Cahiers d'Asie centrale

3/4 | 1997
L'héritage timouride : Iran – Asie centrale – Inde, XVe-XVIIIe siècles

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OpenEdition Journals

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/asiecentrale/489
ISSN: 2075-5325

Publisher
Éditions De Boccard

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 October 1997
Number of pages: 215-227
ISBN: 2-85744-955-0
ISSN: 1270-9247

Electronic reference
Claus-Peter Haase, « Shrines of Saints and Dynastic Mausolea: Towards a Typology of Funerary Architecture in the Timurid Period », *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* [Online], 3/4 | 1997, Online since 03 January 2011, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/asiecentrale/489

Shrines of Saints and Dynastic Mausolea : Towards a Typology of Funerary Architecture in the Timurid Period

Claus-Peter Haase

The history of Islamic funerary architecture in Central Asia is in many ways peculiar and fascinating. The sheer existence of monumental early mausolea is a proof of the discussion opened here against so-called orthodox trends to restrict memorials for the dead. That the oldest Islamic mausoleum preserved, the *turba* of the Samanids in Bokhara from the first half of the 10th century, is a dynastic mausoleum may be taken as a symbol for a special form of dynastic conscience introduced into or combined with the Islamic society in this region[1]. The Samanid Amirs, who still recognized the Abbasid califate as the legitimate power, were of Iranian origin and probably understood certain of the old Iranian regional traditions combined with Central Asian influences, as appropriate with the new Islamic religion and community. In later, and even recent periods the building escaped destruction and damage because of the popular belief that it was a saint's shrine, that means that after the memory (and the inscriptions) of the political power had faded, the spiritual powers succeeded it and occupied its place – no less a symbolic act. In contrast to this, in other cases like in the famous Shah-e Zenda ensemble in Samarqand popular traditions connected as many mausolea as possible with members of the family and the court of the revered strongman and dynasty-founder Timur, a special case in the history of the mostly unpopular Islamic dynasties[2].

There are hints in the chronicles that a century before the erection of the Samanid mausoleum, the Caliph Harun al-Rashid (d. 193/809) got his tomb erected in Tus in Khorasan, and that close to it the Shiite Imam ['Ali al-] Reza was buried, who died in Khorasan only a little later (203/818) as the designated successor to the caliph al-Ma'mun[3]. It is not to be excluded, we dare speculate, that the shrine at Mashhad, as the place was to be called later on, in its basement also houses the original memorial to the Caliph that became forgotten on purpose because of the Shiite antipathy towards Harun al-Rashid. It thus possibly offers an early example of the connection of purely dynastic and saintly reverence in tomb architecture, certainly not in line with the will of al-Rashid.

In contrast to the very few early Islamic mausolea documented, the funerary architecture developed widely in nearly all Islamic regions from the 11th century onwards, especially in commemoration of Shiite and Sufi saints and authorities, but also of rulers and dynasties. After the interlude of the Great Mongol rule and their maintenance of their own beliefs – in Ilkhanid Persia till the conversion of Ghazan Khan to Islam (694/1295) and in Chaghatayid Central Asia until that of Tarmashirin Khan (after 726/1326) and Toghloq Timur Khan (760-71/1359-70) – the erection of dynastic mausolea started again around 1300. Oljeytu's majestic building in Soltaniya followed the Great Seljuk tradition. In Eastern Turkestan (Almaliq, not Alma Ata) the *turba* of Toghloq Timur (before 1370) is preserved and shows the architectural features of the Central Asiatic facade mausolea with a pointed cupola on a low tambour, combined with a local variation of the glazed terracotta decor. This is also the case in the preserved mausoleum for the Chaghatayid Khan Buyan Qoli in Bokhara after 1358, with a splendid glazed decoration in relief terracotta, showing signs of innovative techniques which were to influence the early Timurid architectural decoration[4]. Its location next to the shrine of the Kubravi Sheykh Seyf al-Din Bakherzi (d. 659/1261), to which originally belonged two *khân-qâh* in the same building[5], is surely significant, though our scanty sources do not allow us to interpret it thoroughly.

All the mentioned mausolea are two-room buildings, with a smaller burial room under or next to a larger room, often called *ziyârat-khâna,* either with cenotaphs or empty. The persons buried are usually placed separately under flat stone slabs, the cenotaph in the shape of a house or a sarcophagus being built above it. This corresponds to the form of the

shrine mausolea of several saints as well, as we know from Iranian, Iraqi and other examples. Inscriptions in the mausolea recall the decay of all beings and the hope for a better life after the day of judgement[6] – this implies that they functioned only as a temporary abode for the dead, on the way to eternal paradise. Several instances which we might call symbolic have been observed that indicate the concept of this abode as an intermediate between earth and heaven. It already shows heavenly joys in architectural forms and colour ; light and elegant looking structures and features, symmetrically balanced, and the abstracted, purified representation of nature surrounding the dead seem to carry them away from earthen reality. In some archaeological investigations the corpses have been found to be embalmed and scented – we recall the famous story of the grave of the Omayyad caliph Hisham (d. 125/743) in his residence al-Rusafa in Northern Syria, which was devastated by the revolutionary Abbasids, who were disgusted by his hybrid memorial and the foreign custom of preserving the corpse against natural decaying by embalming[7]. This points to Iranian traditions followed by Hisham also elsewhere.

In Central Asia the method had apparently lived on, and the memorial places were not any more devastated as such, only very rarely as the places of an unliked predecessor, like in the case of the prince Miranshah, son of Timur, who is reported to have opened the tomb of the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din in Ray, sentenced to death 80 years earlier, and to have sentenced the corpse for a second time – in the chronicles this is called a cruel act excused by Miranshah's having turned insane after a cranial wounding. The ornamentation of the tombs and the tendency to align mausolea in alleys as outstanding places must have exceeded the tranquillity of Christian and Jewish cemeteries, and rigid Sunnites again and again remind the believers not to rever the dead in any form, and to avoid this recommend the burial without any memorial sign ; the latest reform movement in this topic was led by the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia, even restricting reverence at the tomb of the Prophet Mohammad.

Still, the force of opposed traditions and beliefs remained vigorous and such beautiful creations as the architectural ensemble of Shah-e Zenda or the Gur-e Mir in Samarqand are the result of this – but how were their foundations defended within Islam ? We do not think that it is enough to recognize old Iranian or pre-Islamic Turkish traditions in them, one would in any case have to look for the theological permit to continue the erection of solid mausolea or for its conformity with the

Prophet's tradition according to regional authorities. There may be quoted the exposé by Fazlallah Khonji, of the admissible "occasional visit" to a saint's tomb and the forbidden institutionalized pilgrimage, on the occasion of his own journey to Mashhad and Tus with Sheybani Khan[8]. By this time, not only were the Shiite pilgrimage centres in Iran and Iraq becoming more and more frequented, but during the Timurid period the funerary architecture for the dervish orders and other prominent figures was also developing increasingly. We propose an attempt to group the funerary monuments by their founders and "patrons" rather than by the varying architectural styles or regional traditions, and in this way we obtain four main groups.

I.

First, the long established, rather orthodox pilgrims' centre with an adjoining cemetery.

The case of the Shah-e Zenda cemetery in Samarqand with its alleys of religious buildings and mausolea dating back to the 11th century is clear[9]. The undoubtedly early tradition that the tomb of a cousin and companion of the Prophet, Qosam (Qutham) b. al-'Abbas (d. 57/677), honoured this ground[10], gives reason to handle it in analogy to what the first successors of the Prophet, three of the four *Râshidûn* ("well-guided") did : to get buried as close as possible to the grave in the former courtyard of the Prophet in Medina. The fame of the saint was great and the traditional cemetery in Samarqand right outside the walls was so vividly in use that the new dynasties of the Chaghatayid khans and the family and court of Timur sought to build their mausolea juxtaposing it. However, they did not attempt to build a single monumental mausoleum combining the saint's tomb with theirs – which is what Timur did with the old tomb of Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Turkestan/Yasi, which evidently belongs to another context (see 3, *infra).* We do not know who erected the existing mausoleum and mosque over Qosam's tomb in the llth-12th centuries, with decorative additions in the 1330's. A *madrasa* of the Qarakhanid ruler Tamghach Boghra Khan of the same period (dated 1066) on the opposite side of the lane was later on only partly reused and the rest destroyed[11]. But as in the case of the mausoleum for Buyan Qoli Khan in Bokhara, the Chaghatayid amirs and several members of Timur's family before 1486 were buried as close as possible to the existing *turba,* like Shirin Bik Aqa, or the exceptional

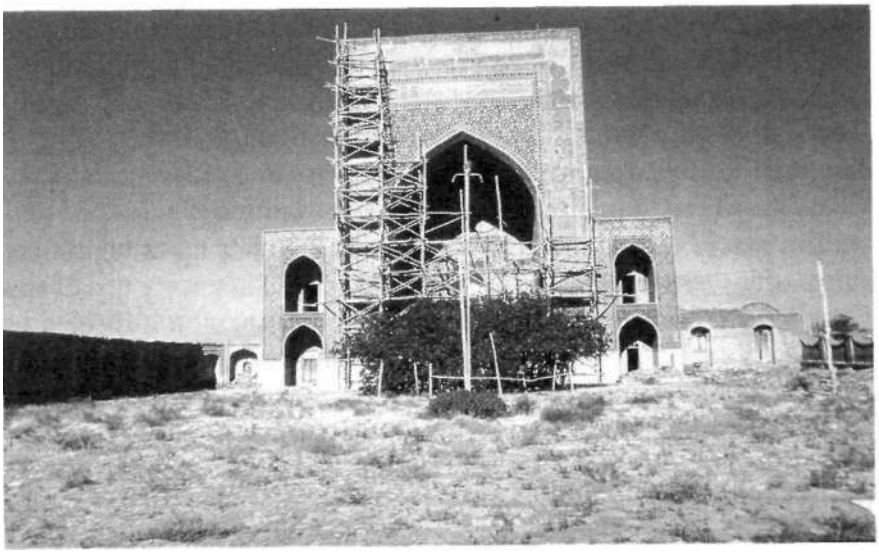
Tuman Bik Aqa's mausoleum and mosque erected in the year of Timur's death, 1404/5, and at least two prayer halls were added to build up an ensemble. So we may guess that it was a Chaghatay Khan or his family who restored the *turba* of Qosam and we may think of the alley as a memorial for this dynasty, only partly superseding older monuments which have been found in archaeological excavations.

The graves of the two Khans whom Timur put up as legitimate rulers of his empire are not to be found here[12]. They were not of the Chaghatay family itself but of the Ogedey branch, who had ruled in Transoxania already earlier – Soyurghatmish, the first, was a grandson of Khan Daneshmandcha, 1346-48. It may not have been appropriate for them to "interfer" in the grounds of the former dynasty, of which other branches continued to exist. Though it is not assured, they seem to have been buried in Timurid foundations, perhaps in Shahrisabz and/or in the *madrasa*-ensemble of Timur's grandson Mohammad Soltan outside the Gur-e Mir.

But apparently there were no further *seyyed* or companions of the Prophet "found" to be buried within the original Chaghatay dominion – it was only during Timur's campaigns that the famous shrines of Mazar-e Sharif and the Shiite centres in Mashhad and Qom were incorporated and progressively "timurized". Concerning the *âstâna* in Mashhad we know, that the Timurid additions by Gowhar Shad respectfully surrounded the tomb chamber, but also that the main cupola may be of Shahrokh's and her times, inspite of Timurid resentments against Shiite doctrines[13]. And it should be remembered that the number of Shiite *emâmzâda* in Iran increased significantly in Timurid times. In Mazar-e Sharif the architectural history is unfortunately even less well known[14].

II.

Far more developed was the Sufi shrine architecture. As has been observed, the architectural features and the Persian terminology do not really help us to differentiate between types and functions of buildings in connection with tombs[15]. Perhaps it will be possible to analyse the material more effectively when we consider the practices of different Sufi *ṭariqa* and different periods. In the Timurid century a great number of Shiite and Sunnite Sufi shrines were built or enlarged, and this process continued in the Sheybanid and Janid periods either under official dynastic responsability, or by private initiative.



Tayyabad. Tomb and mosque of Sheykh Zeyn al-Din Tayyabadi (848/1444-45) (phot. C.-P. Haase)

Torbat-e Jam, tomb and ensemble of Sheikh Ahmad-e Jami, façade, *ca.* 1440 (phot. C.-P. Haase)

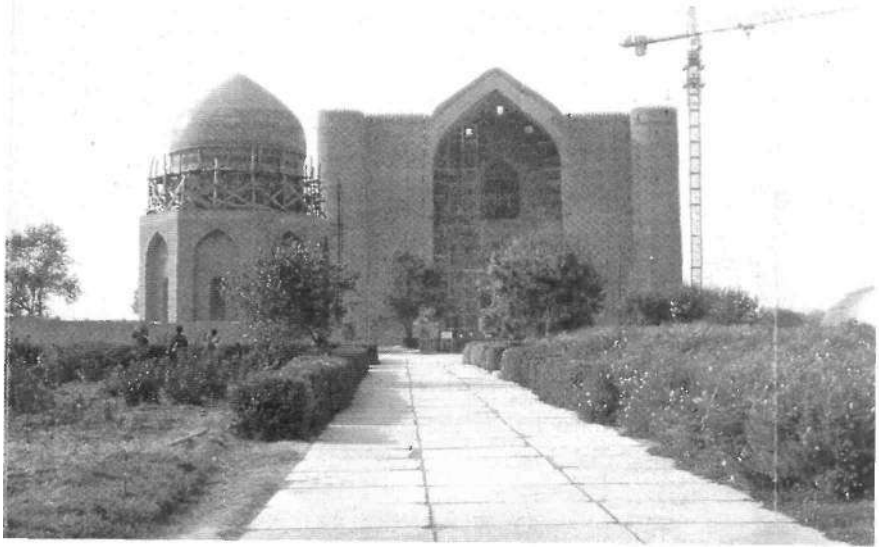
The following buildings should be grouped together within the "orthodox" *(ḥâẓira-)type :*
a) the elegant building behind the "open" tomb of Sheykh Zeyn al-Din Tayyabadi by a vizier of Shahrokh (Pir Ahmad Khwafi, 848/1444-5, see photo 1, p. 220)[16] ;
b) Timur's *khânqâh* and the additions of a mosque, a *madrasa* and a *gonbad-e sabz* to the tomb (*mazâr)* of Sheykh Ahmad-e Jami (d. 536/1141) at Torbat-e Jam by an Amir of the court of Shahrokh, Jalal al-din Firuzshah (and others, see photo 2, p. 220)[17] ;
c) the extended courtyard buildings at Gazorgah, built *c.* 1425-28 (with the addition of a *khânqâh* in 1441-42), around Shahrokh's memorial behind the tomb of Khwaja 'Abdallah Ansari (d. 482/1089), which temporarily became the dynastic graveyard of the family of Hoseyn Bayqara (1477-93)[18].

To this series, I think, also belong for example the shrine of Abu Nasr Parsa in Balkh – which O'Kane convincingly proves to be a foundation of 'Abd al-Mu'men Khan in later Uzbek times, and not Timurid as earlier scholars think[19] –, the Char (Chahar) Bakr ensemble in Bokhara of the Juybari sheykhs (1560-63)[20] and several other *mazâr* (although they are not exclusively designed by the term *ḥâẓira* in descriptions and inscriptions).

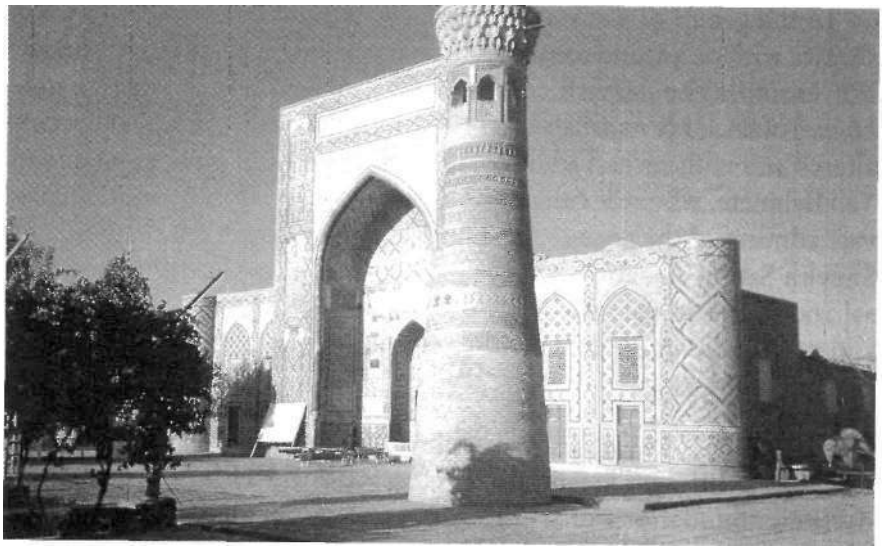
To the group of semi-official or private foundations belong some shrines with or around tombs and venerated places in different shapes. For example the dervish complex next to the hermit's cell *(chellâ-khâna)* of Shah Ne'matallah Vali (d. 834/1430-1), with a large room, often altered and with several additions, but founded in 840/1436 by Ahmad Vali Bahmani, who was ruler of Deccan, but could act here only as a private admirer of the *ṭariqa*[21]. The first two tomb towers of the *ṭariqa* of Sheykh Safi in Ardabil were also honoured by an adjoining transversal room, the so-called *dâr al-ḥuffâẓ* ; these Timurid-time structures still need to be studied.

III.

Quite a different incentive and layout are to be seen in the solemn dynastic foundations of shrines, of which Timur's gigantic building for Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi is the most prominent example (see photo 3, p. 222). Here the impressive large hall and many rooms seem to be more appropriate for court events than for the secluded life of the der-



Turkestan/Yasi, mausoleum of Khwaje Ahmad Yasavi (1394-99),
to the left the reconstructed mausoleum of Rabi'a Soltan, *ca.* 1485
(photo C.-P. Haase)



Ghojdovan, mausoleum complex of 'Abdalkhaliq Ghojdovani (mid. l5th century and later)
(photo C.-R Haase)

vishes[22]. It was left unfinished, even by his followers, and we may guess that among the reasons for it were the tight connection of the building with the conqueror. Indeed, Shahrokh as well as Ulugh Beg erected foundations of their own in other places (of which little is preserved), by all respect to the dynasty's father. The only major mausoleum, now in reconstructed shape, which was erected close to the great building was that of Rabi'a Soltan, a daughter of Ulugh Beg and wife of the new dynasty-founder Abu'l-Khayr Uzbek.

Better off, regarding their continued rebuilding and enlargement, were the much smaller foundations around the tomb of a follower of Khwaja Ahmad, who gave even more renown to the Sufi movement, Khwaja Baha' al-Din Naqshband, near Bokhara. The buildings standing there now mostly date from the 16th century onwards. We cannot consider here the reasons why one Sufi was not and the other was chosen as representative of the dynasty's religious and spiritual goal. But archaeological and architectural investigations may lead to a more coherent picture. For instance, the tomb of such an important Sufi as 'Abd al-Khaliq Ghojdovani should have found a princely sponsor at some time – the existing building attributed to Ulugh Beg (see photo 4, p. 222) appears as the poor remains of an intended larger plan, or the rebuilding by a later, less powerful dynasty or private initiative of part of the original structure[23].

IV.

Finally the dynastic tombs of the Timurid family themselves appear as a group. As O'Kane mentioned, none of them is or was standing alone for itself, but all were connected to an ensemble of buildings with various functions[24]. The last single mausoleums of Timur's sister and wife stand in the Shah-e Zenda alley and can not be called dynastic foundations, in spite of the fact that they house more than one tomb each, because they are for women only. The enigmatic *Dâr al-siyâda* in Shahrisabz seems to be the first example, founded after the death (1372) of Timur's eldest son Jahangir (1375-1404), while the *Dâr al-ṭelâva* is a later juxtaposed *madrasa* and mosque of Ulugh Beg's time[25]. It combines the graves of Timur's father and two sons with that of the Sufi mentor, Shams al-Din Kulal (d. before 775/1373-4), whose identity has been convincingly fixed by Jürgen Paul[26]. According to several sources Timur intended to have his own tomb erected there, too.

The connection with a Sufi tomb seems to be essential for the early dynastic Timurid mausolea. Apparently the Naqshbandi *ṭariqa* was especially linked to the first generations. Though his name is not mentioned in Naqshbandi sources in this form, we should seek the saint, whose tomb was in the end connected with Timur, among its adherents : Seyyed Baraka of Andkhoy (probably a *laqab,* nickname). Only the later *Ẓafar-nâma* by Sharaf al-Din ʻAli Yazdi tells stories about the transfer of his body from Andkhoy to Samarqand and that it was the first corpse to be buried in the Gur-e Mir[27], established by Shahrokh as the dynastic mausoleum of the Timurids in 1409, and that those of Timur and his grandson Pir Mohammad were transferred and juxtaposed to his tomb only then. The rather untrustworthy Ibn ʻArabshah describes the interior of Timur's mausoleum as much adorned, with his weapons and other memorabilia, which were all later removed by Shahrokh – this could also be a distortion of the usual outfit of a saint's or dervish's tomb to reclaim the heathen character of the rule and court of the Amir, and the objects might already have indicated the blessings *(baraka)* of the saintly Seyyed, whom Timur had favored more than once. The cenotaph of the Seyyed Baraka placed prominently in front of the *qibla* must have been planned there originally and can hardly be a later addition. The tomb traditionally assigned to another "*seyyed*", ʻOmar, was apparently added later in the Eastern niche and still bears the pole and horsetail, but the inscription is anonymous and the tomb was found to be empty[28]. As we know, the Gur-e Mir ensemble was a complex of a *madrasa* and a *khânqâh,* erected in the name of Timur's grandson Pir Mohammad, and the *turba* was apparently heightened (can it be understood as by the higher tambour, like a tomb tower ?) in a secondary planning as described by Clavijo[29]. It then came to house the three early Timurid rulers until Ulugh Beg.

The connection of the dynasty's tombs with saints' tombs gives them the aura of a shrine ; and this even pertains to the later women's mausolea Aq-Saray and ʻEshrat-khana in Samarqand[30]. The impressive size of these foundations and their intended multi-functional use – there were several additions to the Gur-e Mir executed and planned until Janid times – apparently also made them popular. Let me recall the event at my first visit to the Gur-e Mir late in 1966 one evening, when a warden with a traditional hat among other things spoke of the *vaqf* foundation of Timur in profound reverence as if it were functioning and

he himself being paid and still serving it (but perhaps this was a lesson he had learned from historians and art historians working at the restauration program then). Later dynastic tombs of the Timurids and their successors were architectonically added to a *madrasa* in the form of cupolas or towers on one side of the facade or at the rear, perhaps balanced by a second tomb tower of some sheykh or rooms of other functions on the other side. The tendency in Timurid times to build large juxtaposed ensembles of *madrasa* and *khânqâh,* shows the enormous concentration of means and manpower within this dynasty. This was only partly equalled in later times, but the most famous Sheybanid and Janid architectural ensembles like the Registan are still deservedly famous today.

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NOTES

1. Literature now easily accessible in R. Ettinghausen and O. Grabar, *The Art and Architecture of Islam,* Harmondsworth, 1987 (Pelican History of Art).

2. Another interesting impact of the early Timurid glorification of the dynasty's founder in architecture is followed up by M. Brand to the imperial Mughal mausoleum architecture, "Orthodoxy, Innovation and Revival : considerations of the past in imperial Mughal tomb architecture", *Muqarnas* 10 (1993), p. 323-334.

3. See for the sources the relevant articles in the *EI²* : "'Alî al-Riḍâ", "Hârûn al-Rashîd" and "al-Ma'mûn".

4. L.I. Rempel, "The Mausoleum of Bayan Quli Khan", *Bulletin of the American Institute of Iranian Art and Archaeology* 4 (1936), p. 207-209 ; C.-P. Haase, "The Türbe of Buyan Quli Khan at Bukhara", in G. Feher (Hsg.), *5th Intern. Congress of Turkish Art,* Budapest, 1975 (1978), p. 409-416.

5. O.D. Chehovich, *Buharskie dokumenty,* Tashkent, 1965, 12f. ; compare for the building complex L. Golombek and D. Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan,* Princeton, 1988, p. 225 f. N° 1-2.

6. Compare examples of Persian and Arabic funerary inscriptions in V.A. Shishkin, "Nadpisi v ansamble Shakhi-Zinda", *Zodchestvo Uzhekistana 2* (1970), p. 7-71.

7. al-Mas'ûdî, *(Muruj al-dhahab), Les prairies d'or,* éd. et trad. Barbier de Meynard, Paris, 1861-1877, vol. 5, p. 471 f.

8. Fażlallâh b. Ruzbehân, *Mehmân-nâma-ye Bokhârâ,* ed. M. Sotuda, Tehran, 1341 Sh/1962, pp. 331-335 ; cf. U. Haarmann, "Staat und Religion in Transoxanien im frühen 16Jh.", *ZDMG* 124 (1974), p. 349. [Also see, in the present volume, M. Bernardini,

"À propos de Fazlallah b. Ruzbehan Khonji Esfahani et du mausolée d'Ahmad Yasavi"].

9. Thoroughly documented in N. B. Nemceva and lu. Z. Shvab, *Ansambl' Shakh-i Zinda,* Tashkent, 1979 ; Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 233-252, No. 11-24.

10. The Arabic sources are not unanimous about his martyrdom under the walls of Samarqand, see *EI*^{2}*,* art. "Ḳutham" ; the archaeological and architectural study of the shrine, earliest mosque and the *madrasa* of Tamghach are documented by N. B. Nemceva, "Istoki kompozicii i etapy formirovanija ansamblja Shahi-Zinda", *Sovetskaja Arheologija* 1976/1, p. 94-106 ; English translation by J. M. Rogers and 'Adil Yasin, *Iran* 15 (1977), p. 51-73.

11. N.B. Nemceva, "Medrese Tamgach Bogra Hana v Samarkande", in *Afrasiab* III (Tashkent, 1974), p. 99-154.

12. B.F. Manz, "The Ulus Chaghatay before and after Timur's Rise", *Central Asiatic Journal 27* (1983), p. 79-100.

13. B. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture in Khorasan,* Costa Mesa, 1987, p. 119-130, No. 2 ; B. Saadat, *The Holy Shrine of Imam Reza,* Shiraz, 1976.

14. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 255-257, No. 32.

15. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 21-26, where the differentiation of "orthodox" tombs in the open – but in connection to a building behind them – and vaulted mausolea is stressed ; Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 49-52, observing different types of shrine architecture.

16. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 223-226, No. 25 ; Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 344-346, No. 117.

17. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 217-222, No. 23-24 ; Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 347-349, No. 119-120.

18. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 149-152, No. 9 ; Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 307-310, No. 71-72.

19. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 106. His paper on "Uzbek Copy or Timurid original ? The case of the Shrine of Khwaja Parsa, Balkh", is to be published in a future issue of the *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale.*

20. G. A. Pugachenkova and L. I. Rempel', Istorija iskusstv Uzbekistana, Moscow, 1965, p. 341.

21. Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* 394f. Shahrokh was obviously opposed to the son and successor of Shah Ne'matallah, Khalil, cf. *EI*^{2}*,* art. "Ni'mat-Allâhiyya".

22. Documentation in Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 284-288 ; N.B. Nurmuhammedov, *Mavzolej Hodži Ahmeda Yasevi,* Alma-Ata, 1980 ; S. Blair & F. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250-1800,* New Haven-London, 1994, 55f.

23. Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* 230f., No.7 ; the tile inscription in bad colour glazes mentioning the foundation by Ulugh Beg does not seem to be original, and the heavy modern rebuilding I saw there during a visit in 1996 makes it more difficult to follow the interpretation of a fairly large ensemble given by VA. Shishkin, "Medrese Ulugbeka v Gižduvane", *Materialy Uzkomstarisa* II/III (1933), p. 11-18, after

archaeological investigations.

24. O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture,* 21f.

25. Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 275-280, n° 40-41, 43 ; but see J. Paul, "Scheiche und Herrscher im Khanat Čaġatây", *Der Islam* 67 (1990), p. 293 f.

26. Cf. J. Paul, *Die politische und soziale Bedeutung der Naqšbandiyya in Mittelasien im 15. Jh., Berlin,* 1991, p. 18 f.

27. See V.V. Bartol'd's article, "O pogrebenii Timura", transl. by J.M. Rogers, *Iran* 12 (1974), p. 82 f. with indication of sources.

28. Bartol'd-Rogers, "O pogrebenii Timura", p. 86 n.188 (by the translator), from A. A. Semenov, "Nadpis' na nadgrobii psevdo-sejid Omara v Guri Emire", *Epigrafika Vostoka* 1 (1947), p. 23-26.

29. Cf. the discussion of his text by Bartol'd-Rogers, "O pogrebenii Timura", p. 80 f.

30. Golombek & Wilber, *Timurid Architecture,* p. 268-270, No. 5-6.