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The Tomb of Muḥammad al-Harawī (447/1055) at Ġaznī (Afghanistan) and Some New Observations on the Tomb of Maḥmūd the Ġaznavid

by ROBERTA GIUNTA

Between 1957 and 1966 the Italian Archaeological Mission under the direction of Alessio Bombaci and Umberto Scerrato (Bombaci 1959, 1966; Scerrato 1959) located in the cemetery areas of Ġaznī a considerable number of tombs in white marble, some intact, some fragmentary, datable as from the early years of the Ġaznavid domination (366-583/977-1187) ⁽¹⁾. Despite the poor state of preservation of many of the monuments, the frequent absence of construction dates from the epitaphs and the impossibility of carrying out further sondages in the area, the almost entirely unpublished documentation obtained has enhanced our picture of the funerary architecture of Ġaznī. At the same time, the inscriptions carved in relief on the elements forming each of the tombs have yielded data essential for a knowledge of the city's funerary epigraphy and pointed the way in reconstructing the evolution of the varieties of Kufic and cursive scripts in use.

Even today we still have only a scant number of studies on Ġaznī epigraphy and even fewer studies on the funerary architecture of Afghanistan, neither of which have been the object of close scrutiny. A fairly exhaustive list of the city's tombs is contained in an anonymous and undated Arabic manuscript, providing for each tomb the name of the cemetery area and reading – not always complete or precise – of the epigraphs ⁽²⁾. Moreover, a few brief indications on Ġaznavid period tombs

⁽¹⁾ The documentation formed the subject of the author's doctorate thesis, discussed on 9 November 1999, under the direction of Solange Ory at the 'Aix-Marseille I' University of Aix-en-Provence (France), shortly to be published. I take this opportunity to give my sincere thanks to Umberto Scerrato, who entrusted me with the photographic material of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Ġaznī has been unstinting in precious advice and useful suggestions. I also wish to thank Solange Ory, who guided my first steps in the field of epigraphy and followed this work of mine over the years. My thanks also go to the IsIAO for authorisation to publish the photographs presented here, all of which were taken by Umberto Scerrato. The facsimiles of the inscriptions and alphabets were drawn by the author.

⁽²⁾ The manuscript was photographed in 1957 by the director of the Kabul Société Historique, Aḥmad 'Alī Kohzād on the express request of Alessio Bombaci and was conserved in the Museum of Kabul; the photos are now preserved at the IsIAO. The manuscript was also published in 1967 by Muḥammad Riḍā.

can be found in the study devoted by Ghulam Jilani Jalali to the city of Ġaznī and to the dynasty taking its name from the city (Jalali 1932: 4, 22, 215-16, 262-63, 240). However, the first and possibly only accurate, detailed study was by Samuel Flury (1925) ⁽³⁾, who analysed the palaeographic and decorative aspects – the primary objects of his interest – of the inscriptions uncovered at Ġaznī by the French Archaeological Delegation under the direction of André Godard (1925). Among the funerary monuments of the city the tomb of Maḥmūd b. Sebūktigin (d. 421/1030) (Figs. 6-7) had been attracting the attention of visitors and scholars since the first half of the 19th century, finding mention – often together with photographs and facsimiles of some of the inscriptions – in a great many publications ⁽⁴⁾. Of these, the article by Janine Sourdel-Thomine (1981) ⁽⁵⁾ contains thorough study of the monument, and the most complete of the examinations of the inscriptions carved on each tomb element ⁽⁶⁾. Few of the city's other funerary monuments dating to the Ġaznavid and Ġurid occupation feature in studies by western and eastern writers (Bombaci 1958, 1966: 10, 14-15, 38, pls. 28-30, fig. 132; Grohmann 1971: 212-13, 230, figs. 236, 258; Ḥabībī 1971) ⁽⁷⁾. The *Répertoire Chronologique d'Épigraphie Arabe* published the – often partial – contents of the inscriptions on just three Ġaznavid tombs (RCEA, 1935, 6: nos. 2059, 2380, 2377; 1937, 8: no. 2929). In the '80s two tombs, again of the Ġaznavid period, were acquired by the Dār al-Ātār al-Islāmiyyah in Kuwait and have since 1989 been included in the museum's catalogue of funeral tombstones (al-Zayla'i 1989: 13-14, 21-29, 35-38, pls. 6A-6F, 7A-7E). Finally, a small fragment of another tomb element, again of the Ġaznavid period, appeared in 1984 in a sales catalogue (*Sotheby's*, London 1984, no. 6) and now in the Tareq Rajab Museum of Kuwait.

Of the funerary documentation collected by the Italian Archaeological Mission about forty tombs are attributed to the Ġaznavids. One in particular drew our interest for a number of reasons, and merits wider attention. It is a small tomb

⁽³⁾ To the same author we owe the previous study of the inscription on the wooden doors of the mausoleum of Maḥmūd, transferred to the Museum of Agra (Flury 1918).

⁽⁴⁾ See Kennedy 1840, 2: 31, 59-64; Vigne 1840: 128-33; Atkinson 1842: 217-22; Masson 1842, 2: 219-22; Bellew 1862: 184-85; Fergusson 1876: 191-95; Diez 1923: 53, 70; Flury 1925: 87-89, no. 14, pls. XVIII, XXIII-XXV; Nazim 1931: 167; Jalali 1932: 215-16; Bombaci 1958: pl. VIII; Riḍā 1967: 45-63, 119-20; Auboyer 1968; Grohmann 1971: pl. XXXII.3; Ḥabībī 1971: 181-82; Knobloch 1972: 241, fig. 133; Rizvi 1976: 302, fig. 2; Tabbāa 1994: 127, fig. 9.

⁽⁵⁾ See also Sourdel-Thomine 1965.

⁽⁶⁾ Omitted, however, are the brief inscriptions in Kufic carved on the small side columns of the south face of the cenotaph, the inscription on the south face of the plinth closing it, and the inscription carved on the south face of the crested upper element. Probably the photographic documentation in Sourdel-Thomine's possession lacked reproductions of the south side of the funerary monument.

⁽⁷⁾ Another tomb element was located by A.D.H. Bivar in July 1962, halfway between Ġaznī and Gardez (Bivar 1986: 133). It should also be noted that certain fragments – funerary and otherwise – studied by Flury (1925) also appear in Blair 1992 (nos. 40, 69, figs. 65, 131-34).



Fig. 1 - The tomb of Muḥammad al-Harawī.

situated in the Bāg-e behešt cemetery west of the citadel ⁽⁸⁾, built for a personage who died in 447/1055, in the reign of Farruḡzād b. Mas'ūd I (443-50/1052-59) (Giunta, forthcoming: no. 3) ⁽⁹⁾. The two inscriptions carved on this tomb are among the earliest epitaphs in cursive script known to us at the present time.

As it appears in the photos taken in 1958 (Figs. 1-3), the tomb consists of only two superimposed elements ⁽¹⁰⁾, a plinth with two steps and an upper element in a monolithic 'little trunk' block ⁽¹¹⁾.

⁽⁸⁾ In the same cemetery the Italian Archaeological Mission surveyed a great many other tombs, almost all built in the Ġaznavid period.

⁽⁹⁾ This tomb also finds mention in the Ġaznī inscriptions manuscript (Riḍā 1967: 76). It is pointed out that the name of the deceased, like almost all the names of the other personages mentioned in the city's epitaphs, is not to be found in the sources of the period.

⁽¹⁰⁾ None of the tombs surveyed in the Ġaznī cemetery have tombstones. However, in recent times, a wooden staff was set in the ground on the north side of the tomb to indicate the position of the head of the deceased.

⁽¹¹⁾ Blocks in this form are also known as 'donkey-back' blocks.



Fig. 2 - The tomb of Muḥammad al-Harawī: north face.

The plinth is without ornaments and inscriptions. The upper element decoration extends over the entire surface of the short, north-facing side ⁽¹²⁾, and over the central part of the east longitudinal face. In the former case a narrow strip of moulding follows the contour of the block and, in the upper part, outlines the form of a trilobate arch (Fig. 2). In the latter case a rectangular cartouche – projecting out in the upper part – contains a decorative motif in the form of a flat-backed *miḥrāb* consisting of a slightly overlapping arch resting on two rectangular side pillars with rhomboidal base and capital (Fig. 3). Each of these

two ornamentations encloses a cursive inscription devoid of vowels, diacritical and orthographic marks, carved in relief in six lines (Figs. 4-5).

1. O God!
2. Forgive Ibn Sahl
3. Muḥammad al-bāḡbān
4. al-Harawī
5. (he died) the month of rabī' al-āḥir in the year
6. 447 (June 1055).

- ١ اللهم
- ٢ اغفر ابن [a] سهل
- ٣ محمد الباغبان
- ٤ الهروي [b]
- ٥ من شهر ربيع الاخر سنة
- ٦ سبع و اربعين و اربع مائة [c]

[a] The verb *ḡafara* lacks the postposition *li*.

[b] Of this word, indicating the *nisba* of the deceased, the *wāw* is carved above the letter *rā'* of the following word and the final *yā'* is positioned above the base line, between the 3rd and 4th lines. It is also worth noting that in the Ġaznī inscriptions manuscript the word الهروي (*al-Harawī*) is, instead, read الغزنوي (*al-Ġaznawī*) and, strangely enough, followed by the expression كان وفاة (*death occurred*).

[c] In this line the two conjunctions (و), the latter *rā'* in the word اربع and the last two letters of the word مائة are set above the base line for lack of space.

⁽¹²⁾ I.e. the side corresponding to the head of the deceased.

1. *Every
2. *soul must taste*
3. *of death; and We try you*
4. *by evil*
5. *and good by way of probation;*
6. *and to Us you shall be brought back**
(Koran 21: 35) ⁽¹³⁾.

- ١ *كل
- ٢ نفس ذائقة
- ٣ الموت و نبلو
- ٤ كم [a] بالشر و [b]
- ٥ الخير فتنة و [c]
- ٦ الينا ترجعون* [d]

- [a] The word نبلوكم begins at the end of the 3rd line and ends at the beginning of the 4th ⁽¹⁴⁾.
- [b] [c] The two conjunctions (و) erroneously appear at the end of the line.
- [d] The last letter of the last word is carved above the base line for lack of space.

The two inscriptions are independent of one another and, curiously, neither is introduced by the *basmala*.

The first inscription begins with the expression *Allāhumma iğfir [li]* (O God! Forgive...) followed by the name of the deceased. The expression substitutes the designation of the tomb (*badā qabr*) rarely attested on tombs of the Ġaznavid era and in particular on the earliest so far known to us ⁽¹⁵⁾. The name of the deceased, devoid of titles, is formed by *nasab*, Ibn Sahl, the *ism*, Muḥammad, and the *nisba*, al-Harawī, which indicates provenance



Fig. 3 - The tomb of Muḥammad al-Harawī: east face.

⁽¹³⁾ The translation of the Koran is excerpted from Maulvi 1920.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The splitting of a word at the end of a line is frequently attested in Muslim inscriptions.

⁽¹⁵⁾ In the Ġaznavid period designation of the tomb does not seem to have been the practice before the end of the 5th/11th century. The earliest dated attestation, which however lacks the demonstrative *badā*, dates back to 503/1109 (Giunta, forthcoming: no. 25). It is also worth noting that tomb designation does however occur on the only tombstone located at Ġaznī, attributable to the early years of the Ġaznavid domination (Giunta 2001a, this volume).

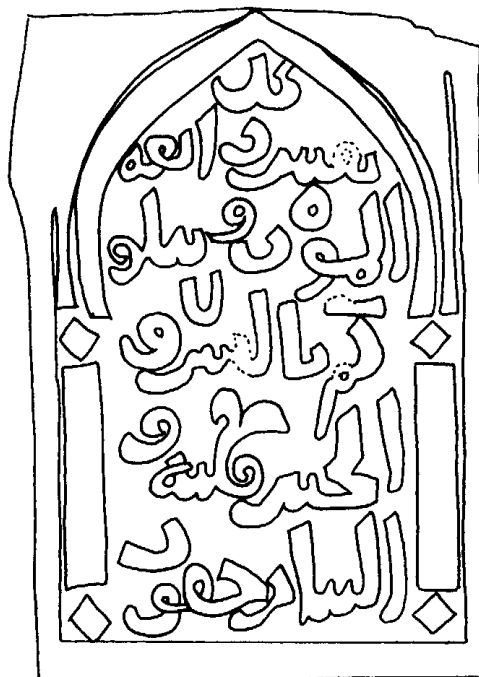
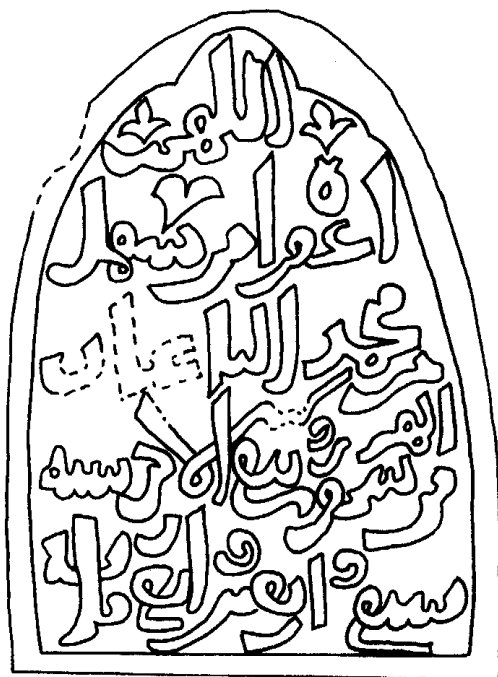


Fig. 4 - Facsimile of the inscription on the north face. Fig. 5 - Facsimile of the inscription on the east face.

from the city of Herat. The Persian word *bāgbān* (*gardener*) designates the trade of the person and is, oddly enough, preceded by the Arabic article (*al-*). The date of death, simply introduced with the preposition *min*, indicates the month and year. A point worth noting here is the curious lack of invocation of God's mercy on the deceased, customary in the epigraphs of the period ⁽¹⁶⁾.

The inscription carved on the east face of the tomb upper element contains only one entire verse of the Koran ⁽¹⁷⁾, the initial part of which, *Every soul must taste of death* ⁽¹⁸⁾, becomes a stereotype formula in the Ġaznavid formulary, attested in a great many epigraphs.

⁽¹⁶⁾ The most frequent invocation, *rahmatu-llāh 'alay-hi* (*may the mercy of God be on him*) is attested as early as the epitaphs of Sebūktigin (d. 387/997) and Maḥmūd. In two of the latter's tomb inscriptions the name of the deceased is also followed by two more invocations often used in the Ġaznavid period: *ḡafara Allāh la-hu* (*may God grant him pardon*) and *nawwara ḡufrata-hu wa bayyada waḡba-hu* (*may God make his tomb – lit. 'pit' – shine and whiten his face*).

⁽¹⁷⁾ City funeral inscriptions in the Ġaznavid period and following centuries rarely contain verses from the Koran transcribed in their entirety, almost invariably breaking off at the end of the epigraphic band enclosing them. Moreover, two incomplete verses may often occupy a single band.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The same expression also appears in verses 3: 185 and 29: 57.

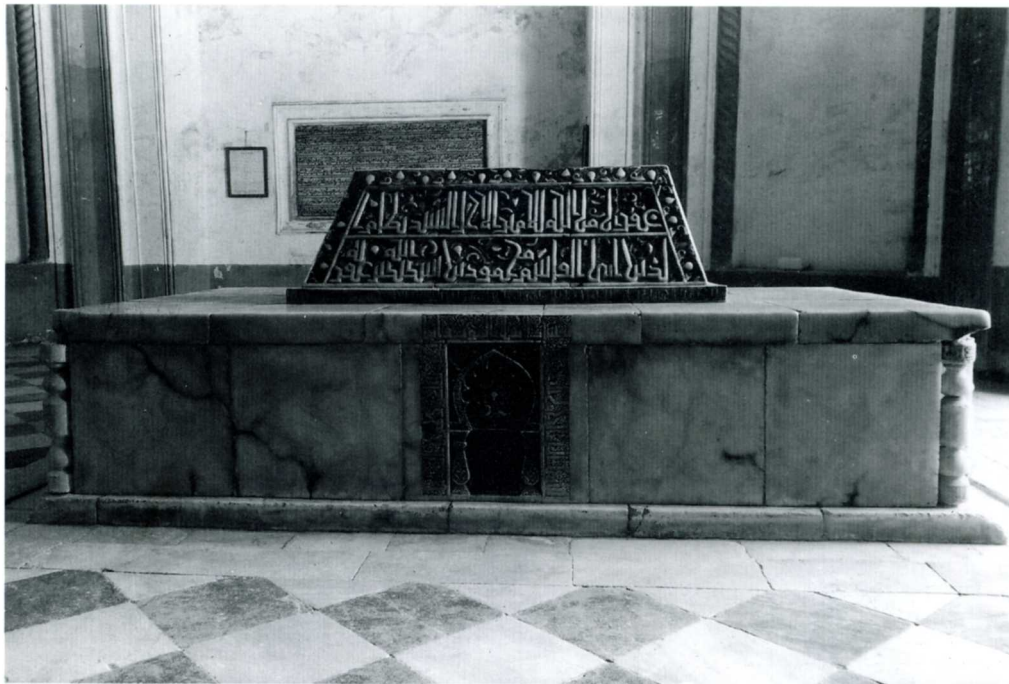


Fig. 6 - The tomb of Maḥmūd b. Sebūktigin: west face.

The most interesting aspect of the inscriptions in this tomb undoubtedly lies in the use of cursive script which, as can clearly be seen, already appeared fully developed in Ġaznī in the first half of the 5th/11th century ⁽¹⁹⁾, slightly ahead of the other eastern ⁽²⁰⁾ and western ⁽²¹⁾ regions of the Muslim world.

The cursive appearing in the inscriptions in this tomb is already characterised by remarkable fluidity, the base line is frequently broken and the links between the

⁽¹⁹⁾ Palaeographic analysis of all the cursive inscriptions found in Ġaznī reveals a considerable uniformity of style over the centuries, evolution appearing not so much in transformation of the *ductus* of the letters as in the harmony shown by the inscription as a whole. Actually, the refined taste and aesthetic perfection of mature Ġaznavid cursive tend slowly to fall off in the course of time to leave no trace as from the first half of the 7th/13th century.

⁽²⁰⁾ See the cursive inscriptions republished by Blair (1992), such as those of the Mašġid-e Pā Manār of Zawāreh of 461/1068-69 (no. 51, fig. 92), the Nīšāpūr building datable between 465/1065 and 485/1086 (no. 64, figs. 115-20), the inscription in the mausoleum of al-Ḥākim al-Tirmidī, at Tirmid, datable between 474/1081 and 482/1089 (no. 63, figs. 112-13), and the inscription in the Great Mosque of Iṣfahān of 479-80/1086-87 (no. 61, fig. 109). The study by Kratchkovskaia (1967) is also worth bearing in mind.

⁽²¹⁾ Among the earliest, see the inscription on the minaret of the Great Mosque of Aleppo, datable between 483/1090 and 487/1095 (Ory 1980).

letters rounded and in some cases scarcely perceptible. Nevertheless, it can be seen that certain letters still show the same characteristics as Kufic script. To take a particular example, the shaft ⁽²²⁾ of the *alif* ends in a pointed, circular or slightly curving extension that cuts through the base line to terminate below it, and this feature is attested in almost all the Kufic inscriptions we know of in Ġaznī. In the case of the *bā'* / *tā'* / *lā'* group, it is worth noting the medial *tā'* in the second word of the 5th line of the Koranic inscription (Fig. 5). Imitating the foliated Kufic – widely used in Ġaznī in the same period, and above all in the latter half of the 5th/11th century – the body of the letter stretches out to generate a leaf with two broad, downward-curving lobes. This ornamentation recalls the decorative motif known as the *chevron* which, regardless of the letter, is of common application above the corresponding letters to signal the absence of diacritical marks ⁽²³⁾. This, indeed, seems to have been the function of the *chevron* carved on the third word in the 2nd line of the other inscription in the same tomb (Fig. 4). It should also be noted that in Ġaznavid cursive ornamentation is only rarely generated directly from the letter, and when this does occur it is always from the tail.

The body of the letters *ġīm* / *hā'* / *hā'* takes on the form of an acute angle, the two sides still remaining rather too rigid to afford the curves typical of the more mature cursive.

The body of the finale *'ayn* shows in one case alone ⁽²⁴⁾ slightly triangular profile characteristic of the simple Kufic of the same period.

The *kāf* and *mīm* in the inscription on the east face (Fig. 5) represent rather special cases. The *kāf* in the first word of the 4th line displays a shaft in the form of a horizontal segment lying over the body of the letter and curiously independent of it – a characteristic attested only in the cursive inscriptions of the first half of the following century. On the other hand, the *mīm* in the same word, occurring in the final position, shows a rigid tail slanting down below the base line to take on a form and position uncustomary in the cursive inscriptions of the time. As far as we know the only attestation of a *mīm* of this sort appears in the epigraph carved on the arch fragment bearing the name of Mas'ūd III b. Ibrāhīm (453-509/1099-1115) (Bombaci 1966: pl. XXXVII, fig. 131; Giunta, forthcoming: no. 6b).

In accordance with widely adopted practice in Ġaznī, the epigraphic field of the inscriptions in this tomb is enhanced with various graphic foils independent of the letters but filling in the gaps between them. All these types of ornamentation belong

⁽²²⁾ In relation to an imaginary base line, Arabic letters consist of three parts: the shaft, the body, which rests on the base line, and the tail, which runs below it.

⁽²³⁾ However, in the funeral inscriptions of Ġaznī the *chevron* almost always played a purely ornamental role.

⁽²⁴⁾ Here we refer to the *'ayn* of the penultimate word in the last line of the inscription on the north face (Fig. 4).

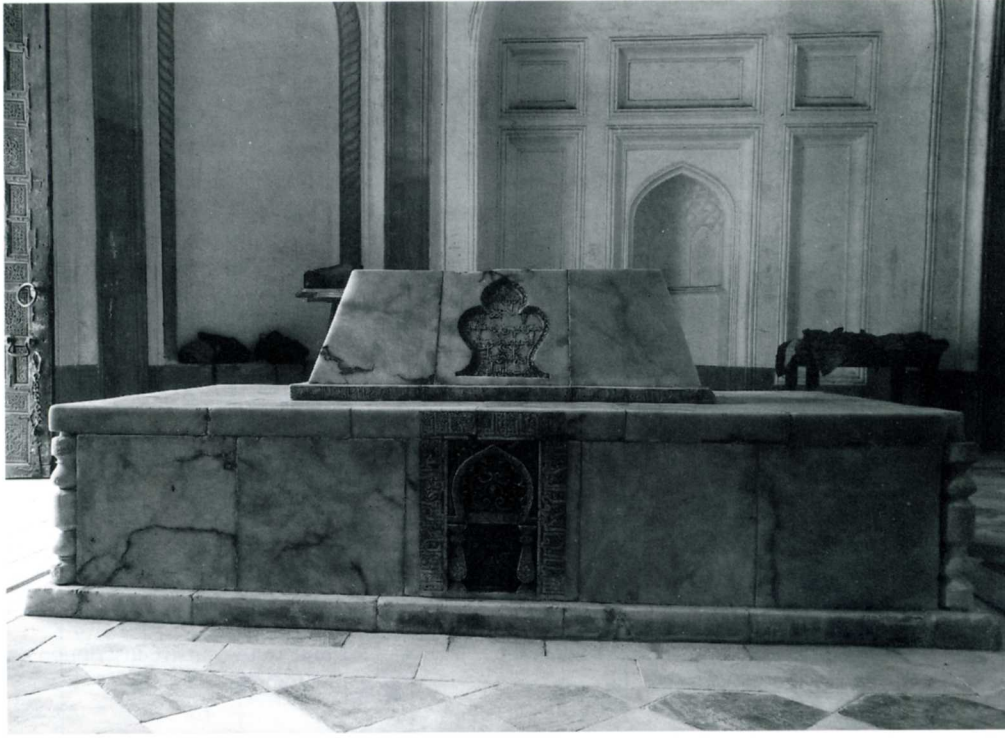


Fig. 7 - The tomb of Maḥmūd b. Sebūktigin: east face.

to the typical Gaznavid repertoire. In particular, the U-shaped ornament – showing a profile reminiscent of the *lām-alif* form and carved above the second word in the 4th line of the second inscription (Fig. 5) – features among the fillers abounding with myriad variants in both cursive and Kufic epigraphs.

Despite the rather less graceful appearance, the *ductus* of certain letters, the lack of vowels and the numerous breaks in the base line, the cursive of these two epigraphs may in some respects be compared with the famous inscription carved on the east face of the crested upper element on the tomb of Maḥmūd the Gaznavid (Figs. 7-9) ⁽²⁵⁾.

For a better picture of the differences and similarities between the cursive inscriptions on these two tombs it is worth considering the alphabets illustrated below (Figs. 10-11).

⁽²⁵⁾ However, it should be remembered that in the cursive inscription in the tomb of Maḥmūd all the shafts of the letters (*alif* and *lām*) and most of the bodies of *bā'* / *tā'* / *qā'*, *nūn* and *yā'* taper downwards, and that the body of *fā'* / *qāf* and in some cases the *wāw* show an oval profile.



Fig. 8 - The tomb of Maḥmūd b. Sebūktigin: the cursive inscription on the east face.

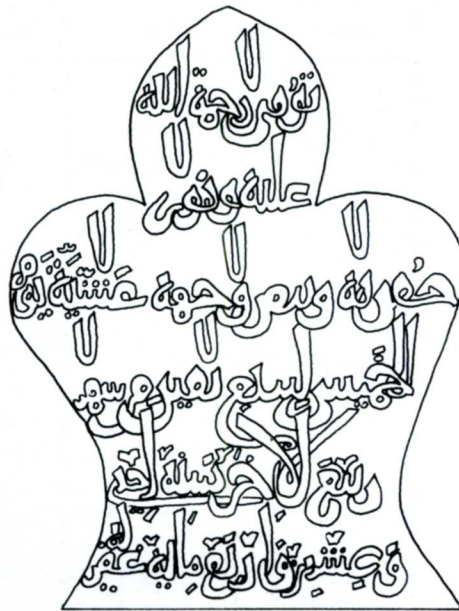


Fig. 9 - Facsimile of the cursive inscription on the tomb of Maḥmūd.

The most evident similarities are to be seen in the form of the final *‘ayn*, the initial *fā’*, the medial *hā’*, and the isolated *yā’*.

As usual, the tail of the *‘ayn* / *ḡayn* runs regularly to the right. However, in both inscriptions – and in one case only – the end of the tail curves, virtually creating a small curl ⁽²⁶⁾.

Although the body of the *fā’* in the initial position shows a different profile, it is in both cases open below – a feature attested in few other cases, and always in the epigraphs of the same century.

The two median, 8-shaped letters *hā’* in the Maḥmūd inscription are comparable with those in the inscription on the north face of the tomb of Muḥammad al-Harawī. With just a few rare exceptions, this letter in the same position has always appeared in double ringlet form since the first half of the 5th/11th century.

Although the isolated *yā’* letters in the inscriptions on the two tombs do not display the same *ductus*, neither shows the S-shape typical of the letter in this position.

It is also worth adding that in the inscription on the Maḥmūd tomb the end of the *alif* shaft in the final position again cuts across the base line as in the case of the earliest Ḡaznavid cursive scripts known to us.

⁽²⁶⁾ No other inscription in our documentation shows the same feature.

FINAL	MEDIAL	INITIAL	ISOLATED	
ا	ا	ا	ا	ا
ب	ب	ب	ب	ب
ث	ث	ث	ث	ث
ج	ج	ج	ج	ج
ح	ح	ح	ح	ح
خ	خ	خ	خ	خ
د	د	د	د	د
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ
ر	ر	ر	ر	ر
ز	ز	ز	ز	ز
س	س	س	س	س
ش	ش	ش	ش	ش
ص	ص	ص	ص	ص
ض	ض	ض	ض	ض
ط	ط	ط	ط	ط
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ
ع	ع	ع	ع	ع
غ	غ	غ	غ	غ
ف	ف	ف	ف	ف
ق	ق	ق	ق	ق
ك	ك	ك	ك	ك
ل	ل	ل	ل	ل
م	م	م	م	م
ن	ن	ن	ن	ن
ه	ه	ه	ه	ه
و	و	و	و	و
ي	ي	ي	ي	ي
لا	لا	لا	لا	لا

Fig. 10 - Alphabet of the cursive inscriptions on the tomb of Muhammad al-Harawī.

Let us recall that the cursive inscription carved on the east side of the upper element of the tomb of Maḥmūd has never been held to have been made at the time of the death of the sultan, which occurred in 421/1030. The data supplied by Godard in the early years of the 20th century (Godard 1925), and subsequent studies by Flury (1925: 87-89) and Sourdel-Thomine (1981) concluded that the monument – or at least some parts of it – dated back to the period following on the fall of the Ġaznavids, when

Maḥmūd n'était plus considéré comme le représentant d'une dynastie, mais comme un des grands héros du monde musulman. (Flury 1925: 88).

J. Sourdel-Thomine offers various arguments that to her suggest attributing the entire tomb

à un essor artistique longtemps méconnu, qui se continua sans solutions de continuité sous l'égide des derniers Ghaznévides comme sous celle des Ghourides et auquel la tradition orale populaire aima longtemps associer le nom révérendu 'sultan Mahmud'. (Sourdel-Thomine 1981: 134) ⁽²⁷⁾.

The wealth of documentation now available to us raises some doubts about the suppositions so far made. Apart from the results obtained with close palaeographic analysis of the earliest cursive inscriptions known to us and comparison with the cursive dated 447/1055 on the tomb illustrated above, there are also further data suggesting greater caution regarding the non-authenticity of the tomb of the great Ġaznavid.

This funerary monument consisting of three superimposed architectural elements ⁽²⁸⁾ displays no fewer than 23 inscriptions in Kufic – some of which very short – and just one in cursive. The crested upper element shows four inscriptions carved on the four faces. Each of the two epigraphs on the lateral faces (north and south) contains a circular medallion enclosing a short part of a verse from the Koran (Koran 2: 285, and 66: 8), introduced by the customary *basmala* ⁽²⁹⁾. In the Kufic inscription on the west face (Fig. 6) God's mercy is invoked for the deceased, whose name appears together with titles (*al-amīr al-aḡall*, *al-sayyid*, *Niẓām al-Dīn*), *kunya* (Abū-l-Qāsim), *ism* (Maḥmūd) and *nasab* (b. Sebūktigin). In the cursive inscription – which we present again in this paper (Figs. 8-9) – the verb *tuwuffiyya* (died)

⁽²⁷⁾ The conclusions the author came to were probably dictated both by the lack of comparison with other tombs in the city and by the incompleteness of the photographic documentation (see n. 6).

⁽²⁸⁾ The tomb consists of a cenotaph surmounted by a flat rectangular plinth topped by a block of triangular cross-section.

⁽²⁹⁾ The repetition of the two, almost identical medallions inserted in the centre of the two lateral faces of the block demonstrates coherence and planned organisation of the forms and ornamentations. J. Sourdel-Thomine makes no reference to the fact that there is a second medallion (inserted on the south face), thus giving the impression of more striking lack of uniformity in the decorative motifs of the upper element, which in turn helps bear out her hypotheses.

FINAL	MEDIAL	INITIAL	ISOLATED	
ا	ا	ا	ا	ا
ب	ب	ب	ب	ب
ج	ج	ج	ج	ج
د	د	د	د	د
ر	ر	ر	ر	ر
س	س	س	س	س
ش	ش	ش	ش	ش
ص	ص	ص	ص	ص
ط	ط	ط	ط	ط
ع	ع	ع	ع	ع
ف	ف	ف	ف	ف
ق	ق	ق	ق	ق
ك	ك	ك	ك	ك
ل	ل	ل	ل	ل
م	م	م	م	م
ن	ن	ن	ن	ن
ه	ه	ه	ه	ه
و	و	و	و	و
ي	ي	ي	ي	ي
لا	لا	لا	لا	لا

Fig. 11 - Alphabet of the cursive inscription on the tomb of Maḥmūd.

introduces the invocation of divine mercy and the hope that God 'illuminates the tomb and whitens the face of the deceased' ⁽³⁰⁾. These invocations are followed by the date of death consisting of the day, month and year. Divided over the four sides of the plinth closing the cenotaph, the inscription includes the first five verses – the fifth being incomplete – of sura 67 and the whole of verse 55 of sura 20. The central part of each of the faces of the cenotaph is ornamented with a '*miḥrāb*' rectangular panel. Each panel contains four inscriptions: the first carved in the outer moulding, the second in the arch of the *miḥrāb*, the third in the transverse rectangular cartouche on the arch and the fourth in the two small cartouches set below the capitals of the two small columns supporting the arch of the *miḥrāb*. While each of the panels shows the same surface organisation, the contents of the inscriptions on each differ, all however being of a purely religious nature (verses from the Koran, aphorisms, and in just one case a badly misspelled, incomplete *ṣahāda*). Moreover, the two small columns incorporated in the corners of the south face of the cenotaph bear on capital and base short inscriptions, unfortunately not entirely decipherable, where God's mercy is once again invoked for the deceased.

The overall form of the tomb and certain details of the decoration displayed by the funerary monument led J. Sourdél-Thomine to descry an Indian influence, necessarily of a later period. Moreover, on the evidence of the set of formulary elements, their lack of uniformity and the aridity of their contents she went on to assert that

cette épitaphe se présente plutôt comme un vague texte commémoratif [...] et non comme une inscription funéraire du type habituel sur les pierres tombales. (Sourdél-Thomine 1981: 131).

However, at this stage in research we know that the coexistence of Kufic and cursive inscriptions on one and the same tomb is a characteristic typical of the Ġaznavid tombs of the 5th/11th century, and in particular of those dating to the period of sultan Ibrāhīm b. Mas'ūd I (451-92/1059-99). Moreover, study of the formulary exhibited by this tomb and by the other epigraphs now available to us fully bears out that the funerary formulary of the Ġaznavid inscriptions is always sober and, from some points of view, sterile and stereotype. Indeed, not even the formulary of the epigraphs carved on the tomb of Sebūktigin seems to have been conceived for a ruling monarch ⁽³¹⁾. The epitaph patrons evidently dedicated all their attention to the aesthetic aspect, at the expense of contents. The only 'historical' data

⁽³⁰⁾ See also n. 16 above.

⁽³¹⁾ The upper element on the tomb of the founder of the Ġaznavid dynasty contains only the *ṣahāda*, repeated on each of the longitudinal faces, while the prismatic plinth which the block rests on displays the *basmala* followed by two verses of the Koran, 29: 57 and 41: 46 – the latter far from complete –, the name of the deceased, with no formula of verb to introduce it, and a brief invocation pleading for the mercy of God. Nor is the date of death recorded.

consist of the name of the deceased and the long series of titles often accompanying it, almost always carved on the crested upper element ⁽³²⁾. The texts on the lower components are of an exclusively religious nature ⁽³³⁾. Moreover, the lack of designation on the tomb is not an anomaly but actually characterises almost all the epitaphs, and in particular the earlier examples ⁽³⁴⁾.

From the ornamental point of view, although the four panels on the cenotaph show a degree of refinement and craftsmanship rarely to be seen elsewhere, there are a great many comparable examples to be found in the ornamentation of the Ġaznavid tombs, all datable to the 5th/11th century, and with certain '*miḥrāb*' slabs, almost all of the same period, and often reused in the walls of various religious buildings in the city ⁽³⁵⁾. In particular, the '*miḥrāb*' arch form underscored within by a second polylobed arch is to be seen on the '*miḥrāb*' slab dated 450/1058 (Giunta, forthcoming: no. 2b) ⁽³⁶⁾. Finally, it is, we believe, also worth noting that the upper element on the tomb of Muḥammad al-Harawī shows both a cartouche with trilobate top and a cartouche exhibiting a '*miḥrāb*' decoration. Moreover, in both tombs the cursive inscription contained in the cartouche with trilobate top is divided into six lines.

The tomb built for the famous sovereign is without any doubt a monument showing notable technical and artistic achievement, but we now see no reasonable grounds to doubt its authenticity. At the same time, we must remember that Muḥammad al-Harawī, died only 26 years after Maḥmūd, was a foreigner in Ġaznī and, in all likelihood, never occupied any position of note within the Ġaznavid state, as the absence of titles suggests. The ornamentation and, above all, the type of script on his tomb could hardly be accounted for if there had not been a model at Ġaznī offering the appropriate inspiration.

If, therefore, the cursive epigraph dated to the time of death of the Ġaznavid sovereign, it would together with the two in the tomb considered above come

⁽³²⁾ It should however be remembered that the name of the deceased is always omitted in the Ġurīd period, and rarely attested in inscriptions datable as from the early 7th/13th century.

⁽³³⁾ Among the few exceptions are the two inscriptions carved on the tomb of Sebūktigin where, as we have seen (see n. 31 above), the name of the deceased does not feature on the upper element.

⁽³⁴⁾ See n. 15. The verb *tuwuffiyya* opening the cursive inscription on the tomb of Maḥmūd is also attested on the tombstone referred to in the same note.

⁽³⁵⁾ The documentation collected by the Italian Archaeological Mission includes ten slabs of this type, two containing a foundation text while the exclusively Koranic contents of the others offer no clues as to their original functions. Another '*miḥrāb*' slab from Ġaznī, dated 476/1083-84, is conserved in the Linden Museum of Stuttgart (Kalter, Kussmaul & Luschey 1982: 56-58, fig. 21).

⁽³⁶⁾ This slab – found in the mosque of Abū-l-Faṭḥ – displays three inscriptions, two in cursive and one in Kufic. The first two commemorate, respectively, the building of a mosque and its '*miḥrāb*' according to the wishes of a certain Ġa'far b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī, and the transference of the slab itself by two otherwise unknown personages, Abū-l-Qāsim Maḥmūd and Abū Bakr 'Alī (oddly enough, the former personage bears the same *kunya* and *ism* as the Ġaznavid sultan!). The brief Kufic inscription contains only the assertion of divine royalty, *al-mulk li-llāh* (Giunta, forthcoming: no. 1a).

among the earliest known example of cursive monumental inscriptions. To these we must certainly add the epigraph carved on a slab (36.5 × 36 cm) uncovered in the Ġaznavid mosque on mount Rāja Gīrā in the Swāt valley (N.W.F.P. Pakistan; Nazir Khan 1985). Dated 440/1048-49, it commemorates the construction of the *masġid* and its doors, and displays an elegant cursive inscription, in this case incised ⁽³⁷⁾, complete with vowels, diacritical and orthographic marks.

It must, however, be pointed out that the architectural aspect of the tomb of Maḥmūd is in no way comparable to that of Muḥammad al-Harawī, nor indeed with any other tomb built in Ġaznī in the Ġaznavid period or the following centuries. The cenotaph is rarely attested in the Ġaznavid period, but was widely adopted in Ġūrīd times ⁽³⁸⁾. On the other hand, the triangular cross-section upper element remains a unique example in the city's cemetery areas, but is attested in certain tombs in Syria datable as from the late 5th/11th century (Moaz & Ory 1977), and in some later tombs in Aḥlāt, Anatolia (Karamağaralı 1993).

Similarly, the tomb of Muḥammad al-Harawī displays a somewhat particular form ⁽³⁹⁾, although the 'little trunk' type of the upper element was occasionally adopted at Ġaznī at least until 848/1444 (Giunta, forthcoming: no. 73). However, the 'little trunk' type datable as the early Ġaznavid period was marked precisely by the projecting cartouches with '*mīhrāb*' decoration which disappeared from the early 6th/12th century. In any case, the 'little trunk' type elements found on the funerary monuments of Syria (Sauvaget 1938) ⁽⁴⁰⁾, Pakistan (Zajadacz-Hastenrath 1978) and Anatolia (Rogers 1988: fig. 1; Karamağaralı 1993: fig. 7) ⁽⁴¹⁾ do not seem to involve ornamentation of this kind.

⁽³⁷⁾ It should be remembered that almost all the ancient inscriptions of the subcontinent known to us are incised.

⁽³⁸⁾ It should however be noted that all the Ġūrīd tombs show technical and stylistic features lacking from the funerary monument of Maḥmūd and the others of certain Ġaznavid attribution: see, for example, the tomb of an unknown personage published by Flury (1925: no. 13, pl. XX).

⁽³⁹⁾ In fact, almost all the Ġaznavid funerary monuments consist of two, three or even four elements superimposed and stepped with a coping block moulded in the form of a rectangular parallelepiped; its upper part, when seen in cross-section, takes on the appearance of a trilobate arch. The earliest example is to be seen in the tomb of Sebūktigin.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ The author uses the Arabic term *ğamalūn* (lit. 'camel hump') to defined the 'little trunk'. With regard to tomb elements of this type see also Sauvaget & Ecochard 1940: 65-75, fig. 38; Sourdell-Thomine 1955; 1957: 304, pl. III.

⁽⁴¹⁾ It must, however, be pointed out that this type of tomb usually includes one or two tombstones at the ends.

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