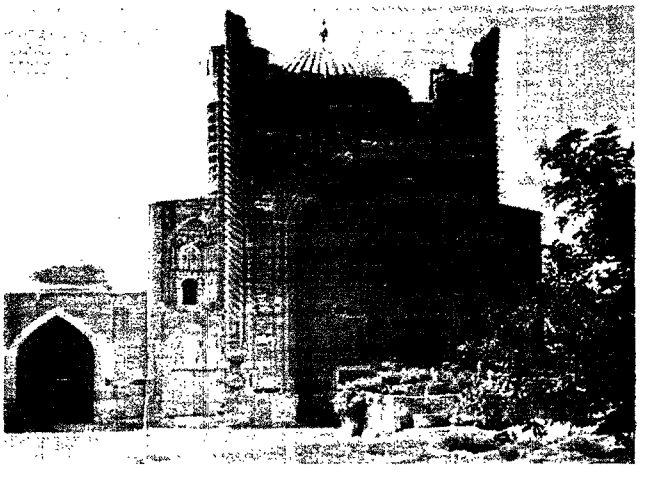

Fig. 13. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, east view. Note condition of dome, metal finial, leveled ground in front of mausoleum, and no longer closed-in lower southeast iwan and the missing structure formerly attached to it. (Photo: Richard Frye, August 1943)

How was the transformation effected? Frye's photo (fig. 13) suggests it was a process of both elimination and rebuilding: remove those elements which detracted from and confused the new meaning of the building and repair those elements which were crucial to the building's survival. In fig. 13, most importantly, the low building which extended from the front of the shrine has been demolished and the lower angled iwan has been opened up again. In addition the forecourt wall separating the inner and outer precincts has been removed. Only the funerary platform (*takht, ṣuffah*) remains. The ground in front of the shrine, which had been a cemetery, is now thoroughly leveled and smoothed, the better to draw the eye to the building, to clean up its setting, as if it were a jewel.

From this point on, photos (e.g., those of Caspani and Cagnacci, and some taken by two Swiss architects, Rudolf Stuckert and Albert Engler, who were in Balkh in the 1940's[81]) show this area turned into a garden with banked beds, benches, and pathways. Destruction of the cemetery was possible, perhaps, because by the late 1930's Balkh was only sparsely inhabited, and there may have been no significant constituency left for the cemetery. There are hints, however, that this was not the case, or at least not a significant factor in the elimination of the cemetery. As noted above, considerable animosity was felt by the long-time populace of the Balkh region towards the changes wrought by the Pushtun-nationalist *ra'īs-i tanẓīmīyah* Muhammad Gul Khan, who was still remembered in the 1970's as a "second Genghis Khan." Besides noting the forcible displacement of at least part of the Persian-speaking population by Pushtuns, Mukhtarov, referring to the modern *ṣuffah* in front of the shrine (not the one visible in the photos under discussion) links Muhammad Gul Khan's name to the desecration of cemeteries.

> Twelve marble tombstones have been gathered and installed in a special raised enclosure in front of the Khwajah Abu Nasr Parsa Mosque. These were probably only recently assembled from other places in the city since in 1922, opposite the main entrance to the mosque, there was only the tomb of a revered Afghan saint which the Afghans would not permit Vecheslov to examine. [M. G. Vecheslov, author of a 1924 work on the monuments of Afghanistan]. On only two of the stones can the dates (1115 [1703–4] and 1332 [1913–14]) still be read. Next to this raised enclosure but on a lower level several marble slabs lie scattered about. They might be tombstones but they have no inscriptions. According to local residents, the inscriptions were effaced by the governor, Muhammad Gul Khan.[82]

Mukhtarov's uninscribed marble slabs are probably the remains of the sides of the *takht* visible in the photos of Niedermayer, Foucher, Byron, and Frye, not the work of erasure attributed to Muhammad Gul Khan. It seems doubtful that the minister of the interior would have expended such effort. It would have been easier simply to pulverize the stones if the object was to erase traces of a Persophone presence in Balkh. Removing inscriptions from marble and leaving a smooth unblemished surface could only be done by a craftsman and after all, why bother? But such repugnance and hostility had Muhammad Gul Khan instilled in the non-Pushtun peoples of the north that, as in the case of Chinggis Khan, otherwise inexplicable but ostensibly destructive phenomena could be easily and credibly attached to his name, even decades later.

Still there does seem reason to attribute the elimination of the funerary aspect of the shrine's meaning to him. Certain graves which proclaimed a nationalist message (notably the grave of the poetess, Rabiʿa al-Balkhi) would be preserved or "re-discovered," but the grounds would no longer be hallowed for the burial of future generations.

These demolitions in many ways echo ʿAbd al-Mu'min's refurbishing and reinterpreting of the shrine at the end of the sixteenth century. Here, too, the work was sponsored by forces outside the shrine. One has the impression that in the late sixteenth century the work had the approval of the Parsa'i family and was not intended to replace the saintly tradition with some new meaning. In the 1930's, on the other hand, the involvement of any local elements is nowhere evident, and if the preserved memory of the disruptive and displacing policies of Muhammad Gul Khan are at all accurate then the shrine had become an object disconnected from any personal or family claims. Henceforth government policy would determine how the shrine was to be presented.

A third change to the building which Frye's snapshot records is the rebuilding of the outer dome. Restored and re-tiled, the dome is also now topped with a large metal finial, a characteristic feature of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Afghan public architecture. The restoration of the dome was a major task. It was not just a matter of making an existing structure weather-tight. The reports on the restoration work carried out later by the Archaeological Survey of India make no mention of any earlier res-

toration or even of older and newer sections of the dome. It is not impossible that the entire standing part of the outer dome (approximately half of the structure) had first to be torn down before the dome could be rebuilt and that what is seen today is largely the work of the late 1930's–early 1940's. The great iwan, however, remains essentially as it appears in earlier photos.

A new meaning has been added to the shrine, one that is asserted as the dominant, or at least the official one. The shrine is now the centerpiece of the urban plan devised by Aryan-influenced and nationalist-minded officials. Balkh, the "cradle of Aryanism," will rise again, and the focal point for urban life will be a piece of monumental architecture, symbolizing—not Sufism or Islam—but the greatness of a past capable of producing such a work. The shrine would remain in this second-phase form for twenty-five years or so, until about 1960. Particularly noteworthy about the structure during this period was the survival of the arcade on its south side. An unusual photograph taken by Klaus Flinker or Max Klimburg from a point due south of the shrine and published in 1959 shows the configuration of this wing of the complex (fig. 14): it is three bays or rooms long and two deep. Was this the modern vestige of the "encircling madrasa" that is described in the mid-sixteenth century? It must have seemed in the 1930's that this was also integral to the overall plan, for it was not touched in the reconstruction of the complex.

At this time, too, there were more minor changes that included replacing the old *ṣuffah* platform with a new one of baked brick. It is possible that a new *hazīra* simply encloses the old *ṣuffah*. but the photographic evidence suggests that the old one was actually dismantled (fig. 15). Another small but significant change occurs in the building during this stage of its evolution. As tiles on the back wall of the great iwan came loose, a small window was revealed in the wall centered directly above the doorway. In an undated photograph taken by Hélène Frumkin in 1952, about one-third of the window is visible (fig. 15). Later, when

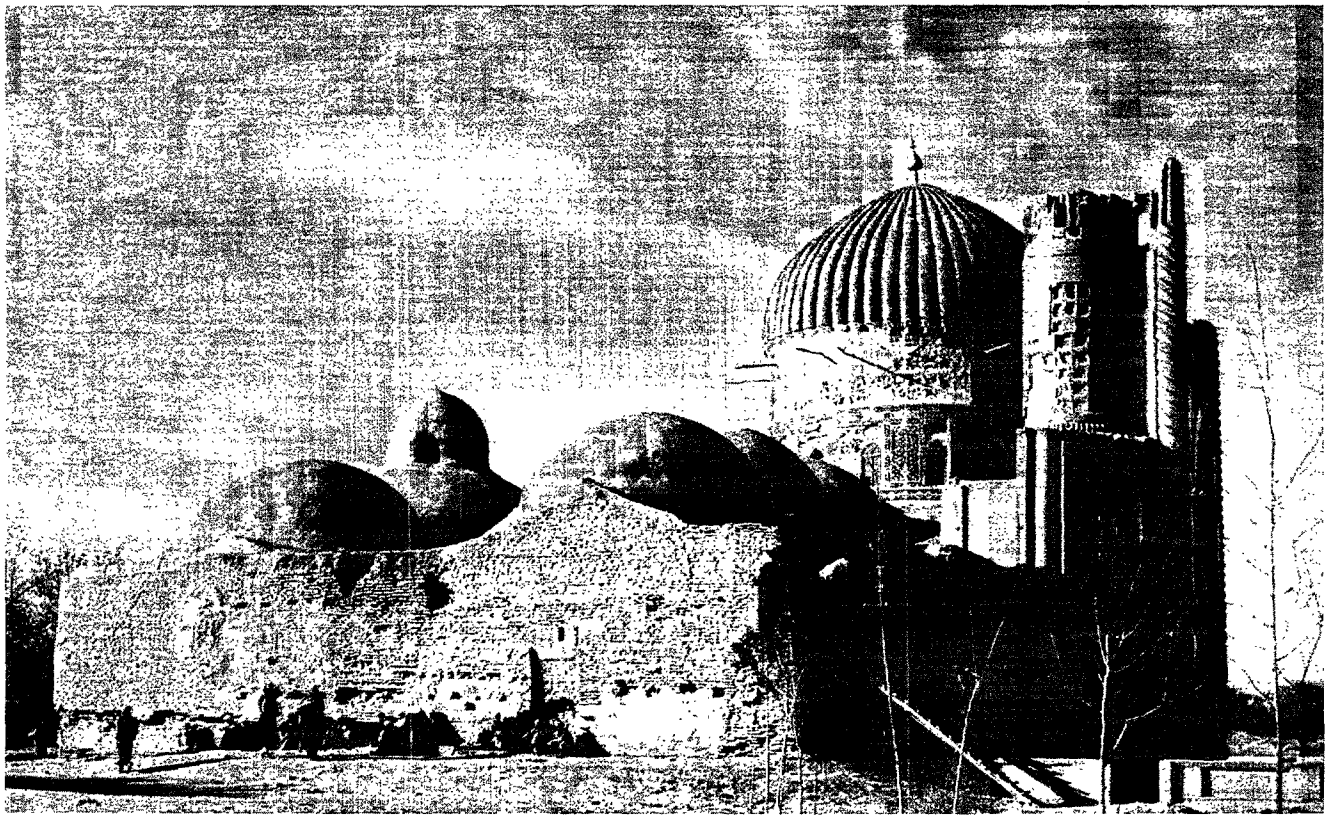

Fig. 14. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, south view. (Photo: from *Afghanistan*, photographed by Karl Flinker and Max Klimburg, text by Joseph Kessel, Thames and Hudson, London 1959)

the aperture for the window was fully opened, it broke into the lower line of the Qur'anic inscription mentioned above (fig. 16). There may be other explanations for covering this window (in 1597) with the back wall of the screen, but it seems most likely that there was no place in the plan for retention of the window and the position of the inscription seems to make that clear. The presence of the window adds to the already considerable evidence that the great iwan was erected after the *gunbaz* structure and that 'Abd al-Mu'min in 1597 added the iwan to the existing *gunbaz* rather than rebuilding the entire structure. The location of the door through the back wall of the iwan no doubt corresponds to the location of a door in the preexisting structure, which in all likelihood would have been centered under the window. Views of the back and sides of the shrine suggest that the remaining three main axes of the base each had a door and a window above centered in them. When 'Abd al-Mu'min's architect decided on the decoration for the wall of the great iwan he must have simply decided that the window had to go.

The Third Phase: ca. 1956–76

The latest photograph of the building in the second phase is either the Flinker/Klimburg photo (fig. 14) or a photo that appeared on the cover of *Afghanistan News*, vol. 2, no. 13 (September 1958), an English-language publication of the Royal Afghan Embassy in London. Both show the arcade to the south. The transition to the third phase is marked by the destruction of this wing, and reduction of the complex to just the mausoleum and the funerary platform in the forecourt. In 1961, a photograph was published by Andrew Wilson showing that the southern wing (what I have referred to as the madrasa part of the complex) had disappeared.[83] Photographs from 1967 and 1970 seem to indicate that the disappearance of the southern wing was not deliberate but caused by some catastrophic force of nature (figs. 17 and 18). They show rough projecting elements of the part of the wing attached to the mausoleum and what first comes to mind is that the building was damaged by an earthquake. The evidence is not conclusive, however. Seismic records document a severe earthquake of magnitude 7.6 (Richter scale) on 9 June 1956. Its epicenter was at Sayqan (Sayghan), about 120 miles south-south-east of Balkh,[84] but whether that would have been powerful enough to create the kind of destruction evident in the photographs is uncertain.

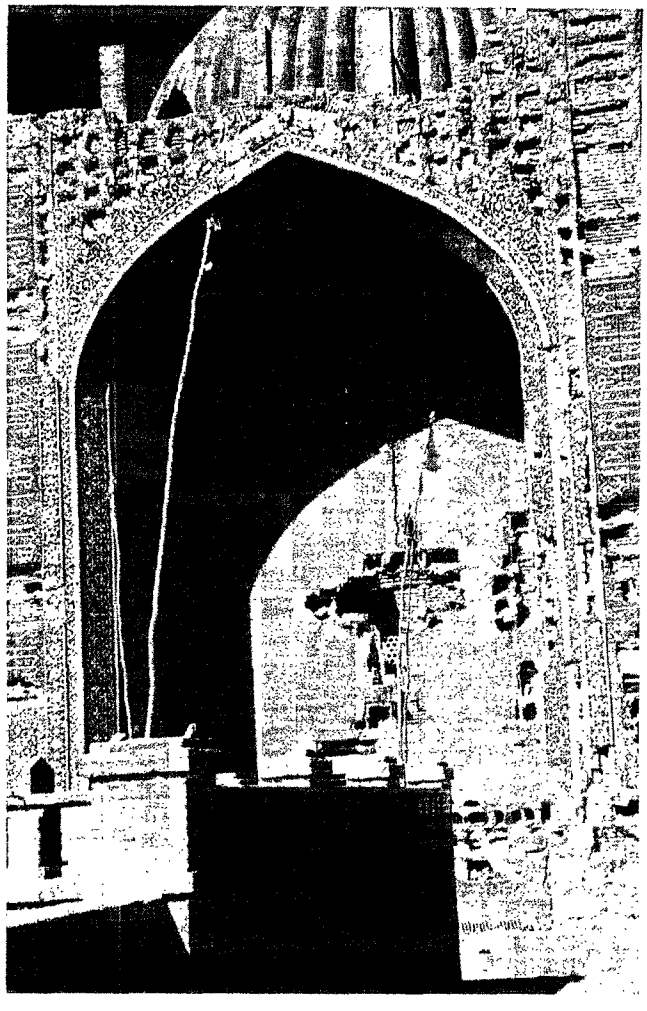

Fig. 15. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, east view. Note reduced height of screen above the arch (inscription roundel now missing), new wall around funerary platform, armature visible where tile has fallen, window gradually emerging behind inside wall of main iwan. (Photo: Hélène Frumkin, 1952, courtesy of Paul Bucherer-Dietschi)

The Fourth Phase: 1976/77–ca. 1995

In the mid-1970's, the Archaeological Survey of India, which had already contracted with the government of Afghanistan to do preservation work on the Buddhas of Bamyan, was called in to remedy what was seen as imminent and perhaps irreversible damage to the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum. A team led by R. Sengupta began work in 1975. In a report filed at the end of the year Sengupta wrote, "The cracks on the external high dome were causing anxiety about the safety of

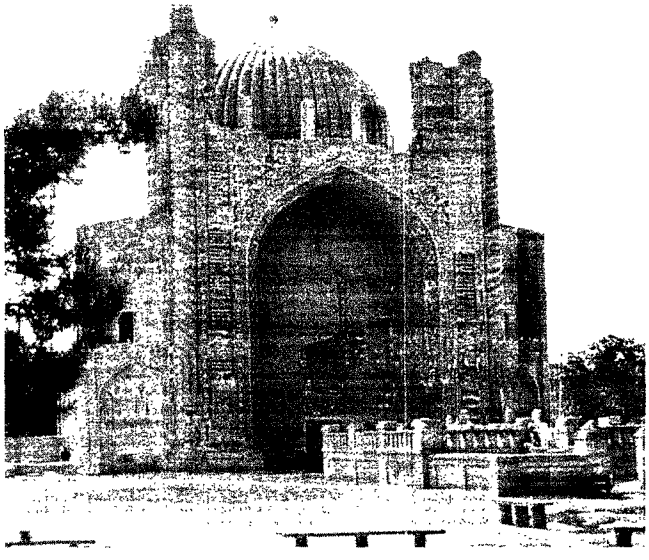

Fig. 16. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, east view, showing full appearance of window and its relationship to the tile inscription. Note armature visible where tile has fallen. (Photo: Donald Wilber, mid-to-late 1950's)

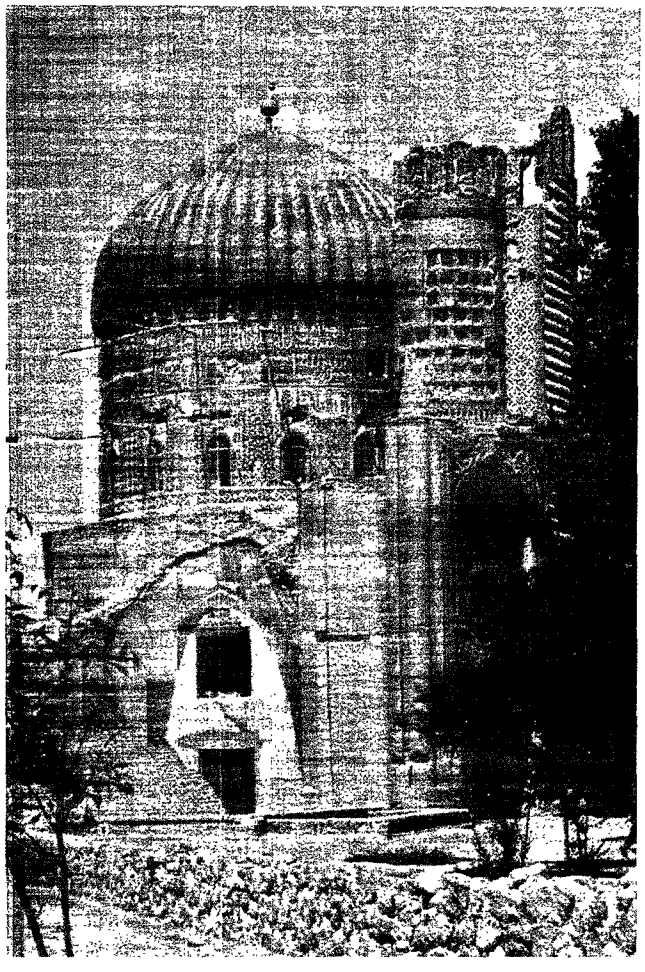

Fig. 17. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, east view. Note missing south wing. (Photo: Dr. Gremliza, 1967, courtesy of Paul Bucherer-Dietschi)

the structure. Hence urgent repair works to save the structure had to be undertaken early at the request of the Government of Afghanistan."[85] The published accounts of the work which appeared in reports for the years 1975–76 and 1976–77 are extremely brief. Fortunately, the photographic record is more revealing. Sengupta was methodical about taking "before" and "after" photographs. His images are the last to show the shrine in its third phase and the first to show it in the fourth. A number of Sengupta's photographs have been reproduced in Golombek and Wilber's *Timurid Architecture,* but it should be noted that these are all pictures taken *before* restoration, i.e., representing the building's third state. From these and other pictures, it is clear that maintenance and restoration work were continuous. This was a fragile building, vulnerable to the effects of wind and rain and, of course, the periodic seismic tremor.

Much of the work done by the Archaeological Survey conservationists is not visible. Three brick arches were constructed on the underside of the outer dome to support it. Brickwork at the back of the screen above the gallery was replaced and much of the brickwork was repointed. None of this is particularly evident. The most visible evidence of Sengupta's work is the mortar used to patch the gaps in the revetment of the great iwan. Before restoration the unusual armature on which the tile panels were hung had been exposed wherever the tiles had fallen away. Following restoration the armature is no longer visible (compare figs. 15 and 19) and the overall appearance of the iwan has been subtly changed.

The Fifth Phase: ca. 1995 to the Present

The history of the shrine in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the collapse of the post-Soviet government of Najib Allah in 1991, the years of fighting between the various mujahidin groups that preceded the Taliban rise in 1995–96, the conquest

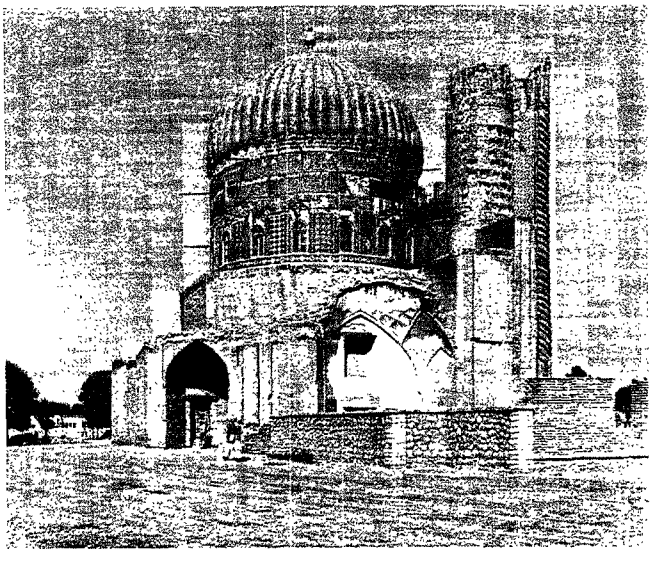

Fig. 18. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, southwest view with remnants of south wing indicating possible natural disaster rather than planned demolition. (Photo: Josephine Powell, 1970 or 1971)

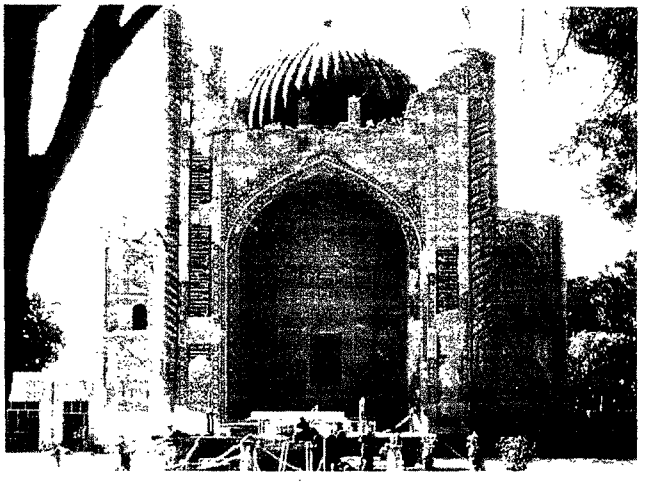

Fig. 19. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, east (front) view showing dismantling of new *ḥaẓīra* wall, new south wing of one-story shops. Note mortar patches (first made by R. Sengupta, 1975–76) over armature. (Photo: Amin Tarzi, 1996)

of the Balkh region by the Taliban by the end of 1999, and then their ouster in 2001, remains for future historians to tell. Some evidence of the fin-de-siècle world and the subtly changing meaning derived from the shrine, at least in the pre-Taliban period, is evident in recent photographs of the complex.

One of the changes is a somewhat unwitting comment on "the global market." Amin Tarzi, a visitor to the shrine in 1996, was told by the official in charge of restoration work that the shrine would again become an important tourist destination. In expectation, perhaps, of the wealth such visitors would bring, a row of concrete shops was constructed on the site of the former south wing (fig. 19). They were painted white and stand in what can only be called stark contrast both architecturally and functionally to the south wing that they replaced. In addition, the *ḥaẓīra* constructed in the 1960's was again renovated, its railing removed and the wall substantially lowered.

A 1998 photograph (fig. 20) taken by Tom Little, an ophthalmologist working in Afghanistan, shows little change from 1996. The ground in front of the shrine, which was undergoing repair in 1996, now appears to have been paved. The photo also indicates that the modern *ḥaẓīra* wall, which was being dismantled in 1996, has now been completely removed. A corner of what looks to be the marble of the original *ṣuffah* platform is just visible in the photograph.

The photographic record provides incontrovertible evidence of the constant changes wrought on the mausoleum and its appurtenances. These changes, as I have tried to show, were not random or haphazard, but were connected with the changing meaning ascribed to the mausoleum and arising from evolving social and political values.

CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF THE HISTORY OF THE ABU NASR PARSA GUNBAZ

Historians search for the meaning of the past amongst the fragments of information that survive. From these bits they try to summon up a story that will be meaningful to their own contemporaries and perhaps enjoy some enduring credibility. Yet the past must be largely imagined; only minute parts of it may be recoverable. Historians of objects may at first see some more permanent truth in the tangible quality of the object, imagining it less subject to whim and fancy and more suitable to the creation of a story with staying power. The effect on the imagination of a monumental building in its surviving form is extraordinarily powerful; it is not easy to envision that structure in other configurations, especially without the benefit of extensive archaeological work on the ground, in surviv-

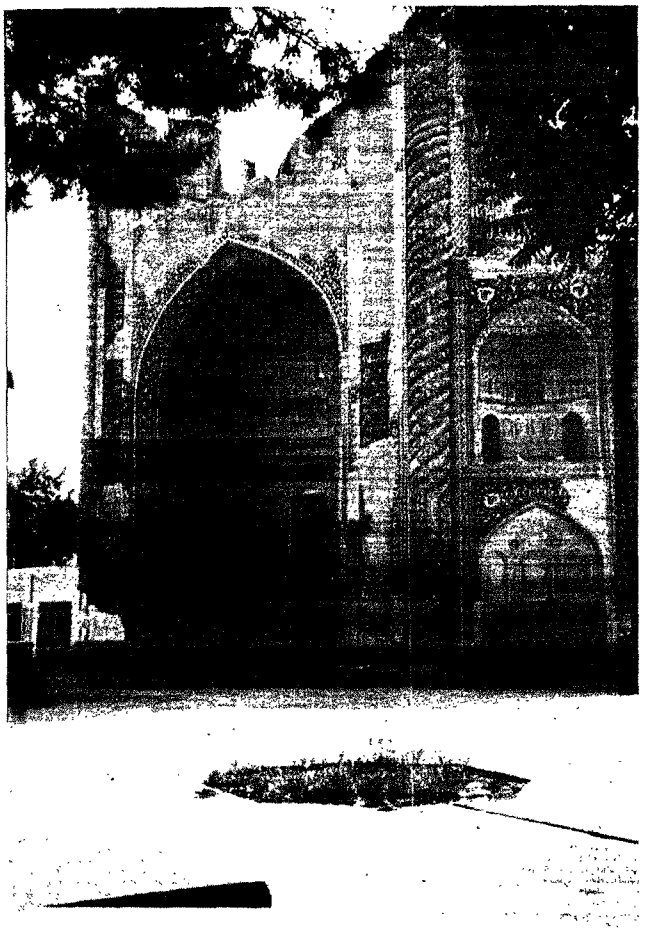

Fig. 20. Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, northeast view. Note new pavement, corner of restored funerary platform (without *ḥaẓīra* wall) and south wing. (Photo: T. Little, 1998)

ing texts, and—in the past hundred years—in the photographic record.

There is always an impulse for historians to seek the original and authentic building. In the case of the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum, the building that has survived has generally been deemed "authentically Timurid," because of its origins in the fifteenth century. The most easily available information—that the building commemorated a fifteenth-century Sufi shaykh Abu Nasr Parsa (d. 1460–61, although in modern times the mausoleum is often attributed to his more famous father, Khwaja Muhammad Pārsa, d. 1420)—limits the search for authenticity to a single period, the fifteenth-century era of the Timurids. The textual and epigraphic sherds that posit a late sixteenth-century origin have until recently been dismissed or ignored. But even revisionist ideas, in bucking the weight of accumulated scholarship, have also tended to ascribe the building's authenticity to a single era.

There is no authentic building encompassing a single historical moment. What remains today and what has vanished represent the ideas of successive generations who found meaning in the building and sought to reify that meaning through manipulating the structure. Had the case not been so, no building would probably have survived at all. Balkh as an urban center had a finite history. Many of the great structures that characterized the urban landscape (baths, caravansaries, palaces) exist now only in the textual record, the remains of their fabric and foundations buried deep beneath the surface of the ground.

The shrine's capacity to encourage and nourish a sense of its importance in the minds of local and distant peoples, those who valued one or more of the building's meanings—as a link to the divine through burial and/or pilgrimage, as a center of education and place for the transmission of social values, as a mosque and cultic site, as a communal hall, as local employer, as linchpin of urban renewal, as nationalist monument, as cultural icon, as object of scholarly study, or as object of touristic curiosity—have all helped contribute to its continued existence. Its long-term existence is by no means assured, however. Its history tells us that it has survived because of its malleable nature, its capacity for renewal, and its ability to symbolize different things to successive generations.

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NOTES

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1. R. D. McChesney, "Architecture and Narrative: The Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa Shrine. Part 1: Constructing the Complex and Its Meaning, 1469–1696," *Muqarnas* 18 (2001): 94–119.
2. Bernard O'Kane, "The Uzbek Architecture of Afghanistan," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* (La mémoire et ses supports en Asie Centrale) 8 (2000): 136.

3. See my *Waqf in Central Asia* (Princeton, 1991), chaps. 7 and 8. In addition, for a thorough exposition of the political events of 18th- and 19th-century northern Afghanistan, see J. L. Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy': Bukhara, Afghanistan, and the Battle for Balkh 1731–1901* (Leiden, 1993).
4. Lee, *Ancient Supremacy*, p. 119. Also see Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826–1863)* (Richmond, Surrey, 1997), pp. 78–79, for a synopsis of the struggle for control of Balkh between 1817 and 1849.
5. One expects, however, that further archival research in Uzbekistan and, if possible, someday in Afghanistan would throw more light on this very indistinct period.
6. Lee, *Ancient Supremacy*, p. 119.
7. See John E. Woods, *The Timurid Dynasty* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990).
8. Louis Palmer, *Adventures in Afghanistan* (London: Octagon Press, 1990), pp. 141–42.
9. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, p. 233.
10. William Moorcroft, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara; by Mr. William Moorcroft and Mr. George Trebeck from 1819 to 1825*, prepared for the press, from original journals and correspondence, by Horace Hayman Wilson, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1841), 2: 494.
11. Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara being the account of a journey from India to Cabool, Tartary, and Persia; also narrative of a Voyage on the Indus from the sea to Lahore, with presents from the King of Great Britain; performed under the orders of the supreme government of India, in the years 1831, 1832, and 1833*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1834).
12. The British side was led by Sir Peter Lumsden and his second-in-command, Colonel Sir West Ridgway. There were also "numerous officers attached for political, survey, military, geological and medical duties." For our purposes here the most important British members were Major C. E. Yate, Captain [W.] Peacocke, Captain [P. J.] Maitland, and Capt. C. L. Griesbach. For others, see Angus Hamilton, *Afghanistan* (London: William Heinemann, 1906), p. 155; Ludwig Adamec, ed., *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, vol. 4, *Mazar-i-Sharif and North-Central Afghanistan* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1979), pp. xvii–xviii; and C[harles] E[dward] Yate, *Northern Afghanistan or Letters from the Afghan Boundary Commission* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1888; rpt. Lahore, 1976). The Afghan side was led by Qazi Sa'd al-Din Khan.
13. L. C. Wickham Legg, ed., *The Dictionary of National Biography: 1931–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).
14. Quoted in Adamec, ed., *Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, p. 110. Jonathan Lee lists a work of Maitland's in the archives at the India Office Library, *Exploration and Survey Operations in the Country from the Hari-Rud to Balkh, including the Bamiyan Pass*, 1886, India Office Library, Secret Letters and Enclosures from India, L/P&S/7/46, 1473–1489. This and Afghan Boundary Commission, *Records of the Intelligence Party of the Afghan Boundary Commission* (Simla, 1888–91), 5 vols. (vols. 1–2, *Diary of Major Maitland*, vol. 3, *Diary of Major Peacocke*, vol. 4, *Reports on the Tribes*, vol. 5, *Miscellaneous Reports* (cited in Lee, *Ancient Supremacy*, p. 654), might contain more information, although from one comparison it appears that Adamec, *Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, extracted all the information pertaining to the city.
15. Quoted in Adamec, *Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, pp. 110–11.
16. Ibid., p. 107.
17. Yate, *Northern Afghanistan*, pp. 257–58.
18. Ibid., p. 302.
19. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
20. Ibid., p. 251.
21. John Alfred Gray, *At the Court of the Amir: A Narrative* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895), p. 186.
22. Oskar von Niedermayer, *Afganistan*, ed. Oskar von Niedermayer and Ernst Diez (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1924). For a recent account of the political aspects of the Niedermayer mission, see Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan's Foreign Relations to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1974), pp. 15–41. I have been unable to find evidence that Diez ever actually set foot in Balkh. He and Niedermayer first traveled together to Iran in 1912–14 (see Jens Kröger, "Diez, Ernst," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 7: 402) and according to his notes in his two-volume magnum opus on Persian architecture (volume 1 being *Churasanische Baudenkmäler* [Berlin, 1918] and volume 2, *Persien islamische Baukunst in Churasan* [Hagen, 1923]), he and Niedermayer reached as far as the Afghan-Russian border, i.e., to a point north of Herat but not to Balkh itself. Niedermayer reached Balkh after the futile mission to persuade the Afghans to enter the war on the side of Germany and the Ottoman Empire. When the mission left Afghanistan via Russian Turkistan, he stopped in Balkh, photographed the shrine, and sketched a plan of it. But it was clearly Diez who later wrote the short descriptive text (pp. 64–65) on the shrine, for he refers to "Niedermayer's notes" and in a footnote refers to "my [*Persien*] *Islamische Baukunst in Churasan*."
23. A. Foucher with Mme. E. Bazin-Foucher, *La Vieille route de l'Inde de Bactres à Taxila*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Editions d'art et d'histoire, 1942 and 1947), pp. 66–67 and pls. XXIII, XXIV.
24. Although they cite Alexander Burnes, James Ferrier, Angus Hamilton, John Wood, and C. E. Yate, Yate is the only one who refers to the shrine.
25. Ibid., pls. IX–X.
26. O'Kane, "The Uzbek Architecture of Afghanistan," pp. 123–60.
27. Robert Byron, "The Shrine of Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa at Balkh," *Bulletin of the American Institute of Persian Art and Archaeology* 4 (1935): 12–14. In a letter to his mother from Mazar-i Sharif, Byron wrote, "I have done quite a good drawing of the big mosque at Balkh," by which he almost certainly meant the Abu Nasr Parsa mausoleum. Robert Byron, *Letters Home*, ed. Lucy Butler (London: John Murray, 1991), p. 223.
28. Byron, "The Shrine of Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa at Balkh."
29. W. Barthold, *Uluğ Beg und seine Zeit* (Leipzig, 1936). Bartol'd, who died in 1930, never wrote about the Parsa shrine at Balkh nor visited Afghanistan. On his life, see Yuri Bregel, "Barthold, Vasiliĭ Vladimirovich," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 8: 830.
30. In the 1313 (1934) *Sālnāmah-i Kābul (Almanach de Kaboul)*, p. 61, the governor (*nā'ib al-hukūmah*) of Mazar-i Sharif (Byron's "Afghan Turkestan"), which included Balkh, is named Gul Ahmad Khan, not Muhammad Gul Khan. He had succeeded to the governorship in the year between the

publishing of the 1933 and 1934 almanacs and remained in that post until at least 1947. The urban plan Byron refers to is visible in maps and aerial photographs taken after the 1930's. Compare, for example, R. S. Young's map of Balkh drawn in the early 1950's (Rodney S. Young, "The South Wall of Balkh-Bactra," *American Journal of Archaeology* [1955], pl. 72, fig.1) with that of A. Foucher, Foucher with E. Bazin-Foucher, *La Vieille route de l'Inde*, p. 59. For an aerial photograph showing traces of the plan, see my *Central Asia: Foundations of Change* (Princeton, 1996), pl. 9.

31. A. U. Pope, *Survey of Persian Art*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), "Timurid Architecture," pp. 1119–43 (pls. 422–24). On p. 1136 he cites Bartol'd's *Ulug̃ Beg und seine Zeit* as his source for the obituary of Abu Nasr. "In 1460/61 (865 H.) ... there died at Balkh in Oxiana the saint Abū Nasr Parsa whose memory provided another and perhaps a last opportunity for the Gur-i Mir type of mausoleum."
32. *Journal asiatique*, vols. 16, 17, 20 (p. 299 in volume 20 is the source of his information).
33. Major David Price, *Chronological Retrospect, or Memoirs of the Principal Events of Mahommedan History, from the Death of Arabian Legislator, to the Accession of the Emperor Akbar...*, 3 vols. (London, 1811–21).
34. I am grateful to Dr. Senzil Nawid for this information.
35. For information on other German expatriates working for the government of Amir Amanullah Khan (1919–29), see Adamec, *Afghanistan's Foreign Relations*, p. 74.
36. Byron, *The Road to Oxiana*, p. 112.
37. In the issue of 29 March 1934, the official newspaper *Iṣlāḥ* (p. 2, cols. 1–2) carried a long account of the establishment of a qarakul monopoly (*inḥiṣār*) which would be under the control of "merchant-monopolists" (*tujjār-i inḥiṣār*), appointed by the government, a system which might have been the means to eliminate Jewish businessmen from the trade.
38. *Sālnāmah 1311*: 154.
39. The 20 March 1934 issue of *Iṣlāḥ* in reporting on recent promotions records the elevation of ʿAbd al-Jabbar Khan, the governor of Darrah-i Suf, a district south of Balkh, to head the office supervising the reconstruction (*mudīrīyat-i taʿmīrāt-i shahr-i Balkh*).
40. *Sālnāmah 1314* (1935–36): 131.
41. In the 1 Dalw 1312 (21 January 1934) issue of *Kābul*, Muhammad Gul Khan's picture and full title (*wazīr-i dākhilah wa raʾīs-i tanẓīmīyah-i wilāyāt-i shumālī*) appear. That Byron called him "Governor of Turkestan" is completely understandable.
42. Ludwig Adamec, *Who's Who of Afghanistan* (Graz, 1975), p. 383, translates the title as "Chief Civil and Military Administrator." While that conveys the proper sense of the power of the individual, it doesn't convey the temporary nature of the office.
43. For his biography, see Adamec, *Who's Who*, pp. 196–97.
44. A. Mukhtarov, *Balkh in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. R. D. McChesney with Nadia Jamal and Michael Lustig (Bloomington, 1993), p. 4.
45. Byron, *The Road to Oxiana*, p. 246.
46. Byron, "The Shrine of Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa."
47. Byron, *The Road to Oxiana*, p. 256.
48. *Sālnāmah-i Kābul 1317* (1938–39): 461.
49. René Dollot, *L'Afghanistan: Histoire, description, moeurs et coutumes, folklore, fouilles* (Paris: Payot, 1937), p. 143.
50. Erwin Grötzbach, *Städte und Basare in Afghanistan: Eine stadtgeographische Untersuchung* (Wiesbaden, 1979), map p. 104, shows three inner complete rings and three outer partial ones and states that, according to K. Ziemke, *Als deutscher Gesandter in Afghanistan* (Berlin, 1939), p. 229 (also cited by X. de Planhol, "Balḵ: Modern town, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 3: 592–3), there were eight rings.
51. *Sālnāmah-i Kābul 1317* (1938–39): 460–61.
52. Grötzbach (*Städte und Basare*, 105), citing Ziemke, mentions plans to build a large bazar with 400 shops and 32 sarays, perhaps the new market to which Dollot refers. As late as 1973, of the 1934 plans to build 1270 houses only some 430 had been built, which Götzbach attributes to the much greater attractiveness of Mazar-i Sharif as a place of residence.
53. The photograph appears in Egidio Caspani and Ernesto Cagnaci, *Afghanistan: Crocevia dell'Asia*, 2nd ed. (Milan, 1951). On the inter-governmental agreements that led to the arrival of the priests in Afghanistan in November 1932, see May Schinasi, "Italie-Afghanistan 1921–1941, IV. Les années 30: Contribution italienne, émoignage barnabite," *Annali* 53, 2 (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale): 149–91.
54. Caspani and Cagnacci, *Afghanistan: Crocevia dell'Asia*, pp. 240–41.
55. Schinasi, "Italie-Afghanistan," p. 188.
56. Ibid.
57. He was in Afghanistan as an officer in the Office of Strategic Services. According to a biography written by Y. M. Nawabi and published in Richard Nelson Frye, *Opera Minora*, vol. 1 (Shiraz: Asia Institute, Pahlavi University, 1976), pp. 1–14, Frye was recruited by his former Turkish teacher, Walter L. Wright, who headed the Near East section of the OSS, and was sent out to Afghanistan. His cover assignment was to be a teacher at the Habibiyah School in Kabul, a Western-style secondary school founded by the Afghan amir, Habib Allah (r. 1901–19).
58. Richard Frye, "Observations on Architecture in Afghanistan," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (March 1946): 137.
59. Donald N. Wilber, *Adventures in the Middle East: Excursions and Incursions* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1986), p. 182.
60. Donald N. Wilber, ed., *Afghanistan* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1956), p. 376.
61. Donald N. Wilber, *Afghanistan, Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files, 1962), p. 104. This appears to be a second edition of the 1956 work, though it is not so designated and its title is different.
62. I.e. Khwaja ʿAkkashah.
63. Young, "The South Wall," p. 268. "In this central area are the mosque called Masjid-i-Sabz and a monumental arch, once the entrance to the Madrassah of Seyed Suba Kuli Khan—both monuments of the Timurid period (sic)."
64. Derek Hill and Oleg Grabar, *Islamic Architecture and Its Decoration: A.D. 800–1500* (London, 1964), p. 57.
65. Nancy Hatch Dupree, *The Road to Balkh* (Kabul, 1967), p. 91.
66. Idem, *An Historical Guide to Afghanistan* (Kabul, 1971), p. 294. The reversed image of the shrine in the *Road to Balkh* is also corrected in the 1971 guide.
67. Peter Levi, *The Light Garden of the Angel King: Journeys in Afghanistan* (London, 1972), p. 141.
68. Her book, *Iskusstvo Afganistana*, published in 1963, seems

to be her first publication on the Abu Nasr Parsa *gunbaz*. The information is reworked in G. A. Pougatchenkova (Pugachenkova), "À l'étude des monuments Timourides d'Afghanistan," *Afghanistan* 23, 3 (1349 [1970]): 33–34.

69. Ibid.
70. Eugene Fodor and William Curtis, *Fodor's Islamic Asia* (London, 1973), p. 446.
71. Dupree, *The Road to Balkh*, p. 93.
72. John Hoag, *Islamic Architecture* (New York, 1976), pp. 274–75.
73. Alfred Renz, *Geschichte und Stätten des Islam von Spanien bis Indien* (Munich, 1977), p. 474.
74. Mukhtarov, *Balkh in the Late Middle* Ages, pp. 44–45.
75. Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 1: 295–96.
76. J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Beloochistan; with Historical Notices of the Countries lying between Russia and India*, translated from the original unpublished manuscript by Capt. William Jesse (London, 1857), pp. 206–7.
77. Griesbach's panoramic views of the outer city are particularly valuable when compared to Foucher's panoramic views taken forty years later. Whole buildings have disappeared and the city walls have markedly deteriorated in the intervening period.
78. Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: New American Library, n.d.), p. 209; A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford, 1964), p. 283.
79. Foucher, *La Vieille route*, pl. XXIII (a) view from the southeast, (b) le grand porch (the pishtaq), and (c) view from the northeast, pl. XXIV (a) face postérieure de la mosquée-verte.
80. At about the same time as Byron, Eric Schroeder also visited Balkh and photographed the shrine. His photos have been published by Bernard O'Kane, "The Uzbek Architecture," pp. 131 and 133.
81. I am grateful to Paul Bucherer-Dietschi for this information.
82. Mukhtarov, *Balkh in the Late Middle Ages*, p. 60.
83. Andrew Wilson, *North from Kabul* (London, 1961), p. 113.
84. I am grateful to Charles Melville for this information.
85. R. Sengupta, "ix. Expedition outside India: The Shrine of Khwaja Abu Nasar (sic) Parsa at Balkh," *Indian Archaeology 1975–76: A Review* (New Delhi, 1979), p. 128.