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# THE ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

## THE COINS FROM TAPA SARDAR AND GHAZNI

*Michael Alram and Arturo Annucci*



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With contributions by

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**ISMEO**

In collaboration with

KUNST  
HISTORISCHES  
MUSEUM

ÖAW  
Österreichische  
Akademie der  
Wissenschaften



Österreichisches  
Archäologisches  
Institut

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*Giuseppe Tucci in the courtyard of the Ghaznavid Palace in Ghazni, 1966*

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## GAZNI IN THE ISLAMIC PERIOD: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Roberta Giunta

Studies on the Islamic period documentation acquired in Ghazni by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan (established by IsMEO) have continued almost uninterruptedly since 1956, the year of the first survey conducted in the city by Giuseppe Tucci and Alessio Bombaci.<sup>122</sup> The field activities, directed over time by Alessio Bombaci, Umberto Scerrato and Dinu Adamesteanu, lasted until 1978 and involved the opening of two excavation sites (a royal palace and a private house) in the so-called Dasht-i Manara plain, north-east of the citadel; surveys in the city and its surroundings, especially in the cemetery areas; the consolidation and restoration of several mausoleums; small and sporadic excavation soundings in the vicinity of historical monuments; the setting up and inauguration of a Museum of Islamic Art on the Rawza hills.<sup>123</sup> Prior to the arrival of the Italian Mission, neither archaeological investigations nor in-depth research had ever been conducted in Ghazni,<sup>124</sup> despite the fact that some 30 years earlier, in 1923, the French archaeologist André Godard, during a brief survey, had identified interesting artefacts of Ghaznavid production, important evidence of the period when the city was one of the main capitals of the eastern Islamic territories.<sup>125</sup>

The initial results of the activities carried out by the Italian Mission appear in a fair number of publications,<sup>126</sup> but due to the vast amount of data collected and the forced interruption of fieldwork due to well-known historical events, much still remained to be done. For this reason, in the early 1990s, Scerrato resumed the analysis of the excavation documentation of the palace<sup>127</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Tucci reached Afghanistan in the autumn season, after conducting a first archaeological mission in the Swat Valley in Pakistan. The preliminary survey in Ghazni, preceded by initial inquiries into historical sources by Bombaci, aimed to identify an area in which to begin the first archaeological research. See *IsMEO Activities* 1957: 392 and Bombaci 1957.

<sup>123</sup> For a summary of the activities and the names of all those who took part in the missions over the years, see the *IsMEO Activities* 1957: 392; 1958: 274; 1959; 1960: 306; 1961; 1962: 86; 1966: 384; 1967; 1972: 379–84; 1974: 478; 1975: 544–46; 1977: 470; 1978: 338–39). These reports also mention the surveys and activities carried out by the Mission in other cities of Afghanistan, particularly in Kabul, Herat, Balkh and Bamiyan.

<sup>124</sup> Kohzad (1955: 13), who was President of the Afghan Historical Society at that time, warmly welcomed the agreement made with G. Tucci and the Italian Mission to begin the first research in a city that had become ‘una pianura vasta cosparsa di tombe, mausolei, pietre tombali, un immenso campo di rovine e di colline artificiali formate dai resti della città’ (‘a vast plain scattered with tombs, mausoleums, tombstones, an extensive field of ruins and artificial hills consisting of the remains of the city’).

<sup>125</sup> Godard’s brief report (1925) was followed by a preliminary study by Flury (1925) based on the photographic documentation collected during this inspection. Subsequently, the Délégation Archéologique Française focused its attention on the area of Bust/Lashkari Bazar where, starting from 1949, it carried out systematic excavations (Schlumberger 1952; Schlumberger and Sourdel-Thomine 1978). See also Gardin 1963.

<sup>126</sup> For accounts of the archaeological excavations, see Scerrato 1959a, Bombaci 1959, 1961 and Adamesteanu 1960; for the Persian-language inscription on the marble slabs found during the excavation of the Ghaznavid palace and the reconstruction hypothesis for a Ghaznavid mosque through historical sources, see Bombaci (respectively 1966 and 1964); for glazed pottery tiles and metal artefacts, see Scerrato (respectively 1962, and 1959b, 1961, 1964, 1971, 1972); for the consolidation and restoration work on some historic buildings, see Bruno 1962, Orazi 1977 and Galdieri 1978, 1982.

<sup>127</sup> Scerrato’s initial new reflections on the archaeological activities carried out in Ghazni and, above all, on the excavation of the Ghaznavid Palace appear in an article that the scholar dedicated to G. Tucci on the centenary of his birth (Scerrato 1995).

and entrusted me with the study of the tombs and epitaphs from the medieval period.<sup>128</sup> After Scerrato's death in 2004, I was entrusted with two significant responsibilities that I still hold today. IsIAO<sup>129</sup> appointed me to lead the project titled 'Islamic Ghazni: An IsIAO Archaeological Project in Afghanistan';<sup>130</sup> Anna Filigenzi, now as then Director of the Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan, appointed me as the Mission's deputy director and head of the Islamic section.<sup>131</sup>

From 2004 to 2013, I had the opportunity to go to Afghanistan many times. The research was primarily conducted at the National Museum in Kabul, where, during the years of conflict, the then Museum Director, Dr Omara Khan Massoudi, had relocated many materials discovered in Ghazni for security reasons.

The issue regarding the locations where the materials discovered in Ghazni were stored is somewhat complex, so I believe it is appropriate to provide a general overview. Upon the Mission's arrival in 1956–57, there was an *Antiquarium* in Ghazni, on the Rawza hills, where, among other artefacts, some high-quality marble elements with zoomorphic and anthropomorphic bas-relief decoration were preserved. Some of these elements were found during the redevelopment of the area surrounding the mausoleum of Maḥmūd the Ghaznavid in Rawza, a site highly frequented by worshippers due to the political and religious prestige of the famous emir.<sup>132</sup> With the exception of the tombs and some materials that were left *in situ*, the artefacts discovered by the Italian Mission during the excavations and research were initially stored in a warehouse in Ghazni for inventory and preliminary study.<sup>133</sup> However, the agreements established between the Afghan authorities, the Afghan Ministry of Education and G. Tucci anticipated that, at the end of the archaeological activities, the materials would be divided into three groups, two would remain in Afghanistan, while one would be transferred to Italy. In Afghanistan, most of the artefacts were to be housed in a museum in Ghazni, which the Italian Mission undertook to establish, while the most representative pieces would be transferred to and exhibited at the National Museum in Kabul. In Italy, the Italian Mission would receive artefacts of which similar specimens existed in Kabul and Ghazni, and would be responsible for their study, preservation, and display.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>128</sup> The study of tombs and epitaphs from the Ghaznavid and Ghurid periods, as well as that of other epigraphic elements in marble found during the Mission's surveys in the city area, was the subject of my doctoral thesis at the Université Aix-Marseille (Giunta 1999). A monographic volume devoted solely to funerary material appeared a few years later (Giunta 2003b).

<sup>129</sup> In 1995 IsMEO was merged with the Italian-African Institute, giving rise to the Italian Institute for Africa and the East (IsIAO) which was closed in November 2011.

<sup>130</sup> The Project involved the reorganization, digitization, study, and publication of the entire documentation. This undertaking required the establishment of a team of specialists, which was created from the outset (see Giunta 2005a).

<sup>131</sup> After the fall of the Taliban regime in 1999 and the untimely death (in February 2000) of Maurizio Taddei, who was the Director of the Mission, the leadership was entrusted to Giovanni Verardi and, from 2004, to Anna Filigenzi.

<sup>132</sup> The restoration of Maḥmūd's mausoleum in Rawza and the reorganisation of the surrounding garden were sponsored by Emir Ḥabīb Allāh Khān (d. 1919) at the beginning of the last century (Naïmi 1952: 14). According to historical sources, this area was also intended to house the *Bāgh* and the *Kākh-i Firūzī* ('the Garden' and the 'Palace of Turquoise'), which were ordered by Maḥmūd himself (see Adamesteanu 1960: 27 and Allegranzi 2014). Some of these marble elements had been transferred to the Kabul Museum before the arrival of the Italians, who promptly inspected them. For a preliminary description of the artefacts, see Bombaci 1959: 10–14. In 1978, at the request of the Director of the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, the Italian Mission conducted a small excavation essay near Maḥmūd's mausoleum where the remains of a marble floor were found. These remains almost certainly belonged to one of the buildings from the reign of this ruler (*IsMEO Activities* 1978: 345).

<sup>133</sup> The exact location of this warehouse is unknown to me, but it was certainly a facility located not far from the excavation area of the palace.

<sup>134</sup> The 'Joint agreement of the Kabul Museum and the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Is.M.E.O.)', of which we retain a copy of the original, was written in English and Persian and signed on 30 Oc-

The agreements were honoured,<sup>135</sup> but over time events took a different course. The nearly 30 years of conflict caused serious damage to the two Afghan museums: many artefacts disappeared<sup>136</sup> or were destroyed, many others were locked in crates, which were gradually transferred to several premises located in ‘strategic’ points in Kabul and its surroundings, and a warehouse/hiding place in Ghazni.<sup>137</sup> The artefacts moved to Italy were deposited at the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale in Palazzo Brancaccio in Rome, but only a small number were put on display, as most remained in storage, still packed.

Needless to say, given such a challenging starting point, the recovery and re-inventorying of artefacts, as well as the reorganization of the excavation documentation and the graphic and photographic archives, required many years of work. The current location and condition of the artefacts preserved in Afghanistan are only partially known to me, considering the many years that have passed since my last mission in the country. In 2013, at the request of the then-Governor of Ghazni, Mr Musa Khan, and on the occasion of the celebrations of Ghazni as the *Capital of Islamic Culture 2013 for the Asian Region*, I organized, together with D. Rosati—at that time the draftsman of the Mission—a temporary exhibition of the most representative artefacts from those stored in the aforementioned warehouse/hiding place.<sup>138</sup> The exhibition was set up in a building located within the Governor’s compound, but a few months after the inauguration it was destroyed by a car bomb; many artefacts were damaged, some were once again secured in the warehouse, and others were transferred to the Kabul Museum, which I have not since had the opportunity to visit. Although less ‘dramatic’, the situation of the artefacts stored in Rome remains problematic. Between the end of 2017 and the first half of 2018, the Museo d’Arte Orientale was relocated from Palazzo Brancaccio in Via Merulana to Palazzo delle Scienze in the EUR district of Rome, and it became part of the Museo delle Civiltà (MuCiv). To date, only a small number of artefacts discovered in Ghazni have been adequately displayed, and no member of the Mission has been granted authorization to inspect the storage facilities.

Firmly believing that the only safeguard that can be guaranteed for these archaeological finds lies in knowledge of them and in the dissemination of the results obtained through in-depth studies, in 2012 the Mission established its own website which collects the files (with photos and drawings) of all architectural decoration artefacts, marble tombs, and coins. The website is constantly being updated and in the near future it is planned to include the most representative finds in ceramics,

tober 1962. It stipulated that the division of materials would take place under the supervision of a representative of the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan.

<sup>135</sup> For the Kabul Museum, where a ‘Ghazni Room’ was set up, see, for example, Courtois 1961: 28, *Ancient Art from Afghanistan* 1966, Rowland 1971, and Hatch Dupree, Dupree and Motamedi 1974. In Ghazni, on the Rawza hills, the members of the Mission set up a Museum of Islamic Art inside the mausoleum of ‘Abd al-Razzāq, which they had previously restored; its inauguration took place in 1966, see Bruno 1962: 99–101. For artefacts delivered to the Italian Mission, see *IsMEO Activities* 1966: 384.

<sup>136</sup> The number of Ghazni artefacts enriching public and private collections is very high. The problems facing the antiques market are unfortunately still serious today, as numerous recent auction catalogues attest.

<sup>137</sup> The main events affecting the Kabul Museum and its collections between 1979 and 1996 are outlined in Grissmann (2001). The scholar pointed out that, in the summer of 1996, ‘the Islamic bronze and lusterware from Ghazni had been mainly destroyed by fire’ (Grissmann 2001: 7). In Ghazni, the Museum of Islamic Art on the Rawza hills was closed, and the materials were transferred to a building that the Italians had constructed in the city to set up a second museum, dedicated to the artefacts discovered during the excavations at Tapa Sardar, which began in 1959. See *IsMEO Activities* 1959: 309, and 1975: 546. Since this second museum was never inaugurated, the building served as a ‘hiding place’ for the Islamic artefacts from the Rawza Museum.

<sup>138</sup> It should also be noted that, since 2002, the year of our first inspection of the warehouse (see the previous note), it was discovered that, over the years, it had become a hidden place for many other artefacts found in and around the town by local people. In some cases, there was no prior documentation for such artefacts.

metal and glass.<sup>139</sup> In addition, a multimedia totem is currently being organized at the Museo Orientale ‘Umberto Scerrato’ of L’Orientale University in Naples. This platform will allow users to take virtual tours of the Ghazni site and explore the main artefacts discovered by the Mission.

In the following two sections, we present the main data related to the royal palace and the private house, brought to light during the archaeological excavations.

### *The Royal Palace*

The Palace of Ghazni is well known as, together with the southern Palace of Lashkari Bazar,<sup>140</sup> it is one of the few pieces of archaeological evidence of a civil building certainly commissioned by Ghaznavid rulers. The two palaces, in addition to their architectural layout and abundant use of baked brick for the flooring and the upper wall coverings of many rooms, share a complexity linked to a varying number of construction, renovation, and reuse phases. However, while it can be stated with a reasonable degree of certainty that the foundation of the southern palace of Lashkari Bazar dates back to the reign of Maḥmūd (998–1030), the attribution to Mas‘ūd III (1099–1115) of the first construction phase of the Palace of Ghazni has always been very uncertain.

At the end of the first excavation campaign in 1957, Scerrato and Bombaci assumed that the building dated back to the reign of Sultan Ibrāhīm (1059–1099) or that of his son, Sultan Mas‘ūd III, therefore to a period ranging from the early second half of the 11th century to the first half of the following century. This hypothesis was based, on the one hand, on the presence of a *ziyāra* built a few centuries later within the building’s western ivan, which popular tradition called ‘Ziyārat Ibrāhīm’, and, on the other, on the discovery, in one of the inner walls of the *ziyāra*, of a portion of a marble arch bearing an inscription dedicated to Mas‘ūd III.<sup>141</sup> Adamesteanu who, in the absence of Bombaci and Scerrato, was the field director of the third and fourth excavation campaigns, instead assumed that it was a ‘monument de l’époque de Mahmoud qui a subi des transformations à l’époque de Massoud Ier et, probablement, à l’époque d’Ibrahim et de Massoud III’.<sup>142</sup> However, the reasons supporting this assumption are vague and, in some respects, incorrect<sup>143</sup> and, in fact, this dating proposal was never taken into account by Bombaci and Scerrato in their subsequent studies.<sup>144</sup>

A date to the pre-Islamic period, or in any case prior to the time of the Ghaznavid conquest, was proposed by Scerrato for the very large quadrangular enclosure (1,200 × 600m), identified immediately southwest of the palace (‘platform B’). This enclosure was flanked to the east by a smaller enclosure (‘platform A’; 300 × 100m) to which it must have been connected. Based on the traces visible on the ground and, above all, on aerial photographs, the archaeologist believed that

<sup>139</sup> The website ‘Buddhist and Islamic Archaeological Data from Ghazni, Afghanistan’ is accessible at <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/>, and is divided into the two sections ‘Buddhist Ghazni’ and ‘Islamic Ghazni’. The site benefited in 2012 and 2017 from two generous co-fundings from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung in Stuttgart and the University of Naples L’Orientale. The bibliographic section lists all the studies conducted so far on excavation activities, research, and material. See also Giunta 2010; 2020.

<sup>140</sup> See note 125.

<sup>141</sup> See Scerrato 1959a: 26, 42 and Bombaci 1959: 20; see also Bombaci 1961: 67. Based on its shape, Bombaci supposed that the marble element ‘was perhaps a piece of a basrelief that decorated a vaulted passage’. Adamesteanu, in an unpublished report on the fourth excavation campaign of 1960, specified that he had been informed that the portion of the arch was found in the palace mosque area.

<sup>142</sup> Adamesteanu 1960: 26.

<sup>143</sup> Two Afghan authorities who were on site in 1959 together with Adamesteanu identified Maḥmūd’s name and that of his son Mas‘ūd I in the epigraphic bands of some marble slabs forming the plinth of the antechambers overlooking the palace’s central courtyard, which we will discuss later.

<sup>144</sup> See, in particular, Bombaci 1961, 1966 and Scerrato 1961, 1962, 1995.

the two enclosures were once a settlement or military camp. The northern boundary of the small enclosure ('A') was only about 15 metres from the south wall of the palace (Figure 32).<sup>145</sup>

Regardless of the time of its foundation, it soon became clear that the palace had undergone an initial major destruction, followed by progressive reconstructions and rearrangements of the decorative apparatus. This continued until a prolonged period of abandonment during which several structures were built over time, including the aforementioned *ziyāra* and two burial spaces, one in the southeastern corner of the courtyard, and one a few metres west of the entrance (Figure 33).

The excavations only revealed the central north-south area of the building. As for the surrounding wall, the foundations and part of the elevation of the entire southern side remained, with two circular towers at the corners and a semicircular tower in the centre, along with portions of the other three sides, including the circular tower at the northeastern corner. The discovery of many portions of the enclosing wall and three towers positioned at the corners has made it possible to estimate the area occupied by the building (c.15,100m<sup>2</sup>). The conditions of the entire eastern area and the southwestern zone have been severely compromised by illegal excavations;<sup>146</sup> the remaining faint traces of the western area—which, however, was only partially excavated—suggested the presence of a second, large central courtyard. The northern area appeared to be more problematic—where the only entrance opened (XVIIa)—and consisted of a large, likely unbuilt space, a kind of street,<sup>147</sup> bordered to the south by a sequence of small rooms (each 3 × 2m), orthogonal to the boundary wall.

The central area of the building, described in various publications,<sup>148</sup> featured a large courtyard (50.60 × 31.90m) surrounded by a walkway (4.50m wide and c.15cm high), with four ivans arranged axially. The northern ivan (XVII) was accessible through an entrance vestibule (XVI-Ia–c) flanked by two large square rooms (XVIII, XIX). The southern ivan (I; 9.20 × 6.50m) led to a room (II) with a podium (*suffa*)<sup>149</sup> in the centre and a large rectangular recess at the back. This hall certainly served as the throne room, at least for a time.

Around the courtyard, on either side of the west, south, and east ivans, there was a sequence of rectangular rooms of similar size (approximately 3m wide), each preceded by an antechamber. On the northern side, only a few antechambers remained, as the construction of the two square halls had evidently obliterated the original rooms. An equally anomalous situation was found in the northwest corner, where four antechambers preceded the mosque (XIII). The latter, rectangular in plan and of the hypostyle type, had five naves perpendicular to the *qiblī* wall, each composed of two rows of four columns of which the marble bases remained. The column shafts must have been made of wood. The *mīhrāb* niche was quadrangular in shape (1 × 1.50m).

Two residential complexes (III and IV) were located in the southeast area of the palace; they had a central courtyard and an upper floor, as evidenced by portions of staircases found in Rooms IIIIn and IVd. Based on its shape and size, the northern complex (III) must have been the main one. It was situated immediately west of Room II but was not connected to it. Access to both apartments, in fact, was provided through several rooms that opened onto the central courtyard.

<sup>145</sup> See Scerrato 1959a: 24, 30–31 and figs 16, 17.

<sup>146</sup> Scerrato (1959a: 24) pointed out that 'all that remains on the east side is the negative trace of a wall consisting of a deep trench dug by seekers for building materials'.

<sup>147</sup> In his unpublished excavation report, Adamesteanu defines this street as 'via-canale che penetra nel Palazzo' ('street/channel penetrating the Palace').

<sup>148</sup> The first description of the palace plan was provided by Scerrato (1959a) who added some details in one of his last essays (Scerrato 1995).

<sup>149</sup> The height of the podium was about 50cm above the floor level.

The rooms were paved with baked bricks of different sizes, laid flat or on their edge,<sup>150</sup> except for the central courtyard, the walkway surrounding it and some thresholds paved with marble slabs.<sup>151</sup> In some of the rooms, as a result of reconstructive work, re-used marble slabs, sometimes with bas-relief decoration, covered portions of the brick floors.

Based on the materials found during the excavation and the layout of the rooms, archaeologists have hypothesized the roofing system only for certain areas, in particular: a dome over Room II to the south, or possibly a semi-dome over the recess in the southern part of the room; two imposing domes over the two square-shaped halls situated on either side of the entrance; barrel vaults covering the ivans, as well as the antechambers and, perhaps, the rooms behind, arranged around the courtyards; a flat roof over the mosque (Figures 34–36). The courtyards were uncovered; the empty space between the façade and the northern enclosure wall was likely also open. This space might have been accessed through two large arches, one to the northeast and one to the northwest (Figure 36).

Starting from a reading of all the excavation reports, written between 1957 and 1960 and still unpublished, an analysis of the plans and sections produced between 1957 and 1966, and a study of the data relating to the walls (construction techniques, foundation trenches, thicknesses, alignments, interlocking, and abutments of walls), the shape of the rooms, the internal subdivision of the spaces and limited information on the horizontal stratigraphy, we formulated the hypothesis that the building had six major construction phases and an unspecified number of intervention phases within them (Figure 37 and Table 11).<sup>152</sup>

<i>Phases</i>	<i>Colours</i>	<i>Related structures</i>
I	Red	Boundary wall and a section of wall running north-south (25m long), parallel to the boundary wall on the western side and joined to the boundary wall on the southern side. <sup>153</sup>
II	Brown	Room II (about 13m in length) at the half-way point of the boundary wall, behind the semicircular tower; south-north wall (about 70m long) leaning against the north wall and running parallel to the room; three walls that, together with the phase I wall, define a large space in the western area; arrangement of the western space, to the north of the previous space, through the construction of an irregularly shaped rectangular courtyard, surrounded by small rooms, at least on the east, south and west sides. It is not unreasonable to hypothesize that a similar courtyard arrangement with rooms surrounding it might have been planned in the eastern area as well, adjacent to the east boundary wall. <sup>154</sup>
III	Blue	Arrangement of the central space, east of the western court (or, probably, in the centre between the two courts) with a court in the form of a regular rectangle surrounded by rectangular rooms and two opposing ivans, in the centre of the south and north sides, respectively.

<sup>150</sup> Floors made of baked bricks arranged on edge were mainly found in the southern area, particularly inside and outside the residential complex III.

<sup>151</sup> For the location of the quarry discovered a hundred metres from the city, see in particular Bombaci 1959: 8.

<sup>152</sup> After the initial results obtained with D. Rosati, work proceeded with C. Passaro in 2014.

<sup>153</sup> This first phase was also assumed by Scerrato (1959a: 33).

<sup>154</sup> The irregular shape of the west courtyard (and that of the possible east courtyard) was due to the irregularity of the perimeter wall of the building. The latter was due, to the south, to the presence of enclosure 'A', and to the north to the presence of the street. See above and Figure 32.

IV	Green	Rearrangement of the apartments, including the southernmost one with four ivans around a central courtyard; construction of the two ivans on the east and west sides of the central courtyard and addition of the anterooms; construction of the mosque which was rotated by 5°. The inclusion of the forced a reorganisation of the northeast side of the western court.
V	Yellow	Further rearrangement of the apartments; construction of the two large square rooms to the north; construction of the small rooms orthogonal to the south wall.
VI	Purple	Long phase of abandonment. The building was no longer a residence.

Table 11. The six main construction phases

In order to propose dating hypotheses for these phases, it is necessary to take into account the materials found during the excavations.

It is also well known that the palace had sumptuous wall decoration, featuring marble, brickwork and stucco elements, as well as, to a lesser extent, glazed ceramic tiles.<sup>155</sup> With regard to the vessels, the excavations yielded a very high number of ceramic sherds and many fragments of metal and glass objects.<sup>156</sup>

The marble elements can almost all be dated to the same period, due to the working technique, the nature of the decoration and the writing styles of the epigraphs. Most of these elements are rectangular slabs which adorned the lower part of the walls of the entrance vestibule (as well as, perhaps, of the façade, on either side of the entrance),<sup>157</sup> the ivans (certainly the eastern and western ones) and, above all, the antechambers that opened onto the central courtyard, where they were also found *in situ* (Figures 38a, b). Consequently, we believe that the majority of the marbles belong to Phase IV.

This same phase may include the bases of the columns of the mosque (Inv. nos C6178–C6185), as well as the upper part of the arch bearing the name of Mas‘ūd III (Inv. no. C2952; 72 × 100 × 12cm) and two marble transennas with the date 505 AH (= 1112 CE), discovered by Adamesteanu during the third excavation campaign (Inv. nos C2975 [48 × 92 × 12cm] and C2976 [48 × 94 × 12cm]).<sup>158</sup> These last three elements, found in the mosque area, were certainly part of a single structure (180 × 100cm), originally leaning against a wall.<sup>159</sup> A closer reading of

<sup>155</sup> Almost all these finds can be found on the mission’s website, along with the corresponding bibliographic references. Among the major works that have been conducted so far by the research group, I think it is worth mentioning Martina Rugiadi’s PhD thesis on marbles (2012a; see also 2012b; Rugiadi and Lazzarini 2013), Simona Artusi’s PhD thesis on brickwork and stucco (2009), as well as Viola Allegranzi’s PhD thesis on the long Persian inscription on marble slabs (2017; see also Allegranzi 2019). The latter study was a continuation of Bombaci’s work (1966). For glazed ceramic tiles, see a recent study by Agnese Fusaro (2020).

<sup>156</sup> See especially Agnese Fusaro’s PhD thesis (2014; see also 2015) on ceramic material and Valentina Laviola’s PhD thesis on metalwork (2016; see also Laviola 2017 and 2020). The glass material has only been studied very partially; see Laviola (2019). We also note that preliminary results have been obtained by Sara Fiorentino, Barbara Venezia, Nadine Schibille and Mariangela Vandini on assemblages of glassware and bracelets based on a chrono-typological and archaeometric analysis (Fiorentino *et al.* 2019).

<sup>157</sup> These are the slabs with decoration divided into three horizontal registers. The upper register bears a Kufic inscription in Persian, or a cursive inscription in Arabic. Rugiadi used the definition ‘Dado panels. Type 14’ for the former and ‘Dado panels. Type 2’ for the latter. See <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/dado-panels>.

<sup>158</sup> The two transennas were found immediately north of the *ziyāra*, at the base of the pillar between the antechambers located in front of the mosque (between XIIIc and XIIIId). For the provenance of the arch, see note 138.

<sup>159</sup> On several occasions, I introduced the reconstruction hypothesis for this structure. This hypothesis is based on the shape and size of the three artefacts, the location of their discovery, but above all the position and content of the inscriptions. The date, repeated on the two transennas, refers to the completion of the construction of an unspecified building which, in my opinion, could not have been the palace. The celebration of a sultan’s residence

Adamesteanu's 1960 excavation reports revealed two interesting details: the excavations of the prayer room yielded a large number of burnt wooden fragments enveloped in a mass of ash, as well as, to the north of the *mihrāb* niche, the traces of three steps that 'si dipartono dal pavimento e montano sulla superficie del muro, leggermente incassati'.<sup>160</sup> The archaeologist assumed that the steps had belonged to the *minbar*. The presence of a large amount of wood in the prayer room is not surprising since this material must have been used both for the beams that supported the flat ceiling and for the columns whose marble bases remain. However, we can assume that wooden columns also served as connecting elements between the arch and the transennas of the marble structure,<sup>161</sup> which could in turn be associated with the stairs and thus the *minbar* (Figure 39). Furthermore, the discovery of numerous fragments of nails and other iron elements could support the hypothesis that the structure was anchored to the *qiblī* wall (Figure 40).

All this data allows us to attribute to Mas'ūd III the fourth construction phase, which can be therefore dated to the first half of the 12th century.

The numerous stucco fragments of various sizes found in the prayer hall, in front of the *mihrāb* niche, can certainly also be attributed to the work phase ordered by Mas'ūd III. These fragments formed a rectangular panel (about 60cm long) with a vegetal decoration, bordered on all four sides by an epigraphic frame containing a Koranic verse (Kor. 3:18; Figures 41a–c). The panel was possibly placed inside the *mihrāb*.<sup>162</sup>

The attribution of marble elements to the phases preceding and following Phase IV is not a simple task. However, we are fairly certain that two perfectly matching fragments of a portion of frame (29 × 23 × 4cm; Inv. nos C2781 and C2784) found in the northern part of Room II belong to an earlier production (Figure 42).

The vegetal composition of this frame seems to be inspired by the decoration of the top element of Sebuktigin's Tomb (977–997); the style of Kufic script is closely compared to that of the inscriptions on the Tomb of Maḥmūd in Rawza (d. 1030).<sup>163</sup> The importance of this inscription lies also in its content, as it is the only epigraph discovered in the palace, bearing the name of a prominent figure who does not belong to the Ghaznavid or Ghurid dynastic lines (*al-Shaykh al-Jalīl al-Sa[yyid]?*). The names of the Ghaznavid rulers Maḥmūd and Mas'ūd I appear in the Persian inscription on the dado panels of the antechambers on the western side of the central courtyard. However, contrary to Adamesteanu's assertion,<sup>164</sup> they are not mentioned as the patrons of the palace's construction, but rather as prominent rulers of the dynastic line celebrated in the text, which dates back to the years of Mas'ūd III.<sup>165</sup> The name of the latter appears in the inscription on the above-mentioned arch, as well as on a portion of a marble well curb found in the central courtyard, not far from the 'Ziyārat Ibrāhīm'.<sup>166</sup> The question of the probable presence of an inscription dedicated to a ruler of the Ghurid dynasty will be dealt with later, as it was executed in brickwork.

would have warranted a more monumental inscription (see, in particular, Giunta 2020 and 2022).

<sup>160</sup> 'Three steps spread out from the floor and mount/rest on the surface of the wall, slightly recessed'.

<sup>161</sup> Both transennas feature two circular holes on their upper surface.

<sup>162</sup> Although broken into fragments, the panel bears only one inventory number (IG6190). Its reconstruction was based on the inscription. It is worth noting that, apart from this panel, the only other Koranic verse (Kor. 2:255) is found on the frames of the arch of the *minbar*.

<sup>163</sup> See Giunta 2003b: 19–44, pls I–VIII. The style of Kufic writing is also comparable with that of the only funerary stele found at Ghazni, dedicated to a personage from Nishapur and ascribed to the 11th century (Giunta 2003b: 70–72, pl. XVII).

<sup>164</sup> See note 141.

<sup>165</sup> The content of the Persian inscription is discussed in depth by both Bombaci (1966) and Allegranzi (2019).

<sup>166</sup> Inv. no. C2977. The other inscriptions on marble and brickwork that mention the names of the Ghaznavid rulers were found outside the palace area. See Giunta 2005b.

If our assumptions are correct, the marble frame could date back to the first half of the 11th century, when the construction or the first rearrangement of Room II took place (Phases II or III). The hypothesis would be corroborated by the dating that can be proposed for two alabaster fragments and a stucco panel discovered in the same room, which also differ in their working technique and decoration from those that we can ascribe to the early 12th century (Figures 43a–c).

The fragment of a small column base (Inv. no. C1051)<sup>167</sup>—probably belonging to a panel of the *mīhrāb*-like type—can be compared with the column bases of the *mīhrāb*-like panels decorating the centre of the four faces of the cenotaph of Maḥmūd's tomb, also made of alabaster, whose decoration appears to have served as a model for the vegetal interlacing of fragment Inv. no. C2978 (23 × 16cm).<sup>168</sup> The rectangular panel Inv. no. C3600 (68 × 26.5 × 13.5cm) stands out as a unique piece among all the stucco artefacts discovered during the palace excavations. The vegetal motif, which echoes the so-called 'Style C' of 9th-century Samarra stucco, might have served as a prototype for the vegetal composition of the numerous baked brick pilasters produced later, especially in Phase IV.<sup>169</sup>

The numerous fragments of architectural decoration in baked brick and stucco, varying greatly in size, are not easily classified in a chronological sequence. Compared to marble, the material is less homogeneous and fits into different categories, each of which includes several subtypes. Moreover, the fires and devastations that have marked the history of the palace certainly required the reconstruction of the upper parts of the walls in many rooms and the rearrangement of the decorative apparatus. The studies conducted so far have allowed for the identification of the main morphological-functional types and the formulation of hypotheses regarding the original placement of some of the materials, since, with very few exceptions, the artefacts were found in layers of collapse. At the current state of research, we can only establish that most of these materials were produced especially during Phases II–III and IV, thus spanning from the first half of the 11th century to the first half of the 12th century.

The construction of the two large square halls (XVIII and XIX) that we have included in Phase V, i.e. the last phase in which the building continued to serve as a royal residence, led to a significant change in the entrance area. Additionally, between the western wall of the west hall (XVIII) and the eastern wall of the west courtyard, a residual space (about 19m long) was generated, which archaeologists have referred to as 'Corridor' XVIII. This space served as a dumping ground for many baked brick elements that had evidently once constituted the decorative apparatus of the rooms upon which Room XVIII was later built. Many of these fragments bear large Kufic epigraphic bands. The letters, made of bricks arranged on their edge, stand out against an undecorated background coated with a layer of white plaster (Figures 13a–b).<sup>170</sup>

The same technique and the same style of writing were used for many other Kufic epigraphic bands and panels found in other areas of the palace, which we believe to be coeval and therefore not later than phase IV.

A different script and, more importantly, a different technique can be observed in three large portions of epigraphic panels discovered near the antechambers on the southwestern side of the central courtyard: the inscription is in cursive and the background is filled with triangular stucco cells. The inscription must certainly have been part of a single large epigraphic band that likely served as a frame for the antechambers south of the western ivan (Figures 44a–c).

<sup>167</sup> We do not know the dimensions of the fragment.

<sup>168</sup> It is interesting to note that this vegetal interlacing is also very similar to that seen on four fragments of brick pilasters, all found outside the palace excavations for which we have proposed a date to the 11th century; see [https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/brickwork/bw\\_pilasters/type-5](https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/brickwork/bw_pilasters/type-5).

<sup>169</sup> See [https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/brickwork/bw\\_pilasters](https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/brickwork/bw_pilasters), in particular Types 1 and 2. Also in this case the width of the pilasters does not exceed 27cm.

<sup>170</sup> Due to the condition of the panels, it has not been possible to decipher the inscription. It may, however, be a benedictory text.

The text is certainly dedicated to a ruler since on two portions of the band the title *al-sultā[n]* *al-muʿazza[m]* can be discerned (Figures 45b, c); the third portion (Figure 45a) may contain the word *al-muʿmin[n]*, a term that may appear in the final part of a ruler's titling in order to enshrine the relationship with caliphal authority. No Ghaznavid ruler held the title of *al-sultān al-muʿazzam*, a title that appears instead in the protocol of the Ghurid ruler Muʿizz al-Dīn who reigned in Ghazni between 1173 and 1203, after the Ghaznavids had lost their capital.<sup>171</sup> In an inscription dated 599 AH (= 1203 CE) carved on a marble slab discovered by the Mission in the village of Ramak, 25km southeast of Ghazni, this sultan bears both the official title *al-sultān al-muʿazzam*, and the honorary title *Nāṣir khalīfat Allāh Amīr al-muʿminīn*.<sup>172</sup> It is most likely that the ruler inhabited the palace after ordering new construction work, inserting the two rooms on either side of the entrance (and most probably the sequence of rooms against the northern boundary wall), and celebrating his power in a large epigraphic band clearly visible from the central courtyard. Phase V could consequently date to the end of the 12th century or the early years of the following century.

The issue regarding the glazed ceramic tiles is unresolved. Most of the specimens (76 units) come from the private apartments (Zone III), where they served as a decorative element on the walls.<sup>173</sup> Their production seems to be limited to the Ghazni area, both for plain tiles and those with moulded relief decoration. Scerrato (1962) believed that all the specimens dated to the Ghurid period (Phase V). Based on a detailed study of the entire ceramic corpus, Fusaro (2014: 190–99) proposed that production may have begun in the late Ghaznavid period (Phase IV?), at least for the undecorated tiles.

As for the ceramic ware, Fusaro (2014: 261–96) divided the production into four main periods, dating from the 11th century to the 17th century (Table 12).<sup>174</sup> This periodization excludes the few fragments found in secondary stratigraphic positions, which can be attributed to a period between the 8th and the beginning of the 10th century.

<i>Periods</i>	<i>Dating</i>
I	11th century
II	late 11th century–first half of the 12th century
III	second half of the 12th century–first half of the 13th century
IV	13th–17th centuries

Table 12. Periodization of ceramic wares from the palace excavations

In the first period, the production included primarily archaic slip-painted ceramics, monochrome and monochrome graffito, which were found in the few deeper, stratigraphically reliable levels of the palace. The second period encompasses a much broader and more varied range of productions, including primarily splashed graffito ware, dotted graffito ware, and ceramics with a

<sup>171</sup> According to epigraphic data, the Ghaznavid rulers, starting with Ibrāhīm, bore the title *al-sultān al-aʿẓam* (Giunta and Bresc 2004: 187–88, 225). See also Giunta 2005b.

<sup>172</sup> It is a construction text of an unspecified mosque, reused on the *qiblī* wall of a modern shrine (Giunta 2003c).

<sup>173</sup> In addition to the tiles found in the excavations of the palace and the private residence (from which about 30 were recovered), and in both cases none in their original position, around 60 specimens were housed at the Kabul Museum, with some fragments in the so-called *Antiquarium* of Rawza.

<sup>174</sup> The study focused on glazed ceramics, although the scholar always considered the corpus of unglazed ceramics, particularly where it was possible to establish a chronological association with the glazed ones.

siliceous body and opaque turquoise glaze.<sup>175</sup> The third period witnessed significant changes, especially in technological, morphological, and aesthetic aspects. There was a near-complete disappearance of earlier productions, with some classes evolving—such as splashed and monochrome graffito ware—alongside the introduction of new productions, such as the class (with related sub-classes) featuring alkaline transparent glazes. This third period includes fragments of lustreware, mina'i, imported Chinese porcelain, as well as one of the most original productions discovered in Ghazni: ceramics with white siliceous slip-painting applied directly onto the ceramic body beneath a transparent turquoise glaze.<sup>176</sup> The final period is marked by a noticeable reduction in ceramic production. Given the small number of fragments, primarily found in the uppermost layers, it is difficult to establish precise chronological ceramic associations. Furthermore, it is likely that these fragments are imports from neighbouring regions.

The following table illustrates a chronological framework based on a comparison of data related to architectural and decorative phases and the ceramic finds (Table XIII).

<i>Architectural phases</i>	<i>Pottery productions</i>	<i>Dating</i>
I	–	before the 11th century
II	I	11th century
III		
IV	II	late 11th century–first half of the 12th century
V	III	second half of the 12th century–first half of the 13th century
VI	IV	13th–17th centuries

Table 13. Dating hypothesis for the history of the palace

The number of metal artefacts from the palace excavations includes around 70 specimens, almost all of which are in a fragmented state and not easily datable.<sup>177</sup> A noteworthy exception is two cylindrical inkwells in copper alloy, discovered in the area of the private apartments (III). Both specimens, in good condition, retain their ribbed dome-shaped lids with knob handles and feature very elaborate decoration.<sup>178</sup> The vegetal and epigraphic decoration on one of the two specimens is engraved on silver plates applied on the box and on the lid (shoulder and lobes of the dome). For this specimen, we agree with Laviola's proposed dating of no later than the 11th century (Architectural phase II–III; Pottery production I; see Table XIII).<sup>179</sup> We also agree with the

<sup>175</sup> Fusaro (2014: 275) believes that during this period 'iniziano a essere prodotte le mattonelle invetriate non decorate e iniziano a diffondersi gli sfero-conical vessels' ('undecorated glazed tiles began to be produced and sphero-conical vessels began to spread').

<sup>176</sup> The originality mainly lies in the decorative techniques.

<sup>177</sup> Metalwork documented at Ghazni by the Archaeological Mission between 1957 and 1978, dated to a chronological span between the 9th and 13th centuries, have been the subject of an in-depth study by Valentina Laviola (2020). Of these, only about 100 items come from the two archaeological sites.

<sup>178</sup> The specimens were catalogued under Inv. nos C10 and C11 (Laviola 2020: nos 390–391). The current location of the first specimen (C10), which was displayed in the 1960s at the Museum of Islamic Art of Rawza, is unknown. The second specimen (C11) is housed at the Museo delle Civiltà – Museo d'Arte Orientale in Rome (Inv. no. 8368). For a photo of the discovery at the excavation site, see Laviola 2020: 466, fig. 81. See also Scerrato 1959a: 39, 1959b: 96–97.

<sup>179</sup> It is interesting to note that, from an aesthetic perspective, the decoration on this inkwell evokes the carving found on the aforementioned stucco panel, for which we have proposed the same dating (Inv. no. C3600; Figure 43c).

hypothesis that the second inkwell may belong to a later production period (end of the 11th–first half of the 12th century?; Architectural phase IV; Pottery production II).

The data provided by the coins found in the excavations is presented in this volume. I would just like to emphasise the difficulty of the study conducted by the two numismatists, who had to rely solely on photographic documentation and a fair number of casts. The agreements with the Afghan authorities, to which we have already alluded,<sup>180</sup> stipulated in fact, in section B-1b, that ‘All coins whatever their metal or historical period shall be the property of the Kabul Museum’, and in section B-1d that ‘copies and casts of unique objects may be made and taken by IsM.E.O. at its own expense’. Unfortunately, the coins preserved at the Kabul Museum have been lost.

Based on the archaeometric analyses, it has emerged that ‘all the analysed objects were manufactured by using a plant ash-based glass in line with Central Asian glassmaking technology. Regarding the glassware, the closest affinities have been shown with the so-called “Mesopotamian I” type, a compositional category identified among 9th- to 11th-century CE plant ash-based glass assemblages from Central Asia’.<sup>181</sup> This dating, which should, however, be appropriately compared with a morpho-typological study, suggests that the glass production can be ascribed to Architectural phase I or, in my opinion much more likely, to Architectural phases II–IV.

In conclusion, based on the current state of research, we can hypothesize that Phase I of the building predates the 11th century. However, we lack data to determine the exact date of its foundation, its initial function, and the organization of the spaces enclosed within the boundary wall. However, we doubt that the building was conceived as a royal palace at the time of its foundation, especially considering its location on the southernmost of the two ancient roads of the city, as well as its close proximity to the northern part of the pre-Ghaznavid ‘A’ enclosure, which has influenced the irregular shape of the building’s perimeter (see Figure 32).<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, with the exception of a small number of pottery sherds attributed to the 8th–10th centuries, there is no architectural decoration element that can be dated to the period before the Ghaznavid conquest.<sup>183</sup> The two subsequent Phases (II and III) were certainly Ghaznavid and would date to a period between the reigns of Maḥmūd and Ibrāhīm b. Mas‘ūd I (early 11th century to 1099), although it remains difficult to establish the exact use of the building during this century. The presence, in Hall II, of a marble frame fragment bearing the name of a *shaykh* (which dates to the early 11th century; see Figure 42) and, more importantly, the absence, throughout the entire area of the building, of marble elements with figurative bas-relief decoration, comparable to those found in Rawza, where the palaces and gardens of Maḥmūd and his son Mas‘ūd I were located (Figures 46a, b, 47a, b), suggests that even during the first half of this century the building was not used as a royal palace. Such a function can only be proposed from the second half of the 11th century onwards, during the reign of Ibrāhīm, when the central courtyard area of the building was reorganized with the four ivans and rooms arranged on all four sides.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>180</sup> See note 134.

<sup>181</sup> See Fiorentino *et al.* 2019: 168.

<sup>182</sup> We know from coeval historical sources that the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, Sebuktigin, had his palace and a mosque built on the citadel occupying the southwestern area of the city. His son Maḥmūd, however, preferred the area of Rawza to the northeast. We lack information on the construction of the buildings in the central-southern area of the city during the earliest Ghaznavid period.

<sup>183</sup> It is worth mentioning the close proximity between the southern boundary wall of the building and the so-called enclosure A. See above and Figure 32.

<sup>184</sup> See above and note 132; see also <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/dado-panels/dado-antropomorphic-decoration-39>, <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/dado-panels/dado-zoomorphic-decoration-41>, <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/dado-panels/dado-zoomorphic-decoration-43>, <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/dado-panels/dado-zoomorphic-decoration-44>, <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/screens/screen-7>, <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/screens/screen-7a>, <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/screens/screen-8>, <https://ghazni.bdus.cloud/islamic/finds/marble/screens/screen-9>.

However, we owe to Mas‘ūd III a comprehensive renovation of the palace, featuring lavish architectural decoration (Phase IV). This renovation coincided with the foundation of his great mosque, located in the immediate vicinity of the palace, as evidenced by its minaret. Phase V would correspond to the fall of the Ghaznavids and the subsequent reuse of the palace by the Ghurid Mu‘izz al-Dīn between the late 12th century and the early years of the following century. This sultan is likely to have ordered new construction and restoration work, almost certainly following the fire that the Ghurids themselves had started in the city in 1150/51. The final Phase VI extended over a long period, right up to the 17th century. The building ceased to function as a residence and was gradually transformed into a burial area, a phenomenon that appears to have affected the entire medieval city.<sup>185</sup>

Although based on an incorrect interpretation of some data, the hypothesis put forward by Adamesteanu regarding an early dating of the building to the beginning of the 11th century<sup>186</sup> would therefore prove to be correct. However, we do not have sufficient evidence to support the other archaeologist’s hypothesis that the building served as a *madrasa*.<sup>187</sup>

### *The House of the Lustrewares*

This private residence was uncovered during a single excavation campaign (1957) a few kilometers northwest of the palace and about 200m to the west of the tomb of Sebuktigin, in the area between the citadel and the Rawza hills.<sup>188</sup> The only detailed account is provided by Scerrato<sup>189</sup> although the plan of the building is merely sketched, and we lack information on the stratigraphic sequence.<sup>190</sup>

The building had a quadrangular floor plan (approximately 30–40 meters on each side) and was enclosed by a stone wall, of which mainly the northern portion has been found. The main entrance was located on the southern side. Thirteen rooms, defined by mudbrick walls on stone foundations, were arranged around a central square courtyard. The presence of numerous staircases made it possible to determine that the building also had an upper storey (Figure 48). The floors were made of beaten earth, except for one room in the southeast area, which had a baked brick floor. A trench dug in the courtyard, however, led to the discovery of some portions of a marble floor at a depth of about 2.27m below the walking surface. The roofing system mainly consisted of barrel vaults.

The dwelling, which showed clear signs of many rearrangements, contained several ‘hiding places’: a niche with a vaulted ceiling, located in the lower part of the northeast wall of Room II, and some ceramic vessels in which a number of objects had been ‘hidden’, first and foremost the large jar buried in the floor up to the rim in Room III. The niche in Room II is famous, due to the presence of eight perfectly preserved lustrewares—which gave the residence its name—dated to a period between the second half of the 12th century and the first half of the 13th century (Figure 49).<sup>191</sup>

<sup>185</sup> See also note 124.

<sup>186</sup> See above and note 143.

<sup>187</sup> Adamesteanu 1960: 23. This hypothesis was supported, over the years, only by J. C. Courtois (1961: 28–29).

<sup>188</sup> Scerrato 1959a: 23, 42–52. Further information can be found in his unpublished excavation report and notebooks.

<sup>189</sup> Scerrato 1959a: 23, 42–52. Further information can be found in his unpublished excavation report and notebooks.

<sup>190</sup> In this case as well, the archaeological site had been compromised by illicit excavations, particularly its southern part. Scerrato (1959a: 42) reports that traces of clandestine excavations were clearly visible in many of the numerous mounds scattered across the hillsides.

<sup>191</sup> For a recent study on these lustrewares, see Fusaro and Allegranzi (2023). The two scholars point out that ‘The Ghazni specimens belong to the distinctive production of lustre-painted stonepaste pottery developed in Iran during the second half of the 12th century and the early 13th century [...]’ and that they ‘constitutes an exceptional early collection of lustrewares, assembled shortly after their production date’ (Fusaro and Allegranzi 2023: 2).

The studies conducted by Scerrato (1959a: 42–53), first, and Fusaro (2014: 253–60), later, attest that the building was certainly occupied at least from the first half of the 12th century, but that the phase of greatest occupation occurred between the second half of the 12th century and the first two decades of the 13th century, thus when the city had become the capital of the Ghurids. Scerrato also advanced the hypothesis that the dwelling was abandoned due to an unforeseen event and that this event could be traced back to the arrival of the Mongol hordes in 1221.

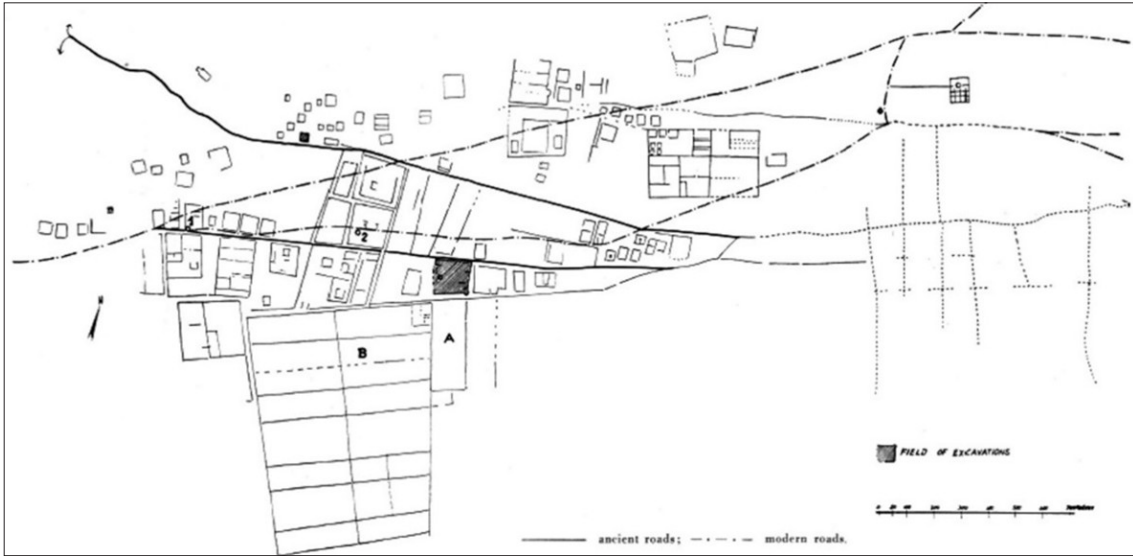
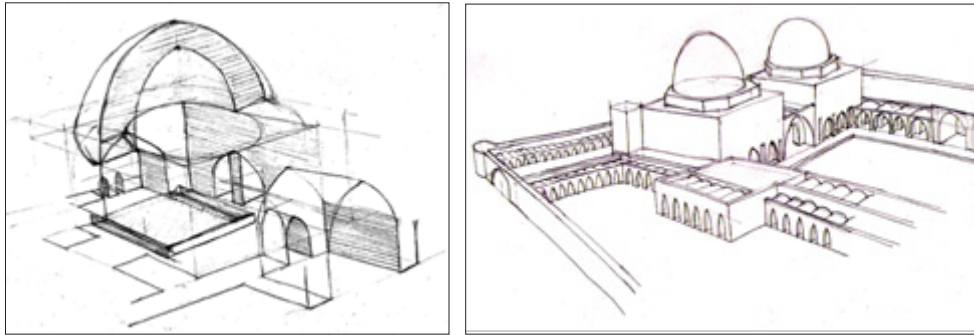


Figure 32. Map of Ghazni drawn from an aerial photograph, showing the roads, the two excavated sites (in gray), the two Ghaznavid minarets (1 and 2), the two pre-Islamic enclosures ('A' and 'B'), and other archaeological evidences (from Scerrato 1959a: fig. 17)



Figure 33. Plan of the palace with indication of the room numbers (drawing by G. Ioppolo, 1966; reworking by C. Passaro, 2024)



Figures 34, 35. Reconstruction hypothesis for Room II and ivan I, and for the northern area and the western court (drawings by D. Rosati, 2012)

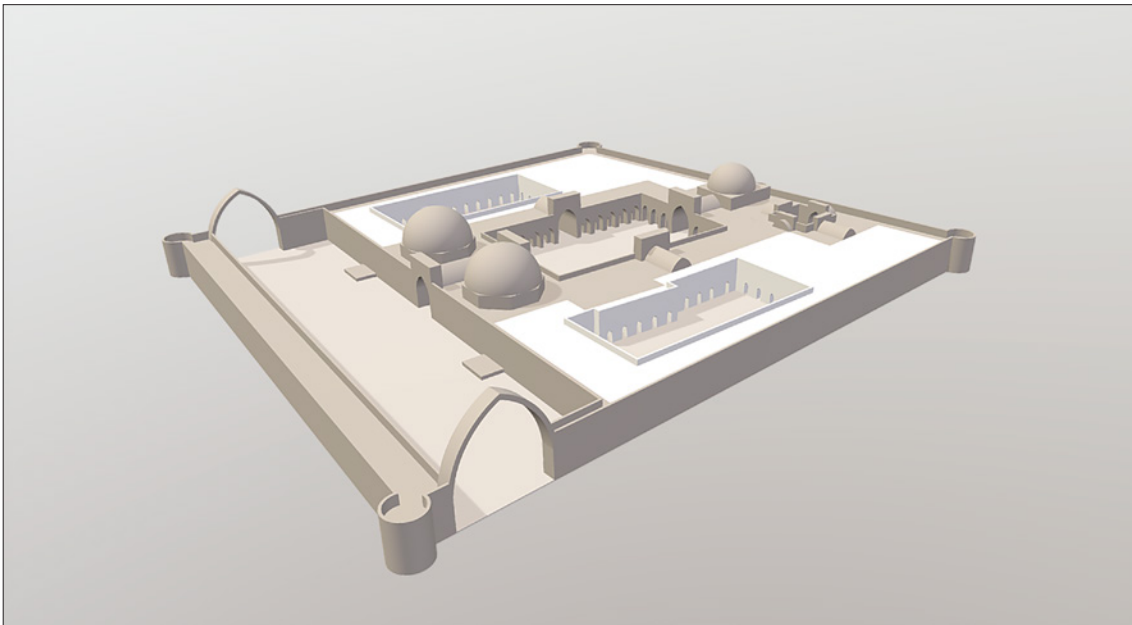


Figure 36. Reconstruction hypothesis for the palace (drawing by C. Passaro, 2015)



Figure 37. Plan of the palace showing the six main construction phases (elaboration by C. Passaro)



Figures 38a, b. Marble dado panels with Persian (a) and Arabic (b) inscriptions. a: C1198 (74 x 41.5 x 7 cm); b: C2066 (71 × 46 × 5 cm). Figure 39. Reconstruction of the marble structure consisting of the arch and the two transennas (elaboration by C. Passaro, 2024)



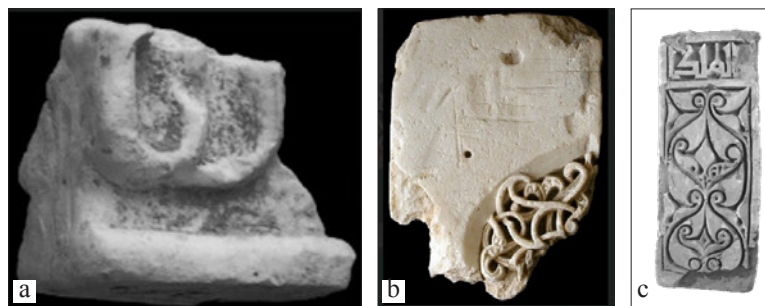
Figure 40. Hypothetical reconstruction of the prayer hall (drawing by C. Passaro, 2024)



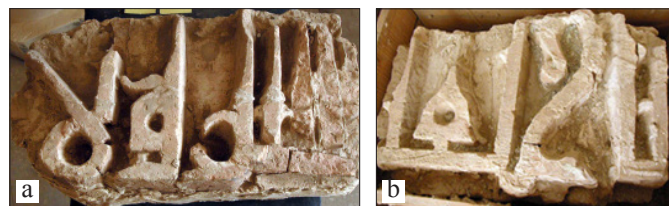
Figures 41a, b, c. Stucco fragments and partial reconstruction of the panel



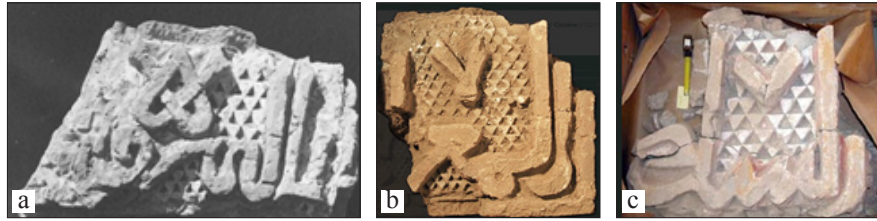
Figure 42. Portion of a marble frame found in Room II



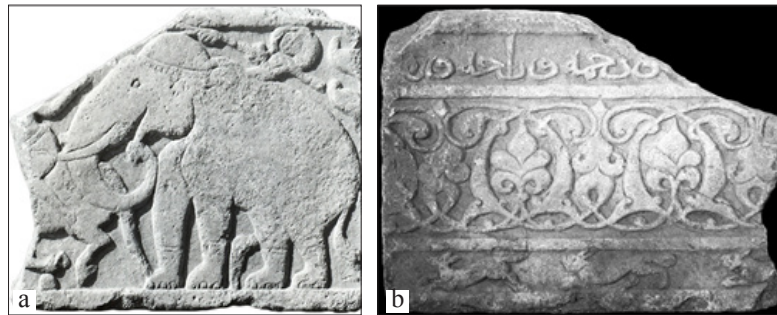
Figures 43a, b. Alabaster fragments; c. Stucco panel



Figures 44a, b. Portions of epigraphic panels found in 'Corridor' XVIII.  
 a: C6025 (29 × 56 × 20 cm); b: C5973 (31 × 52 × 20 cm)



Figures 45a, b, c. Portions of epigraphic panels in cursive script.  
 a: C5612 (48 × 72 × 20 cm); b: C2719 (58 × 56 × 21 cm); c: C5784 (58 × 53 × 15 cm).



Figures 46a, b. Marble screen found on the Rawza hills with decoration on both sides;  
 first half of the 11th century. RM0040 (45.5 × 60.5 × 7 cm, sides 1 and 2)



Figures 47a, b. Marble screen found on the Rawza hills with decoration on both sides;  
 first half of the 11th century. RM0039 (23 × 34 × 4.5 cm, sides 1 and 2)



Figures 48, 49. Plan of the House of the Lustrewares (from Scerrato 1959a: 44, tab. II);  
 the House of the Lustrewares. The niche/hiding place in Room II (from Scerrato 1959a: fig. 49)

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND EDITORIAL REMARKS

### *Transliteration notes*

Geographical and personal names, as well as other designations, are usually transcribed from Middle Persian or Sanskrit without diacritical marks. Greek, Bactrian, Middle Persian, and Sanskrit coin legends are generally transliterated.

Names, coin designations, offices, royal protocols, and coin legends are transliterated from Arabic according to the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Except for names, all these elements are presented in italics.

### *Dates*

Other calendars use common acronyms (see below); the dates are always given together with the corresponding date in the Common Era calendar. For the sake of simplicity, the same system is used throughout the text for the Hijri years (e.g. 569 AH [= 1173/74 CE]).

Only in the catalogue (Part B) is the standard system retained for the Hijri years (e.g. 421/1030–31)

### *Abbreviations*

#### *Descriptions*

Obv.	Obverse
Rev.	Reverse
l.	(to the) left
r.	(to the) right

#### *Denominations and material*

4Δ	tetradrachm
2Δ	didrachm
Δ	drachm
½Δ	hemidrachm
Ob	obol
Æ	copper or copper alloy
AR	argentum = silver
BI	billon = silver-copper alloy

#### *Varia*

AH	Hijri Year
Bac.	Bactrian
BE	Bactrian era
Bra.	Brahmi
Cm	countermark (after Göbl 1967, abbreviated there as KM)
Gr.	Greek
ht.	height
Khar.	Kharoshthi
MP	Middle Persian
Pah.	Pahlavi
PYE	post-Yazdgerd era
pr.Sh.	proto-Sharada
S	symbol (after Göbl 1967)

Sp	sporadic
TS	Tapa Sardar
VS	Vikrama Samvat

*Collections*

AuR	Aman ur Rahman Collection, Dubai
Berlin	Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett
BHM	Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des médailles, Paris
BM	British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals, London
FINT	Forschungsstelle für Islamische Numismatik Tübingen
HMM	The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
JPR	Jean-Pierre-Rhigetti Collection, Ferpicloz
KHM	Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Münzkabinett
NMA	National Museum of Afghanistan

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The volume focuses on the study of the coins discovered in the region of Ghazni during the excavations carried out by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan between 1956 and 1978 in the areas of the Buddhist complex of Tapa Sardar and the Islamic sites.

It is an as yet unpublished corpus of excavated coins that have unfortunately been lost. However, thanks to archival documentation and the plaster casts made after the coins were found, it has been possible to resume and deepen the investigation in recent years.

Arranged and described in a catalogue, the 227 coins cover a wide chronological range and testify to the long history of the Ghazni region—from antiquity to the present day—which greatly enhances our understanding of the political and economic history of the region. The coins are presented in two sections: The first contains coins from the 2nd to 8th centuries, the second from the 9th to 20th centuries. Each section is accompanied by a detailed numismatic analysis and enriched by updated archaeological contributions on Tapa Sardar, the Ghaznavid Palace and the House of Lustreswares.

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